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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—A. Blake

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—J. W. Jones

2 March 1992

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 205**

EIGHTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1991-92

House of Commons

Monday 2 March 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

National Insurance

1. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many non-pensioners with annual gross incomes below £10,000 a year would be affected by the imposition of national insurance contributions on income from savings in excess of £3,000 a year.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): We estimate that for the United Kingdom, in 1991-92, some 230,000 non-pensioners with gross incomes below £10,000 a year would have to pay national insurance contributions on their income from savings.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that the use of national insurance contributions as an underhand tax is fundamentally dishonest and that early retirers, widows and those on limited incomes would be hurt by the imposition of a savings tax as proposed by the Labour party?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend is certainly right to identify the type of people who are likely to be hit—in all, more than 1 million people. What is more, they would get absolutely nothing in benefit entitlement for this purported contribution.

Mr. Enright: Will the Secretary of State join me in congratulating my constituent, Archie Heptinstall, on his 80th birthday this week? Will the right hon. Gentleman further explain to my constituent why people who reach that age end up in the appalling position of having all their age allowances clawed back by the Government?

Mr. Newton: I would wish warmly to join in congratulating the hon. Gentleman's constituent on his 80th birthday, particularly as, next month, the income support premium for the over-80s will be raised in real terms for the second time in three years.

3. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the average cost to a non-pensioner basic rate taxpayer of the imposition of national insurance contributions at 9 per cent. on savings income in excess of £3,000 a year.

Mr. Newton: We estimate that in the United Kingdom the average cost in 1991-92 to a non-pensioner basic rate taxpayer would be £280.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. Friend agree that imposing an extra 9 per cent. on savings income would almost certainly deter individuals from saving and that the knock-on effect would be to reduce the resources available for investment in industry? Does he agree that such a policy—it is, of course, Labour policy—would be sheer lunacy? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is based on the Labour party's ideological dislike of people who are not wholly dependent on the state?

Mr. Newton: I have great sympathy with every point that my hon. Friend made. I have the greatest difficulty in finding the remotest sense in the policy of a party which says that it is in favour of investment but which goes out of its way by every possible means to penalise saving.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Secretary of State explain where is the remotest sense in the present system whereby the editor of a national newspaper pays less than 1 per cent. of his salary in national insurance, someone on the Prime Minister's salary pays 3 per cent. and a person on average wages pays 9 per cent? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the Government—without announcing it in any manifesto—have increased national insurance charges by 40 per cent?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's figures are right. He has looked at marginal rates in some cases, but not in others. The basic point about the national insurance system is that it is a contributory one whereby what is paid bears some relationship to what is received. If the hon. Gentleman wants to tax people more rigorously, he should do so openly and not in the disguised form in which that is proposed.

Self-employed

4. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many self-employed people earn more than £20,280 a year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Michael Jack): We estimate that, in 1991-92 about 400,000 self-employed people will earn above the upper profit limit of £20,280.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Bearing in mind the Opposition's unalloyed joy at the thought of an increase in national insurance contributions for people who earn more than that, is it time that the Opposition came clean on their plans for the self-employed, who are the engine of the power house for this country? Does my hon. Friend agree that any extra tax on the self-employed without benefits in return would damage the country's chances of growth, and would help it in no way whatsoever?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend, in his inimitable style, has smoked out one of the hidden parts of the Opposition's agenda. I hope that, during this Question Time, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) will make Labour's policy clear. The Labour party is committed to removing the upper earnings limit for employed persons, but the hon. Member for Oldham, West has not made his party's policy on the self-employed clear. We have flushed him out today. His policy is the start of Labour's hand-in-the-till tax.

Mr. Skinner: One thing that the Opposition are certain about is that those who earn more than £20,000 have every right to be called upon to pay the extra 9 per cent. Members of Parliament earn between £20,000 and £30,000. If they cannot find that extra 9 per cent.—a few hundred quid a year—what right have Tory Members to talk about pensioners who must get by on about £56 a week? I am prepared to pay my contribution. It is time that Tory Members understood that they should pay theirs, too.

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman shows the Opposition's fundamental commitment to tax, tax and tax again and then spend, spend and spend again. He ignores the fact that, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pointed out, our national insurance scheme is founded on a contributory principle that has served the country well for 50 years. We now know what the Labour party's agenda is on that issue.

National Insurance

5. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the time necessary to switch from the current system for collecting national insurance to one based on annual assessment.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): It could take three years or even more, depending on the exact nature of the change and, of course, the priority given to it.

Mr. Dykes: Is my hon. Friend aware that that bizarre proposal, tucked into the back end of a newspaper on 25 January by an Opposition spokesman, would cause total chaos and huge problems for companies making such a change, particularly small companies? It would mean devastating expense in terms of new software and the reprogramming of computers. Would my hon. Friend care to comment on the chaos proposed by the Labour party?

Miss Widdecombe: The proposal would cause a huge administrative burden not only on business—the necessity to give businesses good notice would take some time—but on the DSS and the Inland Revenue. It would also mean massive computer reprogramming and possibly the expense of other computer programmes which would have to be introduced.

Mr. Dalyell: In the absence of a member of the Scottish National party in the House, may I ask the Minister to write me a letter setting out, in terms of computer programming and related difficulties, the problems of collecting national insurance in the event of an independent Scottish Parliament?

Miss Widdecombe: Where are the Members of the Scottish National party if they are so concerned about the matter? As for the unlikely event that the hon. Gentleman sketched, he may wish to test that policy with members of the SNP to find out precisely how such a system would work. Although I am always prepared to enter discussions with the hon. Gentleman about hypothetical matters, one must also balance the amount of time and expense that it would take to comment on something that is not a reality.

Pension Funds

7. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last held a meeting with the Occupational Pensions Board to discuss protection of pension funds.

Mr. Newton: I have had a number of informal discussions with the chairman of the Occupational Pensions Board in recent months.

Mr. Corbyn: In those discussions, did the Secretary of State draw to the attention of the Occupational Pensions Board the loss of hundreds of millions of pounds of money owned by Maxwell and Mirror Group pensioners? Did he also draw attention to the total inadequacy of control over pension fund investments and procedures? Is he prepared to state clearly now that he will introduce legislation to ensure that the sort of scandal that occurred, which robbed the workers of the Maxwell and Mirror corporations, will not occur again and those workers and others like them will be protected in future?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is a member of the Select Committee on Social Security, which is examining those matters, and I see that the Committee's Chairman, the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), is sitting in front of the hon. Gentleman. We have seen in the press suggestions about what members of the Committee might say, and we shall consider their proposals with interest. I spent two hours responding to questions put to me by the Select Committee only a fortnight or so ago. I made it absolutely clear that, when we know precisely what happened in that case and can draw the lessons from it, we shall be willing to learn them and take note of the need for future action, if that is shown to be necessary.

Mr. Hind: In the light of the serious situation which has arisen in relation to the Maxwell case, will my right hon. Friend take a good look at the pension funds of ABG Research, which is about to be wound up? Hundreds of pensioners in the north and south of England who work for that company are about to lose their pensions, including a 79-year-old widow. Will my right hon. Friend consider the problem to see whether the Government can help?

Mr. Newton: I am concerned about the position in which some people find themselves as a result of problems with the funds. That is why, among other matters, I made it clear that, in the appropriate circumstances, we would expect to operate the provisions—through state scheme premiums—to ensure that people at least receive their state earnings-related pension scheme entitlement.

Mr. Kirkwood: Although I fully understand why the Secretary of State needs to be cautious about the Maxwell case, will he be more firm on the need for change? His earlier answer suggested that there was some doubt in his mind about whether that was necessary. Is he having any discussions with the Treasury to find ways of getting some compensation for pensioners, who stand to lose millions of pounds?

Mr. Newton: I have made the point about the SERPS buy-back provisions and the guarantee involved, but I cannot go beyond that. On the wider issue, it has been made clear, not simply from what I have said but through what I have done over many years—in an earlier ministerial capacity and in my present one—that we are more than willing to take action where it is shown to be necessary, once we are sure that such action would be well-judged. We are some way short of being able to judge precisely what is required, especially as questions have been raised about the regulatory machinery under the Financial Services Act 1986, as well as the arrangements of the Occupational Pensions Board.

Mr. Irvine: My right hon. Friend will know that the Serious Fraud Office is conducting investigations into fraud and dishonesty in this sphere. However, there is also the related issue of possible negligence and breach of duty on the part of the supervisory authorities. Will my right hon. Friend give the several hundred Maxwell pensioners in my constituency an assurance that he will scrutinise carefully the role of those supervisory authorities—such as the Occupational Pensions Board—in relation to that subject? If those authorities were negligent or in any way in breach of duty, it is important that that fact should be uncovered at an early stage.

Mr. Newton: I can certainly give my hon. Friend an assurance that, were the investigations by the Serious Fraud Office to produce evidence of fraud that would have to be considered by those involved in criminal prosecutions of if there were claims that the Occupational Pensions Board had been negligent or in any other way culpable of failure to carry out its duties as imposed by the law, those matters would be considered with great care.

Mr. Frank Field: Does the Secretary of State accept that the answer that he has given on paying the guaranteed minimum pension to the Maxwell pensioners is wholly inadequate? Does he accept that many of the constituents of his hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) face losing their houses if they do not receive the full pension? Once the facts are established, will the Government be prepared to move beyond carrying out what they are, after all, required to do by law?

Mr. Newton: I certainly cannot go beyond what I have said this afternoon and on earlier occasions, including what I have told the hon. Gentleman in the Select Committee, about the guarantee of SERPS rights—to put it in shorthand terms—in respect of the guaranteed minimum pension. As I told the Select Committee—I make no apologies for reminding the hon. Gentleman of it—anything going beyond that would raise huge implications for all kinds of investments.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Robert Maxwell episode has vividly illustrated to the nation the fact that an unscrupulous director can put his hand in the till and get hold of pension fund money? That being so, many people throughout the nation who are in pension schemes are frightened. Will my right hon. Friend go as far as to say that we definitely intend in the fulness of time to bring in legislation and, I hope, include in the legislation the provision that there should be at least one employee representative among pension fund trustees?

Mr. Newton: To take the latter point first, if my hon. Friend looks at many, perhaps all, of the Maxwell pension fund trustee bodies, he will find that they were split 50:50—there was employee representation. I do not think that that would necessarily solve the problem. I cannot go beyond what I have said, except to make it clear once again that if and when it is clear that a further legislative change will materially assist in ensuring that this sort of thing does not happen again, we will be ready to make it. But there is still a great lack of clarity and we are not prepared to pretend that we know the answer, thereby running the risk of causing at least as much damage as we do good.

Mr. Meacher: Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that the banks and the Government have treated Mirror Group Newspapers pensioners extremely shabbily? Will he seek to ensure that the banks hand back the pension fund assets which belong to scheme members and which the banks have no right to keep, given their reckless lending practices? Is not the right hon. Gentleman culpably negligent in that, 20 months after the Social Security Act 1990 became law, he has still not introduced the regulations that would protect pension funds in the event of bankruptcy? Although the right hon. Gentleman has said again—several times today—that he will pay MGN pensioners their guaranteed minimum pension, will he accept that it is a mere pittance, and that if Barlow Clowes group shareholders who knowingly took the risk of speculating offshore can be compensated by the Government, the pensioners in MGN and other pension funds are no less deserving?

Mr. Newton: On the latter point, the hon. Gentleman is well aware of what was said at the time of the Barlow Clowes affair, following an investigation by the ombudsman into what was seen to be a unique set of circumstances.

To answer the hon. Gentleman's other points—I hope, not taking too much time over it—the debt-on-wind-up provisions were originally linked, as I think the hon. Gentleman knows, with the wider provisions for limited price indexation. As they involved a great deal of the same work to bring them into effect—work that would have taken a considerable time—and would have imposed further contingent or actual liabilities on funds at a time when there was already considerable anxiety because of the uncertainty over the Barber judgment——

Mr. Meacher: The Government dropped limited price indexation.

Mr. Newton: We did not. We made it clear that we would give further consideration to it once the Barber judgment was clear, and that is precisely what we are beginning to do.

On the hon. Gentleman's first question, he will understand that I have no power to order banks to take particular actions. However, he will have noted what some banks have said in recent days about their attitude to this matter.

National Insurance

8. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many more people would be liable for payment of employees' national insurance contributions if the atypical work directive were adopted.

Mr. Jack: We estimate that a further 1,750,000 people would have to pay national insurance contributions if the directive were adopted.

Mr. Squire: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Will he confirm that the directive, which is strongly supported by the Labour party, would discriminate heavily against part-time workers, especially women who are trying to combine a job with family responsibilities? Is this yet another instance of the anti-choice nature of the Labour party which, in the guise of new-found moderation, seeks to deny that which is currently available?

Mr. Jack: Again, the Opposition seem to be confused on the issue. They seem to have signed up to the work directive from which the measure comes. As my hon. Friend says, the proposal would bring another 1,750,000 people into the position that he describes. My hon. Friend is right. Many people take a part-time or lower-paid job because it suits their circumstances and is a good choice for them. Those people benefit from the fact that they do not have to make national insurance contributions. Again, the Opposition are recommending a "take" society.

Mr. Frank Field: Will the Minister confirm that even if the work directive came into force, the Government could still levy national insurance at a zero rating of 1 per cent. instead of the full rate? Would not many of those workers prefer that option, with all the benefits that would come from it, rather than the scare stories that the Government are putting over in this pre-election period?

Mr. Jack: I know that the hon. Gentleman is assiduous about detail, and I recommend that he reads article 2 of the directive. It is not disputed by any member of the European Community that if that part of the directive were to be implemented everybody would have to pay for the associated benefits. I refer the hon. Gentleman to his hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) who, if I have understood her words, made it clear that she did not think that it was a very good idea for people below the lower earnings limit to pay small amounts of national insurance. The hon. Gentleman should look at the detail.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that the directive would force employers to pay national insurance for employees who were below the lower earnings limit and that, effectively, that would be a tax on businesses that wish to employ part-time workers? Given th[illegible]e wish to give British industry the flexibility to employ part-time workers, is not this another effort by Labour to hit the people who most want to seek jobs?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend has put his finger on an interesting point. The measure, coupled to Labour's proposal for a minimum wage, is a straightforward attack on jobs. The receipts received by us on the consultation document about the directive show that the Contract Cleaning and Maintenance Association claims that some 40 per cent. of those employed in its industry would be sacked in the first year. That is the kind of enlightened policy to which the Opposition are signing up.

State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme

9. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will revise the state earnings-related pension scheme to make higher pensions available for those people made redundant in their late 50s who are unlikely to obtain another job.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Bennett: The Minister will recall that during the first Tory recession, Ministers claimed that making many people redundant was a price worth paying to make British industry leaner and fitter. For many of my constituents who were made redundant, it was not a price worth paying. They lost their jobs and the chance to get another job and contribute to their pensions. Now, when they are at pensionable age, their pension is much below that of people who were fortunate enough to keep their jobs. Is not it time for the Government to compensate the people whom they damaged in their first Tory recession?

Mr. Newton: That is a slightly odd point from a Labour Member in view of the fact that the SERPS entitlement of such people, which is what the original question was about, is precisely as it was left by the Labour Government. None of the changes made to SERPS affects anybody who is retiring this century. It is even odder that many of the people about whom the hon. Gentleman expresses concern are precisely those who would suffer from Labour's proposed savings tax.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, under the current rules for SERPS, there is a cut-off in the amount which is the same as the cut-off for the earnings limit? Will he confirm that all the figures published so far by the Labour party, in attempting to collect more money from the national insurance contribution, show that it will not put a penny of that money into increased SERPS for people who retire? Is that not a clear case of fraud?

Mr. Newton: Even in these relatively heated times, I am not sure that I would wish to use such a word as fraud against the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). However, I endorse my hon. Friend's suggestion that the SERPS entitlement accrues on earnings between the lower earnings limit and the upper earnings limit and that the Labour party's proposal to scrap the upper earnings limit for contribution purposes is associated with no increase in benefit for those persons.

Pensioners (Owner-Occupiers)

10. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners are owner-occupiers and have paid off their mortgage.

Miss Widdecombe: The latest figures available show that in 1988, 50 per cent. of pensioners were owner-occupiers, of whom 46 per cent. owned their homes outright. That compares well with 1979, when only 38 per cent. owned their homes outright.

Mr. Bowden: With more and more pensioners owing their homes outright, and with eight out of 10 recently retired pensioners having an income from investment and savings, is it not reasonable to recognise a measure of prosperity among pensioners? If resources are to be used to increase pensions, should they not be used to target those in greatest need, rather than spreading across the board and benefiting both rich and poor? Does not the idea of giving out a blanket provision look like political bribery in an election year?

Miss Widdecombe: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It not only looks like political bribery—it probably is. It is perhaps worth pointing out that in the past three years we have spent some £350 million on the poorer pensioners. Whereas it is right to make sure that the value of the basic state pension is preserved for all income brackets we believe that any extra resources should be directed to the poorer end. The Labour party may well find that by the time it has spent billions of pounds on all income levels it will not have the extra money to spend on those who need it most. That is the price that Labour will have to pay for its policy, in the unlikely event of its ever being able to implement it.

Mr. Bradley: Is the Minister not aware that a significant number of pensioners who own their own homes are among the poorest in the country? Many have all their capital tied up in their homes and have to use the meagre resources of the basic state retirement pension to repair and restore their homes and to pay their heating bills? Is not that situation made even worse by the massive Government cuts in renovation grants for elderly people? Will the Government recognise that the only way that many of those pensioners will have a happy and healthy retirement is through a substantial increase in the basic rate of income of at least £5 for a single person and £8 per couple, which is the commitment of the Labour party and which is supported by pensioner groups throughout the country as was shown by a recent lobby of Parliament by pensioners from the north-west which was supported by many Conservative Members?

Miss Widdecombe: When those same pensioners understand that blanket commitments of that type will erode the extra money available to help the poorer end, they may take rather a different view. When they also understand that housing costs play a proportionately lower part in pensioners' expenditure in England than in the rest of Europe, they may be grateful for the way in which we have promoted home ownership. If 50 per cent. of those retiring now own their own homes, they do so thanks almost solely to the policies pursued and enacted by the Government. We have made a major contribution to the overall income of pensioners, while all that the Labour party has to offer is inflationary erosion of savings, a failure in home ownership and many other schemes that Labour has offered; although such proposals make it seem that pensioners are better off, because they are offered with other features, in reality it is a small percentage rise. Labour has nothing new to offer. We saw the effects of those policies and, in the unlikely event of the Labour party taking power, we shall see them again.

Pension Levels

11. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about pension levels.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): We have maintained the real value of the basic retirement pension since we took office in 1979 and we are pledged to continue this policy.

Mr. Taylor: At my weekend surgery three pensioners came to see me in considerable distress because of the difficulty that they faced in paying their water and electricity bills and other bills from private utilities following the large price increases. Is it not time that those pensioners, including the one who told me that she was keeping warm during the day by clutching a hot-water bottle because she could not afford heating bills, were given a decent state pension as of right, without the humiliation of a contributory test, which involves means-testing for those who are in greatest need?

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman examines the incomes of retirement pensioners since the Government took office, he will find that they have increased substantially. From 1979 to 1988 they increased by about 34 per cent., and there have been further improvements since 1988. Under this Government, the income of retirement pensioners as a whole has increased more in each year than it did throughout the Labour Government's administration.

Mr. Dunn: Would my right hon. Friend care to speculate as to the impact on pensioner living standards of the suggestion that petrol prices be increased by 50p per gallon, and especially the impact on pensioners who live in the country and who need a motor car for shopping and other aspects of life? Will my right hon. Friend remind the House that the 50p tax on petrol is a Liberal Democrat idea?

Mr. Scott: I am sure that the House needs no reminding of that. None the less, I am grateful to my hon. Friend for doing so. He will realise the concern that I have for disabled people, who would be hit by such an increase in petrol tax.

Mr. Meacher: In the light of the current Conservative "Newsline" pledge that the Conservative party, if it wins the election, will "target social security" so that it is

> "not a handout to those who do not need it",

will the Minister confirm that that is a Tory pledge to means test pensions after the election? Will he also confirm that that is exactly what a previous Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer—the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson)—said that he intended to do during a notorious private briefing? Before the right hon. Gentleman issues a denial, will he confirm that before the previous election the Tories said that they would continue to pay child benefit as before—only to freeze it immediately for three years when they took office? Does he recall that before 1979 the Tories said that they would maintain the value of the retirement pension in line with rising living standards—a pledge which was promptly broken when they took office? As a result, a single pensioner has lost £17 a week under the Government while a married couple have lost £28.

Mr. Scott: I can say unequivocally and without a shadow of doubt that the Conservative party has no intention whatever, when it is returned to office, to means test the basic retirement pension. As I have already said, we have pledged ourselves to maintain the pension's real value. What we shall do, as we have done over the past three years, is to ensure that poorer pensioners—those who have not benefited from the result of our general policies towards pensioners which have increased pensioners' real living standards by over 34 per cent.—will be helped. To that end, as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has already said, we have contributed about £350 million since October 1989.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mrs. Alice Mahon. I call Mr. John Evans. [Hon. Members: "Where are they?"] I call Mrs. Teresa Gorman.

Mrs. Gorman: No. 15, Sir.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes you shout out the names of hon. Members who are caught up in British Rail delays. It is most unreasonable—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me.

Benefits (Recent Settlers)

15. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to review the eligibility criteria for benefits for individuals recently settled in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jack: People who have the right of residence in the United Kingdom and who might apply for social security benefits will have their application assessed on the same criteria as British citizens. Those criteria are kept under review.

Mrs. Gorman: Is my hon. Friend aware that, during the recent debate on the Asylum Bill, our right hon. Friend the Home Secretary pointed out that about 30,000 people are registered as asylum seekers, without their families, and that they are allowed six months' benefit immediately upon registering as asylum seekers? Will my hon. Friend please comment on the cost of that and on the fact that, 50 years after the Beveridge report, we have moved a long way from the principle of paying into the kitty through insurance before being allowed to draw out of it?

Mr. Jack: First, on a point of detail, people are not automatically entitled to six months' social security. The longest period for which an order book can be issued to an asylum seeker who makes a successful application for income support is 20 weeks. Secondly, we are very aware of the seriousness of that development. Admissions to the United Kingdom are matters for our right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

On income support applications, I reassure my hon. Friend that the standard acknowledgement letter, a copy of which I have, has been markedly improved by watermarking and the addition of a photograph. That is a key part in the identification process of an asylum seeker applying for income support. In the first two months since its advent, that process has reduced by 40 per cent. the number of people making application for asylum status. It is important that we maintain our form of help because among asylum seekers there are those who will ultimately be proved to be genuine refugees.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Fraud

29. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Attorney-General if he has any proposals to change the prosecution procedures in cases of fraud.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): No, Sir. Wherever they have been operating, persons whose dishonesty has infringed the criminal law, on the basis of reliable and admissible evidence, will continue to be prosecuted. If, on review, any procedural change is shown to be desirable, the Government will consider the steps that need to be taken.

Mr. Flynn: Is the Attorney-General aware that, while the West Bromwich building society and financial advisers have grown fat and rich by selling home income equity bonds, 14,000 pensioners face the prospect of losing their homes, including some of my constituents who were not advised that the bonds were dangerous? One pensioner, tragically, has taken his life because of them. Is it not fraud of the most cynical, wicked type that financial advisers are not telling elderly people that those bonds are dangerous and that they are likely to lose their homes within two years? What does the Attorney-General intend to do about that?

The Attorney-General: I am naturally extremely sorry to hear of the personal circumstances that the hon. Gentleman very properly brings to the attention of the House, but he will not expect me to prejudge any issue of criminality that may arise. If the hon. Gentleman believes that there is evidence of criminality, he should draw it to the attention of the police, if he has not done so already.

Mr. Tim Smith: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, since it was established in 1988, the Serious Fraud Office, under the direction of Barbara Mills, has done an outstandingly good job and has brought a number of successful prosecutions for fraud? Before we make any radical changes such as doing away with jury trials, should we not think very carefully indeed?

The Attorney-General: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Recent comment has been disfigured by a good deal of misinformation. The Serious Fraud Office has been in operation for three years and has achieved a striking rate of success in serious and complex frauds. My hon. Friend is absolutely right in the tribute that he pays.

Mr. John Morris: Does the Attorney-General accept that there is concern about our procedures? Will the Lord Chancellor consider asking the Lord Chief Justice to establish a committee of judges and practitioners to propose reforms to be approved by a practice direction, and by legislation where necessary? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that while juries are unequalled in deciding dishonesty, the burden of lengthy trials is becoming unfair on jurors? Why are there such a multiplicity of counts, and sometimes of defendants, with long opening speeches and insufficient identification of the issues for the jury until nearly the end of a trial?

The Attorney-General: Obviously, my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor will heed the right hon. and learned Gentleman's remarks. I am not sure about there being a multiplicity of counts. In the recently concluded County NatWest and Blue Arrow case, there was only one count—yet comment on it included the assertion that the Serious Fraud Office used a "scattergun approach". In Guinness 2, there were five counts. I believe that I am right in saying that in the most recent 20 cases, there have been at most 22 counts. Some of them have to be in the alternative, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows. Every effort is made to bring matters into clear focus.

Incidentally, I was interested to read in the *Financial Times* and other newspapers today that the foreman in the Guinness 2 trial of Mr. Seelig and Lord Spens said that the prosecution had made a good job of identifying the structure of that case.

Mr. John Marshall: Visitors to Westminster Hall are amazed at Warren Hastings' ability to survive a case which lasted seven years. Is there not a danger that modern cases go on too long and cover too wide an area? Is it not sometimes the judges who are overwhelmed by the evidence?

The Attorney-General: I am very sensitive to my hon. Friend's reference to Warren Hastings' because it was Edmund Burke, a kinsman of mine, who prosecuted him over that length of time. I agree with my hon. Friend that recent cases last far too long, and that a means must be found of securing quicker trials. In the County NatWest and Blue Arrow case, the time taken before the jury by the prosecution amounted to 27·5 per cent. of the total. At present, there is no means by which a judge can sufficiently control the length of time taken by a defendant, particularly—this was not the case with the County NatWest and Blue Arrow trial—one who is defending himself. We must find a quicker way of securing justice. That issue is not one on which the Government have made up their mind, and all suggestions will be sensibly considered.

Serious Fraud Office

30. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Attorney-General what is the current complement for the Serious Fraud Office; what is the number of staff in post; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The complement of the Serious Fraud Office is 129 permanent posts. All those posts are filled and, in addition, a number of temporary staff are employed to meet the varying demands of its case load.

Mr. Skinner: Are there any doctors among that complement? What is the source of the medical advice given in fraud trials? Why was Roger Seelig told by someone giving medical advice several months after his trial began that he was on the verge of a mental breakdown, yet last week he was roaring up the M4 in his Porsche to look after his two properties? Ernest Saunders was told that he should leave gaol after serving 10 months of a five-year sentence because he was a victim of senile dementia, yet now he is running his own business. I have a suggestion for the Attorney-General. He ought to swap the doctors that he has at the Serious Fraud Office for those who decide applications for disability allowance and attendance allowance. If he did that, some of our constituents might receive benefits, and the people involved in crime might get sent down for longer periods.

The Attorney-General: There is no space in the Serious Fraud Office complement for a doctor. The hon. Gentleman should bear in mind that each of the two cases to which he has referred was decided by the trial judge on the basis of medical evidence, including independent medical evidence.

The hon. Gentleman knows that I am in no position to comment on the decision of any judge. Let me say this, however. Mr. Justice Henry is no respecter of persons, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman has not become such a respecter of persons that he supposes that those two people were dealt with out of any consideration for who or what they were.

Law Reform

32. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the chairman of the Law Commission to discuss the Commission's programme for law reform.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): The Lord Chancellor has regular contact with the commission about all aspects of its work.

Mr. Fraser: How does the Lord Chancellor explain to the chairman of the Law Commission the Government's appalling record on matters of law reform? Since 1984, 22 Bills have not been acted on. What does that do for the morale of the Law Commission? Why do the Government not act on the huge injustices currently affecting business people, such as original lessee liability? Why have they such an appalling record when ready-made Bills are presented to them by the Law Commission?

The Solicitor-General: There are two answers to that question. First, the hon. Gentleman should not underestimate the immense force of major legislation presented by the Lord Chancellor in the past three or four years—not least the Children Act 1989, which has entirely restructured the law on children and paved the way for the family court, and the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990, one of the most important pieces of legislation in this field to appear for decades.

The House of Commons will need—and the other place will wish—to examine the recommendations of Lord Jellicoe for new procedures to bring such comparatively uncontroversial measures before both Houses more swiftly.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

CIS (Aid)

38. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the latest figures for aid and other financial support for the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): Britain has pledged more than £80 million in bilateral aid to the former Soviet Union and is contributing through the EC budget about 18 per cent. of Community technical assistance and food aid which totals £595 million. The Community has also agreed a programme of food credits worth £1,225 billion.

Mr. Bowis: With other hon. Members, I recently visited Russia and the Ukraine. Does my right hon. Friend accept that we returned with an impression of economic chaos —and the impression that, although aid from this country and others is welcomed, it is feared that too much is being siphoned off on to the black market? Above all, the need is for the west to encourage economic development trade with export credits and, indeed, joint ventures such as the one that we saw with one firm—Tambrands—in Kiev.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. If the former Soviet Union and all the republics are ever to put the situation right, the most urgent job is to bring about economic reform. That is why we have ensured, through our know-how funds and all the other means at our disposal, that we are providing economic advice and sound advice for training members of the former republics to get on with the job of economic reform.

I note what the hon. Gentleman said about the siphoning off of food aid. I have said from the beginning that we and other donors, including the European Community, must have arrangements to guard against misappropriation. That is why, to date, food has been available through only a limited number of channels. I have pressed the EC, however, and we have now secured agreement that it will expand the number of outlets in Moscow and St. Petersburg from the 60 shops that were operational in January and February to 150. Later this week, further missions will be sent from the EC and from this country to ensure that food is getting through.

It is interesting to note that other countries are now copying our know-how funds because they have been of such help to the former Soviet Union and other eastern European countries.

Mr. Winnick: I was on the same delegation to Russia and the Ukraine. Would it not be very short sighted of the western democracies—not simply Britain—to allow the countries which now make up the Commonwealth of Independent States to drift into such a state of anarchy that a dictatorship could well return? Given the 74 years of Communist dictatorship and the long period of Tsarist dictatorship before that, is it not essential to provide aid and assistance so that at long last Russia and the countries associated with the former Soviet Union can become stable democracies?

Mrs. Chalker: I agree very much with what the hon. Gentleman says. That is why Britain was the first country to give £20 million worth of feed grain. Medical supplies are going in from this country not only to help Moscow and St. Petersburg, but to go as far as Ekaterinburg, Tymen, Novokuznetsk, the Kiev oblast, the Donetsk oblast, and further afield. We have help going in alongside the United States and German Project Hope airlift, and we have £50 million for the know-how fund. Everywhere we go, we have been told that the British help is extremely well appreciated. We are considering what more we can do and it is up to some other donors to do likewise.

Mr. Soames: I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on her excellent work in co-ordinating the aid, but does she agree that the words of the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) are correct? We need a kind of Marshall plan which will bring to those poor suffering countries aid such as was brought to continental Europe when it lay prostrate at the end of the second world war. Is it not time that we tried to co-ordinate an effort on that basis to enable the Soviet Union to pick itself up and start taking a proper role in the world economy?

Mrs. Chalker: The size of the problem is comparable, but I do not believe that the post-war reconstruction programme in Europe is a good model for what is required in the Commonwealth of Independent States. More than anything else, the CIS needs economic and agricultural reform. The responsibility for that lies not with the west, but with the CIS itself. Through our International Monetary Fund membership, we have pushed forward the idea that the CIS countries should come under the IMF. In Moscow tomorrow we shall discuss with the Russian authorities the way forward on a number of difficult economic questions.

Mrs. Clwyd: I listened to the Minister's words with interest. Is she aware that when my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and I visited Moscow last week and questioned Russian officials about food aid, we found stacked away in a third-floor warehouse what we were told was the whole British contribution of beef to Moscow, which had been there for a month? We were told that the reason for that outrageous situation was that, unlike the meat from all the other EC countries, our consignment was not colour coded. The labels were in English and no one could read them. Downstairs in the warehouse, French pork was being offloaded from vehicles and immediately reloaded for distribution in Moscow shops.

When we asked Russian officials whether the beef was having any impact on meat prices in Russia, we were told that it was not. As the Minister said, there are too few outlets, which she intends to do something about. There is also a shortage of EC monitors. Does the Minister intend to increase the number of monitors? Are we not faced with the same old story of a badly managed project with inadequate monitoring—in other words, Government incompetence?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Lady could not be more wrong. Of course I am aware of what she found in Moscow. The beef that went to Murmansk was used immediately, and the beef that has gone to St. Petersburg has been used. [HON. MEMBERS: "Moscow."] I know that there has been a problem with beef in Moscow. I also know that the EC arrangements for labelling were not adequate. That is why the goods for which we are responsible are being labelled in Russian when they go to the former Soviet Union. We have asked the Commission for greater consistency in labelling and colour coding for the beef, and we have told Moscow that it is vital that the meat is released on to the market straight away. The problem is not the incompetence of this country. The EC simply had not got matters organised. The way in which we put our food over there actually got it to the places for which it was intended.

Refugees

39. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place with the United Nations High Commission on Refugees over the last month.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs called on Mrs. Ogata in Geneva on 29 January. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State also had discussions with Mrs. Ogata on 7 February. My officials are in regular contact with UNHCR and I shall welcome Mrs. Ogata to London again in a fortnight's time.

Mr. Wareing: When the discussions took place with the UNHCR, did the problem of the Kurds come up? On 25 June last year the Prime Minister said:

"We have now met most of the humanitarian needs of the Kurds in Iraq."—[*Official Report*, 25 June 1991; Vol. 193, c. 856.]

Is the Minister satisfied that those humanitarian needs have been met and are being met, or that they can be met so long as there is a risk to the Kurdish population from the evil dictator in Baghdad? What do the British Government intend to do to ensure that the Prime Minister's promise of last June is upheld?

Mrs. Chalker: When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister spoke in June last year, the UNHCR was well on the way to meeting the humanitarian needs of the Kurdish people. Since then, and particularly in the past three months, the economic blockade of northern Iraq by Saddam Hussein has prevented the UNHCR from doing as much as it would like to do. We have made sure that we get on with as much as we can get through in our help for Iraq through UNHCR, but there is one man—and one man only—who stands in the dock for the denial of resources to the northern Iraqi people, and that is Saddam Hussein. Until United Nations Security Council resolutions 706 and 712 are implemented, we cannot relieve the plight of all those people.

Sir Philip Goodhart: As the contribution of Britain to the UNHCR is very much greater than that of France or Germany, will my right hon. Friend encourage our European partners to increase their support for the vital work of refugee relief?

Mrs. Chalker: Indeed, our contribution to the UNHCR this financial year totals some £40 million. I have asked that the United Nations hold a conference this month to ensure that the UNHCR's vital work continues not only in Iraq but in helping all the people who so desperately need our assistance.

Points of Order

3.32 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you had any request from the Secretary of State for Health to make a statement? I raise this matter because it has been reported that four patients under the care of the hospital trust of Guy's and Lewisham have died because there was no money to pay for their continued heart surgery. That has been confirmed by Dr. Graham Jackson, a consultant at Guy's, who is a member of the Conservative party. We have just rightly dealt——

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Winnick: The point of order is that it is an urgent matter that four people have apparently died as a result of the failure of the reorganisation of the health service. As a matter of urgency, I am asking you whether the Secretary of State for Health can be brought to the House to make a statement by 7 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member knows that that was a good try but that it is not a matter for me.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will know that, at last Thursday's business questions, I asked the Leader of the House to ask the Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for Scotland to make a statement about the changes that they propose to make to renovate and improve the A1. This morning, a press conference was held in Edinburgh. *[Interruption.]* My point of order is this. When the Government are in control of a press conference, they can leak in advance the contents of such a statement, whereas, if they were brought to the House to make a statement, it would be a contempt to do so. Have you no control as Speaker to lay down some guidelines for any predecessor to control such occurrences in future?

Mr. Speaker: Well—*[Interruption.]* I know that the hon. Gentleman meant "successors". I have had no request for such a statement. I heard what was said at business questions, but, of course, if we had to have a statement on absolutely everything that happened to every road in the country, we would not get very far down the Order Paper.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Did you see the sad story this weekend about an eight-week-old child who was refused admission to the Royal Bristol hospital for sick children because the surgeon insisted on a promise that funding would be available before he treated that baby? Subsequently, the baby died. Is it not absolutely right that we should discuss such cases in the House, and that the Secretary of State should make a statement by 7 o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: I am afraid that I did not see that report, because I paid a happy visit to the Principality of Wales and therefore did not have the opportunity to see the newspapers. That is the sort of subject that could well be raised on the Adjournment.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday you were in the Chair when the Minister of Agriculture made a statement on decommissioning. Do you intend to make a statement about what happened, in the light of the precedent that appeared to be set, whereby on one day a written answer is given in *Hansard,* which no one sees, and the next day you feel obliged to allow a private notice question? If you were not to make a statement deprecating that as a procedure, surely it has major implications for the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker: I think that the hon. Member knows that the Speaker is specifically enjoined never to give any reasons for his decisions. I granted that private notice question on Friday, and I was present for the proceedings.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I went for a ball of chalk down the Mile End road this morning in my new whistle and saw a poster being put up which said that when Labour is elected it will deliver a "double-whammy". You ruled out Cockney rhyming slang earlier in our proceedings. First, do you know what a double-whammy is, and secondly will you make it clear that, if Cockney rhyming slang is banned in the House, Americanisms that have been imported for use during the election will also be banned?

Mr. Speaker: I am not an expert in rhyming slang and I have no idea what a "wham" is. Certainly, if it is in the Old Kent road or wherever, it is not raised in this Chamber.

BILLS PRESENTED

FIREARMS (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2)

Mr. Michael Shersby, supported by Sir Bernard Braine, Sir Teddy Taylor, Mr. Neville Trotter, Mr. Ken Maginnis, Dr. John Blackburn and Sir Anthony Durant, presented a Bill to amend the Firearms Act 1982 so as to apply certain provisions of the Firearms Act 1968 to imitation firearms which are capable of firing blank ammunition; to make provision for the issuing of permits for such weapons; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 6 March and to be printed. [Bill 99.]

NEWSPRINT RECYCLING

Mr. Harry Cohen presented a Bill to provide for a minimum content of recycled paper in newsprint produced in or imported into the United Kingdom; to impose a duty on the publishers of newspapers to use newsprint with a minimum content of recycled paper; to empower the Secretary of State to provide financial assistance for the recycling of newsprint; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday next and to be printed. [Bill 100.]

Statutory Instruments &c.

Mr. Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the two Questions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

FINANCIAL SERVICES

That the Financial Services Act 1986 (Extension of Scope of Act) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 273) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Financial Services Act 1986 (Investment Advertisements) (Exemption) (No. 2) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

Asylum and Immigration

Mr. Speaker: Before I call upon the Home Secretary to move the motion, I must tell the House that I have not selected either of the amendments on the Order Paper. However, the arguments which are advanced in them may be canvassed during the debate.

3.38 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8810/91, relating to the right of asylum and 8811/91, relating to immigration and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Home Office on 27th February 1992; endorses the Government's view that harmonisation of substantive immigration and asylum policies among the Member States of the European Community should be taken forward inter-governmentally outside the Treaty of Rome; and welcomes the wide recognition of this principle at Maastricht.

I welcome the opportunity that this debate provides to discuss immigration and asylum issues within the Community and to explain the objectives that the Government are pursuing in this area.

It is right that Europe should be concerned—and collectively concerned—about increasing immigration pressures, which almost every member of the Community faces, and that collectively we should look for common solutions in Europe.

We only have to look at the problems which we and our European partners are facing with asylum to see the scale of those pressures. The number applying for asylum in Europe rose from 64,000 in 1983 to half a million last year. In the United Kingdom, it has increased tenfold in the past three years, to 45,000 principal applications last year. Well over 90 per cent. of those are people already within the borders of Europe when they apply for asylum. Many have arrived illegally. Fewer than a fifth are found to be genuine refugees. In Germany—with its large number of eastern European applicants—the proportion is as low as 3 per cent.

This is a European problem. Germany last year had 250,000 applications for asylum; France, 46,000; and Italy, 30,000. The uncontrolled mass movement of people is one of the biggest problems facing the world today. All hon. Members will be aware of the political consequences in Europe. In Germany, we have seen attacks on asylum seekers and the rise of the extreme right. In France, again, there has been unrest in many major cities and an undoubted surge in support for the National Front. In Austria, a party won nearly 25 per cent. of the vote on the slogan, "Vienna for the Viennese". In Belgium, a similar movement, gaining similar support, has emerged in Flanders. All these movements thrive upon the racism and nationalism aroused by large numbers of asylum seekers.

I am absolutely determined that we should not give any encouragement to the rise of the extreme right in Britain. This is fertile ground for its extreme racialist policies. To remove the circumstances in which it could flourish, action has to be taken to deal with the problem. We have to show that we are dealing urgently, energetically and firmly with the manifest abuse of our system. We have therefore taken the following action.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Clearly, the Home Secretary would not want fascists, whether in this country or the rest of Europe, to dictate our actions in this

[Mr. Tony Banks]

House. If we are talking about removing the reason why asylum seekers come to the west, surely we should not put restrictions on them, but should do something about the economic circumstances of their countries, so that they have no wish to come to the west. Is not that the way of dealing with the problem?

Mr. Baker: A large part of our aid programme is directed towards doing that, but one must be realistic. The difference in the economic performance between much of the third world and Europe is large, and the gap is likely to remain large for many years to come. Europe will continue to be a magnet for many people from the third world. I entirely take the hon. Gentleman's point that it is part and parcel of our policy to increase our aid to the most under-privileged and poorest parts of the world to ensure that people stay there and resolve their economic problems. Nevertheless, it is also necessary for us to take action in this country.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): My right hon. Friend mentioned aid and assistance. Could he and Her Majesty's Government recognise that local authorities, such as mine and those of my hon. Friends the Members for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) and for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) face particular problems, as Hillingdon borough contains Heathrow airport, the biggest port of entry into the United Kingdom, and many scores of refugee children are literally dumped there? We require national assistance to finance looking after them.

Mr. Baker: I am glad to say that the numbers of unaccompanied children have fallen substantially. My hon. Friend will recall that the Asylum Bill makes specific provision on housing to help local authorities that face inordinate pressure—I accept that they do face inordinate pressure—as a result of the influx of refugees.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): My right hon. Friend talks about housing. Is he aware that the problem is one of child care? Is he aware that the cost to the local authority, which is running at about £1 million a year in Hillingdon, is for specialised child care on a one-to-one basis? It is not so much a question of housing as of providing foster children parents and child care.

Mr. Baker: The matter was debated at length both on Second Reading and in Committee on the Asylum Bill. We are aware of the problem. Some assistance is available to local authorities. I am glad to tell the House that the number of unaccompanied children, which was extremely high in 1990, has dropped.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I want to press the Home Secretary on resources. He said that he was aware of the problem and wanted to provide assistance. It is now clear that some provisions of the Bill, by driving local authorities to use bed-and-breakfast accommodation rather than to provide housing, will turn out to be more expensive for local authorities. Does he intend to make a recommendation that overcomes the mistake that appears in the Bill on that point?

Mr. Baker: No, I do not intend to change the Bill in that regard. The Bill will restrain the number of people who come to this country as asylum seekers. That must be the main thrust of the Government's policy and of any party's policy. The constant pressure of numbers coming in all the time must be addressed.

The Government have brought in a policy that consists of five different strands. First, the number of staff in the asylum determination division in Croydon has been increased, and we now have nearly 400 more than a year ago to cope with the increased numbers. Secondly, we have sent document specialists out to airports around the world to train airport staff and immigration staff to try to ensure that people without the proper documentation are prevented from getting on planes. Thirdly, over the next few years, we will increase the number of detention places in the United Kingdom at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted from 226 by 290. Fourthly, we have increased the enforcement staff of the immigration service to deal with those who are returned to their own countries.

Fifthly, we have introduced the Asylum Bill, the main principles of which are well known to the House, so I will not re-argue them today. The Bill will streamline the handling of claims to a period of 12 weeks instead of two to three years, and provide additional appeal rights as a safeguard. It will also introduce a power to fingerprint asylum seekers, which is a power that most of our European partners already have. That is an essential check to deal with fraudulent multiple applications. The Asylum Bill has a crucial part to play.

The Bill is now before the House of Lords and the Government are committed to seeing it become law. Its provisions are urgently needed, so that asylum does not become a back door to immigration. They are needed to protect the genuine refugee. Not least, they are needed to ensure that we do not face the wave of anti-refugee and anti-immigrant feeling which has swept across Europe over the last few years.

Misuse of asylum must not be allowed to overturn two decades of progress in achieving harmonious race relations in this country—something of which all parties can be proud. If the Asylum Bill does not become law in this Parliament, the Government will reintroduce it as soon as possible in the next Parliament.

The problem of multiple applications for asylum and for social security has now reached quite unacceptable levels. Only last week, an asylum seeker was sentenced to four years' imprisonment for having made 40 applications for social security benefit as an asylum seeker. That is not an isolated case. There have been other convictions, and a number of cases are awaiting trial. Last week, nine people were arrested in connection with similar frauds. Many more cases are suspected.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The Home Secretary is repeating a litany of complaints about a minority of asylum seekers and the allegations made against them. Instead of that, would he turn his attention to the plight of people who have come here, are divided from their families and unable to achieve family reunion, such as the Kurdish people who came from Turkey two years ago? Will he adopt a more humane and sympathetic approach towards asylum seekers rather than searching for every opportunity he can to criticise them for being victims of the most appalling aggression in their countries in the first place?

Mr. Baker: Until the status of a refugee applicant is determined and he is accepted as a refugee, that person does not have the right to family reunion. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will support our efforts, as we are increasing the number of staff and changing the procedures so that the process of determination can be speeded up. That is the most important thing that we can do. If, as a result of the Asylum Bill, we can determine cases within 12 weeks, that will be an enormous improvement on the two to three years during which such cases can drag out.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): We are talking about relatively small points. If it is held by the European Court of Justice that control of immigration is a matter for the European Community, none of those points will be of any significance. Will my right hon. Friend please deal with the central point: what is the Government's argument as to the status of this policy? If it be that the European Court of Justice rules against us, what will the Government's attitude be to that interference in our domestic affairs?

Mr. Baker: I ask my hon. Friend to bide his time for a moment, because I shall deal with those precise points in the course of my speech. I am dealing first with the issue of asylum, and I shall come on——

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Will my right hon. Friend tell us when he comes to it?

Mr. Baker: I shall signal it in such a way that it is quite clear to my hon. Friends that I have reached that exact point in my speech.

I was considering the abuse of multiple applications. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South-West (Mr. Budgen) should appreciate that that is not a minor matter but one involving considerable fraud. Since November, all those who applied for asylum by post to Croydon have been asked to attend an interview. So far, out of 4,628 who have been called to initial interview, 3,807 have failed to turn up—that is 82 per cent.

The measures that we are taking will have a major effect on reducing the type of fraud that has come to be associated with asylum seeking. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security shares my concerns on that issue. In line with his long established policy to deter fraudulent claims, he will shortly introduce a change in the method of income support to asylum seekers. Their order books will be restricted to six weeks instead of six months, and will be encashable at one nominated post office only. For the bona fide asylum seeker, that will not be a hardship, but it will act as a deterrent for those intent on fraud. I welcome my right hon. Friend's proposals.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): My right hon. Friend mentioned those who fail to turn up. He may have noticed that Liberal Democrat Members have failed to turn up to listen to this debate. He will recall that a majority of them voted against the Second Reading of the Asylum Bill. Is he not distressed to see that those who have an open-door policy on this issue and oppose the Government's policy are not even here to listen to the debate?

Mr. Baker: Yes, their absence indicates an absence of policy on this matter. They certainly have an open-door policy on the issue.

Before I go any further, it may help the House if I explain briefly the status of the Commission communications on immigration and asylum, which the Scrutiny Committee has recommended for debate and to which the Motion refers. They are communications to the Council and the European Parliament. They are not proposals for Community action as such: nor are they likely to be the subject of specific decisions in the Community law framework. They were prepared as discussion papers for use in the preparations for the Maastricht summit.

The Luxembourg European Council in June 1991 decided to seek greater harmonisation of member states' immigration and asylum policies. Since then, there have been two further major developments.

First, the Immigration Ministers' meeting in the Hague in December 1991 agreed on a work programme for discussing, and, where appropriate, harmonising, immigration and asylum policies. That work programme, which was approved by the Maastricht European Council, sets the agenda for work on those issues in the period ahead —including the United Kingdom's presidency of the Community in the second half of 1992.

Secondly, the treaty on European union, agreed at Maastricht in December in December and signed on 7 February, sets a framework for consideration by the member states of immigration and asylum issues, along with other "Interior and Justice" issues.

During the Maastricht negotiations, a number of our partners pressed hard for immigration and asylum matters to be taken into Community competence under the treaty of Rome. That would have made them subject to Community legislation and to the jurisdiction of the European Court. We were not prepared to agree to that. We took the view that policies that determine whether non-EC nationals are to be allowed to live and work in a member state are matters of considerable domestic sensitivity and essential national importance, on which each member state has its own traditions and constitutional framework.

In the event, as the House will know, only two immigration matters will be taken into Community competence: first, a substantive one—the common visa list —which is the agreement on the countries whose nationals would require visas for entry to the Community: and secondly, the more technical question of the format of a common visa. All other aspects of immigration and asylum policy will fall within the procedure for intergovernmental co-operation under the interior and justice chapter of the new treaty.

We have agreed with our European partners that no other matters relating to immigration and asylum will be transferred to Community competence unless two things happen—that constitutes a double lock: first, a unanimous decision in the Council of Ministers—which means that the British Government can veto any proposal; secondly, the approval of each of the national Parliaments. We have agreed to consider at the end of 1993 whether asylum policy should be so transferred. If a transfer were to be proposed, it would be subject to that double lock.

Dr. Norman A. Godman: (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The Secretary of State has just used the term "non-European Community national". Will he confirm that the immigrant worker long domiciled in, say, France, or the gastarbeiter equally long domiciled in Germany, is defined as a non-European Community national? Most of

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

the racist attacks that have taken place in those two countries have been focused on those people. Are they to be denied the status of free movement throughout the European Community that, I understand, is to be given to the nationals of the countries of the European Free Trade Association in relation to the European economic area?

Mr. Baker: I am coming directly to that point, and I think that what I have to say will answer the hon. Gentleman's question relating to the movement of non-EC nationals across frontiers.

I was emphasising to the House the existence of the double lock for the transfer of asylum and immigration matters into the competence of the Community. In that respect, as in others, the outcome of the Maastricht summit represents a highly satisfactory outcome for this country.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am grateful to the Home Secretary for giving way; I think it may be better to clear up a jurisdiction matter now. He may know that the Under-Secretary has written a helpful memorandum dated 27 February on the arrangements for the movement of EEC nationals within the single market from January 1993, particularly the arrangements under article 8A, soon to be 7A, which require the absence of frontiers.

Paragraph 10 of the memorandum states that the Government

"does not regard this step"—

a single market—

"as being required for the completion of the Single European Market and does not propose that the United Kingdom should adopt such a course"—

that course being free movement through an airport without any examination. That is undoubtedly the Government's view, but is it the view of the Commission and the European Court?

Mr. Baker: I am coming to that point, which has already been raised.

I want to emphasise the legal position on jurisdiction, but first I wish to stress that the way forward in such matters—which will be the case as a result of Maastricht —is through intergovernmental co-operation. Such co-operation gives us considerable protection.

An ad hoc group of Immigration Ministers and officials has been working on the issue since 1986. Its most important product so far has been the draft external frontiers convention. That is a major piece of work that sets common standards for controls at the Community's external frontiers and for visas for short stays. It also provides for the sharing of information about serious and repeated immigration offenders. It affords the prospect of improved collective defences against illegal entry into the European Community. We shall press vigorously on our partners the importance of strengthening the Community's external frontiers.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): On the issue of short-stay visas, is it not true that this country has retained visas for Poland, but got rid of them for Czechoslovakia and Hungary, while Germany and France have abolished visas for Poland? It does not seem as though the policies are co-ordinated.

Mr. Baker: I have answered several letters and questions on the matter. Speaking from memory, I think that last year there were about 4,400 rejections of visa applications—[HON. MEMBERS: "Two thousand."] The point that I wished to make was that there were several thousand rejections, whereas the number on visa applications from Hungary and Czechoslovakia is about 20 per country. Therefore, for that reason we think that the visa control should stay for the time being.

Mr. Budgen: Is not the problem of nationality the fact that some countries, particularly France, had a system of dealing with former colonial territories by making them, in law, a part of metropolitan France? Therefore, the talk about external barriers does not assist us, as many of the people who come from, for example, North Africa are French citizens and, under EC legislation, may have to be dealt with on the same basis as people born and brought up in Paris.

Mr. Baker: The French nationality laws are much more complicated than that. Not all the people who come from the Maghreb and north African countries are entitled to French nationality and citizenship——

Mr. Budgen: But some are.

Mr. Baker: That is true. Those who come to France d'outre mer enjoy another status, and that is one of the problems in Europe. There is a great variety of nationality systems entitling people to citizenship. I have repeatedly told my counterparts in Europe—the Ministers of the Interior—over the past 18 months that, as a result of the problems that we have faced since the 1950s with immigration from the old Commonwealth, we have developed a series of controls and arrangements for determining nationality; they are sophisticated and complicated and, on the whole, effective—very much more effective than those in many other countries in Europe.

The amount of competence is limited. There is a double lock before other matters may move into competence, and the way forward is through intergovernmental co-operation. I have already cited the external frontiers convention. Another example is the Dublin convention, another valuable product of this process. It deals with the problem of so-called asylum shopping by setting out rules to determine which member state is to take responsibility for a given application. We plan to ratify it in the course of this year.

With this work programme agreed at Maastricht, we are moving into a new phase.

Sir Teddy Taylor: While my right hon. Friend is expressing these splendid sentiments—we know that he is fighting hard for Britain—would he think it fair to say that his interpretation of the double-lock mechanism from Maastricht means that article 8A does not apply to non-Community nationals who have entered legally? Would it not be fair to point out that that interpretation is energetically disputed by the Commission, particularly by Mr. Bangemann? Will he say before he sits down what the British Government intend to do if by chance the Commission wins the case and we are instructed that these reservations have been overtaken by the views of the Commission? This is desperately important for Britain.

Mr. Baker: The answer is in the part of my speech that I am trying to get to. I am on the threshold of it now.

As I said, work under intergovernmental co-operation is moving into a new phase. The immigration work programme is a comprehensive document covering virtually the whole range of immigration policy, from measures to counter illegal immigration to providing help to countries of origin—the point raised by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks)—and, an important issue for our ethnic minority communities, the enhancement of the position of third-country nationals with long-term residence. Probably the largest and most immediate task to which we have committed ourselves is the harmonisation of policies towards people seeking admission for stays longer than short visits. This work, together with the work programme on asylum, will be a major challenge for the United Kingdom presidency.

Bearing in mind this country's long experience of operating an effective control and the Government's firm but fair immigration policies, I believe that the United Kingdom has an important contribution to make to this work. In any process of harmonisation, there has to be an element of give and take, but I have no intention that we should agree to measures that would represent a significant loss in our present strict controls on immigration for settlement.

Finally, I should like to restate the Government's position on frontier controls. The communications that we are discussing are concerned with policies on immigration and asylum. Checks at frontiers bear on those policies, of course, and I think it important to set out the Government's view on them, particularly in the light of recent reported comments by the Commission.

We are well aware of the view that article 8A of the treaty of Rome requires member states to discontinue all controls at internal frontiers from 1 January 1993. We have repeatedly made it clear that that is not our view. We do not regard the abolition of all immigration controls at internal frontiers after 1992 as required for the completion of the single European market, and we do not propose that the United Kingdom adopt such a course. The Government have consistently said that immigration controls, for an island nation such as the United Kingdom, are most effectively operated at the point of entry, and we intend to continue to apply controls to all arriving non-EC nationals, including those arriving from other member states.

We do not seek to exercise substantive controls in respect of entry to the United Kingdom of EC nationals. They are asked to produce a passport or an identity card to show that they are EC nationals as they go through the EC channel.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that frontier controls are not very effective? We require a smart identity card that can be machine-read and is common throughout Europe. That would be the most effective control possible and would be far more effective than frontier controls.

Mr. Baker: I do not agree with my hon. Friend. Our examination of the effectiveness of controls clearly leads us to the conclusion that the most effective way is to apply controls at the internal frontiers of the United Kingdom, at our ports and airports.

I have been asked to speculate about what would happen if there were changes and whether there are alternatives to internal controls. There are five. First, legislation would be needed to impose heavy fines on employers who employ immigrants without permission. Secondly, there would be more systematic checks on such companies and more unannounced visits. Thirdly, there would be a more systematic check before granting access to social security and state benefits. The fourth alternative is identity cards, and the fifth is random checks on people who are already in the country.

Other countries apply some or all of those controls, but they have not proved very effective in checking illegal immigration. For example, the United States has checks on employment and heavy penalties for companies that employ illegal immigrants, but those controls have not stemmed the flow of illegal immigrants who come from Mexico every night.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) asked about identity cards, and I know that he has pursued that topic in the Select Committee. Various countries have identity cards, but they are not generally used systematically to identify a person's national status. An identity card system would have to be universal and as forgery-proof as possible. There would have to be a careful definition of the identity card's function to establish the immigration status of the cardholder. Any system would have to set out clearly the occasions on which people could be asked to produce an identity card.

From what I have said, it is clear that any alternatives to internal frontier controls would be expensive and cumbersome to operate, and would certainly be a major departure from the way in which we have traditionally operated in this country.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The right hon. Gentleman has said that he accepts that it is essential to maintain British frontier controls on those who seek to enter the United Kingdom from third countries and those who are not EC citizens. Does not the need to maintain sensible control also apply to EC residents and members as well? Are we simply saying that we are maintaining frontier controls for people who come from countries outside Europe, and that we have opened our frontier to 300 million Europeans without any check or control upon them?

Mr. Baker: That is the very issue that I am addressing. Perhaps I could return to the argument that I was advancing before my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth asked about identity cards.

I was emphasising that we do not seek to exercise substantive controls in respect of entry to the United Kingdom of EC nationals. They are asked to produce a passport or identity card to show that they are EC nationals. If there were no identity check at the EC Channel, it would be tempting for illegal immigrants to enter the United Kingdom in that way.

Even as it is, we detect a large number of forged documents. In the last quarter of 1991, of 934 forged documents detected by the immigration service, nearly a third were forgeries of EC documents. Most of these were being used by passengers in the EC channel. If they had not been required actually to show some means of identification, we certainly would not have been able to pick up those forgeries.

In signing and ratifying the Single European Act, which inserted article 8A into the treaty of Rome, the United

[Mr. Baker]

Kingdom Government had no intention of abandoning immigration control on third-country nationals arriving in the United Kingdom, including those arriving from other member states. In terms of the legal interpretation of article 8A, the Government rely on the final words of the article—

> "In accordance with the provisions of this Treaty"—

taken together with the general declaration on articles 13 to 19 of the Single European Act, which provides:

> "Nothing in these provisions shall affect the right of member states to take such measures as they consider necessary for the purpose of controlling immigration from third countries".

Our island geography enables us to place the main weight of our immigration control at the ports of entry. For us, this is by far the most effective way of doing it. It also means that we can avoid the need for intrusive forms of in-country controls—a subject on which I have just touched—such as sanctions on employers who employ illegal immigrants or identity cards or random police checks, which other countries without an effective means of controlling their borders find necessary.

When more and more people are wanting to move around the world, not just as visitors intending to return to their own countries but also with the intention of moving to, and staying permanently in, another country, we must not weaken our controls.

Mr. Wilkinson Is there not a specific and immediate problem, and one that my right hon. Friend appears to have overlooked? It is that, in the present security emergency, there is a need for identity cards for British nationals, and for passports for those coming from the Irish Republic, because, with the free travel area that we have with the Republic of Ireland, people can come from there without the strict control that is so necessary.

Mr. Baker: Only a week ago, we debated the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989, which allows checks on travellers between the Republic of Ireland and our country. That is a separate matter.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Before he leaves this point, will my right hon. Friend return to the subject of Mr. Bangemann? I am sure that the House will warmly endorse the robust sentiments that my right hon. Friend has expressed about the need not to weaken the immigration checks or controls, but Mr. Bangemann has thrown down a gauntlet. He has said:

> "We will fight like lions against anyone violating these rules"—

he means his rules—and continues:

> "I will encourage EEC citizens to sue for damages against Governments which do not lift controls."

There is clearly a clash here. Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that he has taken legal advice, and that he thinks that he will win any case fought in front of the European Court, and that he will continue this robust and admirable stance?

Mr. Baker: The rules are not Mr. Bangemann's rules. What he has said is his view of the interpretation of the rules. What I have expressed today is the collective and considered view of the Government on these matters. At the moment that interpretation is not being challenged. If it is, we shall defend our interpretation robustly.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Is it part of the legal advice that the Government have received on this matter that our case could be weakened if it were shown that we had a less effective or less strict form of control on the frontier with the Irish Republic than we operate on other internal frontiers with Community members?

Mr. Baker: No. The methods of control on movements between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom are determined by the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. That is a separate consideration, and does not bear upon it.

Mr. Hattersley: I am very much on the Home Secretary's side in terms of competence and what the EC is entitled to do and not entitled to do. However, I hope that he will not overstate his case. Movement between the Irish Republic and Great Britain is determined not by the Act but by such factors as the treaties governing the Community and by the Government of Ireland Act 1920. The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act is only—how can I put it?—the icing on the cake.

Mr. Baker: Although there is an area of free movement, checks can be operated on certain travellers, and that is the important point. I am glad that we shall get some support from the Labour party, and I hope that we shall also have support in our interpretation of article 8A and its application to the movement across frontiers.

The House recognises that Europe is a magnet for the rest of the world, because of our living standards, our welfare system, our free speech, our access to justice, our open and democratic way of doing things. The living standards of Europe are infinitely higher than those of most of the rest of the world, and, to be realistic, are likely to remain so for a very, very long time to come. This inevitably makes Europe an immensely attractive place to live in.

Europe cannot be open house to the world. There are already millions of irregular immigrants in Europe. It is essential that all these problems are addressed and are dealt with. Otherwise, there will be all the political and social difficulties which we now see in some countries in Europe. At this moment of great uncertainty, I am sure that it is right that we should not weaken any of our existing controls. Indeed, we should strengthen them, as we are doing. If we did not do this, we would be betraying the basic interests of our country.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Many right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate in the debate, and if there are major interruptions during the speech of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), it will be difficult to call them all.

4.15 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I wish to make it clear at the outset that it is my strongly held view that the two matters being discussed—the acceptance of asylum seekers into the United Kingdom and immigration policy in the United Kingdom—are essentially for the United Kingdom Government alone. In my view, they do not come within the competence of the European Community, and nor should they. The United Kingdom must exercise its own frontier controls and, as the Home Secretary said, they must include the right to check on the entry of European Community nationals. If we were not able to do that, we would be unable to exercise any meaningful control.

I shall go slightly further, and I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will deal with these matters when he replies. On many occasions I have expressed my concern in the House about what I can describe only as informal arrangements which amount to something very much like Community competence. I accept that, in the absence of a treaty obligation, such arrangements cannot be taken before a court and cannot be dictated by the Commission.

I fear, however, that, through the Trevi and Schengen agreements, there is a danger—the Home Secretary will be aware of it if he listens to me describing it—that Home Secretaries or ministers of the interior meet together in private, come to an agreement that they will impose their collective decisions on individual Parliaments and then use the majorities that they possess in those Parliaments to provide a pan-European solution to problems. As well as being opposed to any formal intervention or interference by the Community, we are opposed to the Schengen and Trevi technique of coming to an informal agreement that is then individually imposed.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): I am concerned inasmuch as the right hon. Gentleman accepts the sovereignty of the European court interpreting the competence of the Commission. We understand clearly from the Commissioner's own words that the matter will come before the European Court at some stage for a decision. I take it that the right hon. Gentleman, having accepted the sovereignty of the court, is able to recognise the possibility that the court will not accept his interpretation, or that of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, and the strong words that the House clearly accepts. What, then, is the policy? We have lost control over our borders, have we not?

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman is arguing—he is entitled so to do—the principles of membership of the European Community. When we accepted membership, with all that it implied, we also accepted jurisdiction on certain matters through the courts. The best advice available to the Opposition, like that available to the Government—this is one of the few things on which the Home Secretary and I will agree today—is that Community competence does not extend to these matters. I hope and believe that that is the position. I regard it as a necessary provision which enables us to maintain our own rights over our own border control, immigration policy and asylum policy.

Mr. Spearing: My right hon. Friend and the Home Secretary will appreciate that a point of major importance has been made. Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the interpretation of article 8A, as enunciated by the Home Secretary—when taken with the other articles with which he and, I believe, the majority of hon. Members concur—is not acceptable in any case which comes before the European Court of Justice, the logic of such a position, if it were arrived at, would be the introduction of checks and identity cards? That would be wholly alien to the population of this country. It is a practice that is found elsewhere, but it would not be acceptable here.

Mr. Hattersley: I am wholly opposed to identity cards for reasons that I shall not go into today. I rely on the situation that my hon. Friend has described not arising. I believe that the best advice available to both sides of the House is that the independence of our decisions on these matters can be preserved.

Of the two communications, the one which concerns the right of asylum obviously possesses the special importance of, even now, being examined in this House, and is even now the subject of decisions which I hope that we shall soon take as to how the asylum laws and regulations are to be updated and improved. It is to that directive that I wish to devote most of the time at my disposal today, pausing only to say that, as the Home Secretary tells us that revision of this matter is an urgent necessity—a term that he used three times—perhaps the Under-Secretary of State will tell us why the Bill, which has passed through this House, has been held up for so long before being debated in the other place.

Before talking about asylum, I wish to spend a moment on the other directive—the directive concerning immigration. I repeat again my strongly held view that immigration must be a matter for determination by individual member states. There cannot be a common Community immigration policy mandatory on all Community members. I have read what the Commission has to say on the subject of co-operation between Community members, and I understand that in some ways that is desirable.

I was particularly attracted by what the Select Committee said about one aspect of co-operation—the need for common policies throughout the Community on family reunion—but the most urgent reform needed in British immigration law does not so much concern common policies uniform throughout the Community on family reunion as regulations uniform to all British residents in respect of family reunion.

Mr. Ashby: Is the right hon. Gentleman in favour of relaxing our firm but fair rules on immigration? How would he relax them, and how many additional immigrants would he allow to enter the United Kingdom under such relaxed rules?

Mr. Hattersley: That shows every sign of being a carefully prepared question and it possesses all the subtlety of Conservative central office. If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me for a moment, he will find that I shall answer all those questions. I suspect that, when he was primed, he was told to intervene rather later in my speech. If he can abide in patience for a moment or two, he will hear exactly what I have to say on the subject.

I was referring to the necessity for a United Kingdom immigration policy and policies concerning family reunion which are uniform for all residents in and citizens of the United Kingdom. I will remind the House how the present situation works. The hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) clearly makes a study of such matters, and it will be of particular interest to Conservative Members who have always taken a robust view on the right of the British citizen in England as distinct from Community rights.

At present there are absurd anomalies which discriminate against British citizens. If an Englishman living in England marries a foreign national, his wife does not have the automatic and unqualified right to join him

[Mr. Hattersley]

in this country. If a German living in England or, for that matter, a Greek, Spaniard, Dane, Belgian or Dutchman, marries a foreign national, that citizen of the Community has the right for his wife automatically and without qualification to join him in this country. However, if a British citizen goes and lives in Germany, he possesses the right for his third-country nationality wife to join him in Germany. He possesses rights which he does not possess in his homeland—the land of his birth, the United Kingdom. That seems to be a simple absurdity.

Mr. Budgen: Why?

Mr. Hattersley: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman is surprised to hear that. An Englishman should possess the rights in England that a German possesses in England. It is preposterous to say that Germans can do things here which are denied to English citizens. If the hon. Gentleman wants to defend that proposition, I will give way.

Mr. Budgen: Undoubtedly the procedures are not common or particularly logical, but they arise from the circumstances of each nation state having to come to terms with the historical obligations that it has given to various citizens. It is better for a legislature to keep muddling along and doing the best that it can in the circumstances rather than having a thoroughly defective, if logical, overall solution.

Mr. Hattersley: The phrase "to keep muddling along" seems a good way of describing a system which allows European foreign nationals privileges that are not available to the British. I make no bones about the intention of the next Labour Government to end that kind of anomaly. In short, British citizens have fewer rights now in the United Kingdom than other Community nationals, and more rights in the Community than in the United Kingdom. That absurd anomaly will be rectified by the next Labour Government.

Sir Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): The right hon. Gentleman said that the right of foreigners to bring their non-national wives here derives from the fact that that is Community and not domestic law. It is not strictly the case that Community immigration law is concerned only with Community nationals. It extends in this case to their families. The right hon. Gentleman says firmly that if a Labour Government came to power, they would end that anomaly. I am not sure how, because it is hard to see how they could force other member states to change their policies.

Mr. Hattersley: The present law states that we can treat our own citizens as badly as we like, but we must treat Community citizens rather better. I believe that it is important to treat our own citizens as well as we treat Community citizens.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Is the right hon. Gentleman telling the House that a future Labour Government, if elected, would abolish the primary purpose rule? If so, they would take away the central plank of our immigration controls. What would the right hon. Gentleman wish to see put in its place?

Mr. Hattersley: A rule that would enable an immigration official to make an objective and clearly described judgment as to whether a marriage was genuine or bogus.

Sir John Wheeler: That is the primary purpose rule.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman shows that he does not understand how the rule works. It requires an immigration officer to read the mind of an applicant. I am opposed to laws which require officials to read the minds of British citizens. There should be clearly determined rules to show whether a marriage is bogus or genuine according to accepted criteria. We shall, of course, keep parties to bogus marriages out of this country—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."]—and rather more calmly than the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), by applying objective rules rather than by allowing officials to pretend to be able to read applicants' minds.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The right hon. Gentleman is making an important statement. He owes it to the House and to the country to explain the magic of the objective rules that he mentions. What objective rules could determine whether or not a marriage is genuine? I have seen how our entry clearance officers deal with such matters at their posts overseas. They take difficult decisions with great care. If the right hon. Gentleman has some magic objective rules, let us hear about them. The clear advice that I received was that if the rules or procedures are varied there would be a substantial inflow of fiancées into this country.

Mr. Hattersley: That is not happening in other countries. I will give the right hon. Gentleman an example of a rule change that I regard as absolutely essential. The Kumar judgment says that a man can be refused entry to this country because the immigration authorities doubt the genuineness of his marriage. The courts ruled that if a man showed continued devotion over a period of years, that ought to be taken as evidence that his was a genuine marriage. Cases are being taken to court time and again. The courts are accepting the previous ruling of the High Court and the Lords of Appeal—against the will, objections, and postponements of the Home Office. That is the kind of change that must be made.

Asylum is the central issue. As the Home Secretary knows, the next Labour Government will operate an asylum policy which will draw a sharp distinction between bogus and genuine asylum seekers. It will ensure that the genuine refugee finds a safe haven here, and will rigorously exclude the bogus applicant. I wish to deal with how that can best be done, referring specifically to a page in one of the two directives that have been drawn to our attention. The programme concerning asylum policy is dealt with in chapter 4, entitled "Work": the reference number is SN 4038/91 (WGI 930).

That page of the document deals with all the policies which have been proposed by the Government and examined by the House over the past year, and have been enshrined—more or less—in the Asylum Bill. When we discussed the Bill, I said—I am happy to repeat it today—that the exclusion of bogus applicants was a sensible and honourable objective. That was my view then, and it remains my view.

When we last discussed the matters described in the document, the Opposition tabled a reasoned amendment in an attempt to explain how we believed that asylum policy should be operated. We feared then—together with the Churches, the General Council of the Bar, and the Law Society—that the genuine asylum seeker would be excluded, and we were right to express that fear. Our concerns were intensified by the behaviour of the Home Secretary, who sought to deal with the real problem in terms of party advantage and has continued to do so today.

I do not refer only to the pleasure—indeed, glee—with which the right hon. Gentleman has described every hypothesised fraud; he made one comment that struck me as disgraceful. Heaven knows, it is not my task to defend the Liberal Democrats, but when that party was mentioned, the Home Secretary said, "Of course, we all know that they support an open-door policy." That is a simple slander, and for the right hon. Gentleman to discuss matters in such terms does no credit to him or to the debate.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): My absence from that debate—in which I would have sought to rebut the Home Secretary's slanderous suggestion—was due to the difficulty that I had experienced in establishing contact with the right hon. Gentleman's office to discuss the Representation of the People Act. I think that, once again, he is misleading the House.

Mr. Hattersley: I repeat that the Home Secretary's attitude has not helped our attempts to achieve the good will, common sense and mutually agreed asylum policies that most European Community states have been able to maintain. It is possible that the Home Secretary wants the Asylum Bill to fail. If that is so, he can prevent its passage, but if it is so, let us have no more of the talk that we have heard today about an urgent measure which must be passed speedily.

The Home Secretary must decide whether he wants to make haste in obtaining an Asylum Bill which deals with bogus applicants but protects the geunine asylum seeker, or whether he wants to use the entire operation as an opportunity for what he sees—wrongly, in my opinion—as party advantage.

So that he may make progress, if he chooses to do so, I remind the right hon. Gentleman that the Bill which left the House of Commons was radically different from the Bill that received a Second Reading. The Government made five concessions, each representing a change for which the Opposition had asked. If the Home Secretary or any of his hon. Friends wishes to contest that statement, I will gladly give the *Hansard* references for each demand and each concession. Initially, however, I will simply list the five changes that the Opposition managed to bring about in Committee. I will deal a little later with a sixth change, which concerns the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Sir. T. Raison).

First, asylum seekers who arrive without documents, and who would originally have been assumed to be fraudulent applicants attempting to evade the regulations, will be able to advance reasonable explanations as to why their documents are deficient. That is now a part of the legislation.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): Perhaps I can save the right hon. Gentleman some time. That was never part of the Bill, and it is not part of the Bill now. There was a reference to those matters in the draft rules that were issued for discussion along with the Bill. It became perfectly plain that the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends had chosen not to understand—or were somehow incapable of understanding—that such matters reflected on credibility, which demands that, if there is a satisfactory explanation, that too is taken into account. The only changes made were introduced so that even the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) could understand what the Government intended.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that I should have referred to the rule rather than to the Bill. He is repeating exactly the words that he used to me on Third Reading. Before we demanded it, the provision was not in the rules. After we demanded it, it was in the rules. That is a concession.

Secondly, applicants will not, as was originally intended, have the actions of others held against them when they apply to remain here. Thirdly, oral hearings, which, according to the Home Secretary on Second Reading, were to be allowed only after the special adjudicator agreed, are now more easily obtained. Fourthly, the period allowed for lodging an appeal—*[Interruption.]* Talking Whips are always a disadvantage. The hon. Member at the Dispatch Box always says that if they want to say something they should say it, and that if they do not they should be quiet. The period allowed for lodging an appeal was originally totally inadequate, but it has now been extended to 10 days, with the small exception of people against whom the refusal notice is personally awarded.

The sixth concession—I think that it is a concession, although the Under-Secretary of State will no doubt be quick to advise me on that as well—seemed to be made at the suggestion of the right hon. Member for Aylesbury. He asked that the original proposal for leave to remain if the asylum applicant was already here should not be removed—that anyone with leave to remain who applied for asylum should not automatically have that leave to remain cancelled. In Committee, the Under-Secretary said that he accepted the principle of that proposition. It has not been incorporated through an amendment, but it is no doubt intended that it should be in another place.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will not get up to correct the right hon. Gentleman every time he is wrong, or we should never get through the debate . My right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Sir T. Raison) raised some interesting points about which he was concerned. We made no change to the Bill: the Bill used the word "may" and left the matter to the discretion of the Home Secretary—I merely described how the Home Secretary intended to exercise it.

Mr. Hattersley: That is exactly what I said. I conceded that the amendment had not been made, and I asked whether an amendment would be made in the House of Lords. I understand from the Under-Secretary's answer that such an amendment will not be made in the House of Lords.

Most importantly, the Government have been forced by their critics and by force of circumstances totally to reverse their policy on legal advice and legal assistance for and to asylum seekers. The House will recall that the Home Secretary made an announcement on 2 July, when he also announced the provisions of the Bill, that the

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United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service was to become the sole provider of free advice and free representation. He announced that the green form scheme —legal aid—was to be withdrawn from such cases. It is now the Government's habit to say that the Home Secretary never made that announcement at all, and that he merely observed that he and the Lord Chancellor might possibly be thinking about it. The words make it clear that he intended to withdraw legal aid as the alternative provision of legal advice—the choice—which the asylum seeker might receive. That is no longer his intention. He has not merely changed his position: he has changed it diametrically—legal aid is available, the green form scheme is reprieved, asylum applicants will have a choice of legal adviser, and we rejoice in that change above all others.

There are other outstanding issues which must be examined if we are to have decent asylum policy which is agreed between the parties. Our first concern is the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 and its extension to transit passengers. We propose after the election——

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is this another debate on the Asylum Bill or is it a debate on the European document?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I have heard nothing out of order so far.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) was not here when I referred to the paper which deals with all these matters in detail. Item IV of "Summary, work programmes and conclusion" deals with each of the items that I am now discussing.

I wish to make it clear to the hon. Member for Thanet, North and to others that it is our intention to reform and revise the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act after the general election. I will tell the Home Secretary at once what some of those changes should be.

First, it is clear that the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 has not worked. If it had worked, the immense increase in the number of asylum seekers to which the Home Secretary constantly draws attention would not have taken place. It is also clear that two major changes are necessary.

First, greater powers must be taken against those who organise and profit from illegal immigration—the entrepreneurs of illegal immigration. Secondly, we must end the preposterous practice of fining airlines, particularly British Airways, sometimes for carrying passengers who are eventually allowed into the United Kingdom by immigration officials. Lord King has expressed his view clearly to the Home Secretary that it is preposterous that British Airways, above all other companies, should bear a financial penalty for carrying passengers who are eventually allowed in.

We must also discuss some more fundamental questions of human rights and asylum. On Second Reading I described myself—Conservative Members will not be surprised to hear the description—as "ambivalent" about fingerprinting. I remain unashamedly ambivalent. My wish—indeed, my determination—to exclude bogus applicants and to prevent double applications makes me favour fingerprinting, but my reluctance to see asylum seekers alone subjected to a process otherwise thought appropriate only for suspected criminals makes me oppose the scheme.

Fingerprinting raises a question about Europe. I understand from the documents—I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will answer this question when he replies—that we have virtually committed ourselves to fingerprinting because that is the common policy in Europe and it is a way in which we can co-operate in Europe. I hope that we shall have a system of fingerprinting which applies only to those genuinely suspected of being bogus applicants and to those suspected of making multiple applications. As I understand it from the documents, we are now committed to fingerprinting everyone, including infants and babies. Is that the case? Does that seem reasonable?

Mr. Peter Lloyd: To make a change such as the right hon. Gentleman suggests would do what some of his hon. Friends suggested that the provision in the Bill does: it would criminalise a category of asylum seekers, who would be fingerprinted not because we were comprehensively checking all asylum seekers, but only because we had some suspicion about their veracity. I can think of no more absurd suggestion in the light of the arguments made by the right hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends in Committee.

Mr. Hattersley: That is not the argument that my hon. Friends advanced to me. Will the Minister now answer the two questions that I asked? Have we agreed to universal fingerprinting as part of our obligation to Europe, and does the Minister suggest that we fingerprint children, infants and babies in arms?

Mr. Lloyd: No, we do not suggest that we should fingerprint babes in arms, as the right hon. Gentleman would know if he had read the report of the Committee proceedings on the Bill. We are taking a power to fingerprint, not because the powers exist elsewhere—although, indeed, they do—but because it is clear from the problems that we have that it is a necessary measure which we ought to have on the statute book. If the right hon. Gentleman were ever to fill the place of the Home Secretary, he would regret that such a measure was not on the statute book before the election. I hope that he will help us to put it there.

Mr. Hattersley: This is becoming a strange debate, because the Under-Secretary of State persists in saying things which I can only describe as palpably untrue. It appears in the *Hansard* record that he regards it as necessary to fingerprint babies and infants.

Mr. Ashby: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that Italy has great problems with bogus asylum seekers and has a policy of fingerprinting all those who are rejected so that they can be identified when they make a further application? If that happens in other countries, why should we not do it in Britain?

Mr. Hattersley: As I said earlier, I do not believe that we have to do it simply because the rest of Europe does it. I thought that the hon. Gentleman agreed with that. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that such a policy is common European practice, he is taking the argument a stage further—in a direction which will not allow some of his hon. Friends to follow him.

I wish to deal with what I regard as the real sticking point in the Asylum Bill. There are problems with fingerprinting. There are problems with the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987. There are problems with housing. But the real sticking point—the point that we could not accept, the point to which item 4 in the document is related and the one which is unacceptable to us—is the right of appeal. It ought to be the unqualified and automatic right of every asylum applicant for a refusal to be subject to appeal.

What we ask for and what ought to be the centre of any decent Bill which genuinely discriminates between the bogus and the genuine applicant, is exactly what the Home Secretary said on 2 July that he would provide. He said:

> "The Bill will make it clear that all those who are turned [illegible]own in the determination process will be able to appeal while [illegible] are in the United Kingdom."—[*Official Report*, 2 July 1991; Vol. 194, c. 166.]

He said nothing about the leave to appeal, nothing about the adjudicator deciding whether an appeal was possible, and nothing about an argument as to whether a second hearing was appropriate. He said on 2 July that asylum seekers already resident in Britain already enjoyed that automatic right and that it must be extended to all asylum seekers. To us, that is the essential element of a decent Bill.

We are less likely to send the wrong people back with an appeal system than without one. While I understand and support the need for speed, we cannot have speed which prevents genuine justice. There should be a full right of appeal exercisable in the United Kingdom. It must include an oral hearing. All applicants must be given 10 days in which to mount a case. That is the overriding requirement. It is more important than clause 7 and the carriers' liability Act and more important than clause 2 and fingerprinting, important though those issues are.

I believe, as I have always believed, that unanimity in the House on matters such as asylum is far better than contention. If the Secretary of State wants a Bill with the urgency that he continues to stipulate, he can have it so long as he makes those three concessions and justifiable variations. At least one of them is a variation which he announced in his opening statement but from which he later retreated.

I claim again that, if the Home Secretary wants the Bill to founder, the way in which it will founder will be through his being wholly inflexible and unreasonable. If he wants to make progress, he will accept those three requirements, make progress, maintain the Bill and its principles, and get it on the statute book in a reasonable time. I know that that is a stern test of the Home Secretary's integrity, and some will say that it is an unfair test to place upon him, but for once I am prepared to take him at his word. On 13 November, the Home Secretary said:

> "I am anxious to find common ground in the country on this matter and I suggest that it is important that common ground is found."—[*Official Report*, 13 November 1991; Vol. 198, c. 1086.]

I offer the Home Secretary the chance to find it. If he loses his way, he will have only himself to blame. There must be a new asylum Bill. It can be done decently. If the Home Secretary wants to work with us, we will help to make it the decent Bill that the country needs and wants.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Do you have any power under the protocol of the House to point out to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) an oversight? He promised to answer the question put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby). My hon. Friend asked the shadow Home Secretary to say whether his party intended to relax the immigration rules and, if so, in what way and what would be the impact of that on numbers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair.

4.48 pm

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and it is no less a pleasure this afternoon. However, I found the early part of his speech in particular somewhat reminiscent of one of those large rubber balls with which children are minded to play in school playgrounds. It reminded me of a ball filled with hot air that bounced all over the place without any clear sense of direction. His statement that if he were the Home Secretary in a Labour Government that Government would abolish the primary purpose rule is one of the most significant political statements to have been made. The primary purpose rule is an essential component of the control of immigration, especially that from the Indian sub-continent. Without it, this country would assuredly be the recipient—for perfectly understandable reasons—of significant numbers of would-be immigrants.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said that he would seek to substitute the primary purpose rule with what he called "objective" rules. I wonder what they are. I hope that he will give us the advantage of setting them out in writing so that the House and the nation can examine them. They will most certainly form part of the country's deliberations in the general election.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook referred to the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987. Yes, it is a difficult Act to operate, but Home Office officials seek to advise and assist airline carriers and there are many cases, where a person has been brought into the United Kingdom and is subsequently allowed to remain here, when the carrier receives a refund from the Home Office for any financial penalty imposed upon it.

I am glad to hear that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook will be able to give qualified support to the Asylum Bill. That sits rather uncomfortably with the language that he used at the Labour party conference on 2 October last year, when he called the Bill a "squalid appeal to racism" and said:

> "We shall fight that proposal with the ferocity that comes from contempt".

It appears that he has had a significant change of heart. Perhaps it has something to do with the imminence of the general election.

Like the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, I shall consider the Commission's communication on immigration and I shall relate it to the work which the Select Committee on Home Affairs has done and the inquiry which it is undertaking into immigration controls at the external frontiers of the Community. I do not seek to prejudice any report that the Committee may eventually produce, but from the evidence that we have taken and visits that we have made, several important matters are clear.

No one can say with certainty to what immigration pressures the European Community will be subject in the

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future. There are certainly demographic pressures, especially from north Africa, but we must beware the more lurid fears fostered by people such as Le Pen. In parts of Europe, racism and xenophobia are issues of great concern. Although we see no present evidence that those evils are increasing in this country, that is no cause for complacency.

Under the Maastricht treaty, the European Commission will have certain new limited powers over immigration Athough the Commission assured the Committee, during a visit to Brussels, that it did not wish to extend its competence, some member states and non-governmental organisations in this country want that to happen. It may be inevitable.

Under the external frontiers convention, there will be mutual recognition of visas granted by other member states, as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has already explained. It is hoped that that will bring other countries' standards on the issue of visas up to those of the United Kingdom. However, there is concern that individuals' rights—perhaps the right of appeal—will suffer as countries adopt the lowest common denominator of safeguards for would-be immigrants and the highest common denominator of control. There is little doubt that some nationals who do not need visas will be required to hold them in future.

The United Kingdom's present system of immigration control is based primarily on checks at the frontier. We are set on a collision course with Brussels over the continuation of those frontier controls on passengers arriving after 1 January 1993 from other EC states. The Government's interpretation of the treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act—that our present system of control can continue—is contested by the Commission. Our system relies on those frontier controls. They are especially appropriate on an island and are especially necessary because of the threat of terrorism. They bring other benefits to the police in the fight against crime. Other member states cannot so easily control their frontiers.

If the Commission's view prevails, the frontiers of other member states will become our frontiers and their problems will also become ours. The British people will regard such a development as extraordinary, as they see the United Kingdom for what it is—a series of islands, which ought to exploit that natural advantage with our existing airport and sea port controls. I have sometimes heard the comparison with the United States of America. The European Community cannot be compared with the USA. The way in which people are treated when they arrive in Hawaii, one of the 50 states, is not a suitable comparison with the way in which people are treated when arriving at Heathrow or Dover.

If we relax internal frontier controls, there will be a demand for compensatory measures. The Government have not formed any view on the nature and extent of those measures. Among such measures which will need discussion are identity cards and checks on people's immigration status by employers and the agencies paying them state benefits.

I am glad that the Association of Chief Police Officers, in giving evidence to the Committee, has confirmed that it is in favour of identity cards. I share its view for the following reasons: the identity card is primarily a civil liberties document and gives certainty of identity to an individual and entitles him or her to travel freely within the European Community without let or hindrance; it offers the individual the opportunity to demand and receive services from the state; and it helps in the suppression of crime. For example, the banking industry loses about £0·25 billion a year through cheque card fraud because of the lack of any suitable bona fide identity card.

I agree with the Association of Chief Police Officers that if such a card is to serve the purpose of freedom

> "it should be the size of a normal credit card . . . be incapable of being forged: it should have a unique background and a computer-readable internal strip . . . it should be renewable at regular intervals . . . the individual's fingerprint should be included . . . the individual's place of birth and other suitable details should be included, including the National Insurance number".

We have had national insurance numbers for many decades in this country, but we do not exploit them to give people the services and advantages to which they are entitled.

I also agree with the association when it says:

> "the individual's photograph should be sealed into the card, which should be self-defacing if tampered with";

and:

> "the manufacture of the card should take into account current and developing technology".

If we adopt the identity card scheme, we shall not be alone within the European Community in having such a device. We shall have to decide whether it should be mandatory to carry it, and in what circumstances it should be produced for inspection. We should use the opportunity of our presidency of the European Community Commission to make progress on this matter urgently.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The hon. Gentleman suggested that one's national insurance number should be included on the proposed identity card. We all have a national health service number as well and the hon. Gentleman will know that, for those of us who are old enough, it was our national identity number during the war when we had national identity cards. Would he want to include that number also on the proposed card?

Sir John Wheeler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for pointing out the present absurd position. We have a series of numbers. We have a number on a driver's licence. Now there is to be a driver's licence that includes a photograph. It will become the de facto identity card for those fortunate British citizens who happen to have a driver's licence. As the hon. Gentleman suggests, there is a national health service number. There is also a national insurance number and a United Kingdom passport number. There are too many numbers. Few people remember any of them and they do not serve the best interests of British citizens. We should settle for one number and we should seize the opportunity to exploit that one number within the Community.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman is making the case for a main identity card in the United Kingdom. Indeed, he has just said that we should exploit that at Community level. First, is that a personal view? Secondly, is he saying that we would solve the frontier problem which he mentioned earlier by granting freedom of entry and exit on production of such cards which would be valid throughout the Community? Would the cards and their national variants then be virtually cards of European citizenship, if the Maastricht treaty is endorsed?

Sir John Wheeler: The hon. Gentleman is right. In previous reports, the Home Affairs Select Committee recommended the adoption of a national identity card. We shall have to see what it will conclude in its report on this inquiry. It is my view—I believe that it is shared by many other members of the Committee, if not all—that we must grasp this opportunity and make progress. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that such an identity card would be the card of the European citizen. If the 350 million citizens of the European Community are to exploit the opportunities of being in the Community, they must have the certainty of identification. Other member states are already developing high-tech cards. The kingdom of Spain, for example, is working on one now. When we hold the presidency, we should lead the initiative in the interests of British citizens as well as those of the Community as a whole.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Does my hon. Friend agree that there is nothing to prevent us from developing the card for considerable valuable use in this country, whether or not it ultimately becomes relevant within Europe? Many of his arguments are highly relevant in this country first.

Sir John Wheeler: The arguments for the card are primarily those of civil liberties and the right to receive services. Imagine a pensioner or a recipient of social service benefits who possessed such a card. It would render an entitlement by electronic technology without the argument and debate that is so often the case now. It would be efficient and effective as a tool for delivering rights and services to individuals. It would have the secondary purpose of being the European Community travel passport and means of identity. Therefore, it would solve a number of problems. I agree with the thrust of my hon. Friend's question.

Dr. Godman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir John Wheeler: I should like to make further progress.

I want to continue for a moment on compensatory measures. British airports and sea ports and air and sea carriers are not prepared for the potential changes that would be necessary if the Government's view of the controls permitted at the internal frontier does not prevail. The changes will be costly. Irrespective of decisions about our frontiers, money will need to be spent on improving the control of the external frontier elsewhere in the Community and on improving visa-issuing procedures by some other member states. Important issues are at stake. They need full discussion in Parliament and in the country.

I am glad that the Select Committee on European Legislation has recognised the importance of these proposals. I look forward to a more detailed examination of immigration in the European Community context in Committee and in the Chamber in the near future.

5.5 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): When I sought to intervene in the speech of the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), I wished to ask him whether I was right in presuming that the identity card would be extended to citizens of European Free Trade Association countries vis-a-vis the European economic area agreement.

These documents prompt several questions which I hope that the Minister will answer when he replies to the debate. The supplementary explanatory memorandum states:

> "the Community has competence in relation to rights of free movement and residence under the Treaty of Rome and has issued a number of directives and regulations governing the exercise of those rights."

However, it continues:

> "Under Article 100C, a new provision to be inserted into the Treaty of Rome by the Treaty on European Union, the Community will also have competence over the determination of the non-Member States whose nationals are to be subject to a visa requirement."

I know that that requirement will be subject to the ratification of this Parliament together with the other 11 Parliaments, but we seem to be shifting towards giving competence to the European Commission and taking it from national states.

Hon. Members who sought to talk about the implementation of the principle of subsidiary missed the boat. I am beginning to come to the conclusion that the concept of subsidiarity—perhaps I should say, the doctrine of subsidiarity—is worthless where Community officials are concerned, in terms of devolving political power to national legislatures, and even further to regional and local government.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) talked about some measures being given strength by unanimous support in the House of Commons. I remind the House that we gave unanimous support to the Bill that became the Merchant Shipping Act 1988. One of its most important sections was overturned or suspended by an interim judgment of the President of the European Court of Justice sitting on his own. In other words, an Act of Parliament, passed with support from both sides of this House, was overturned by the President of that court. I suspect that we might have a similar position here.

The European Community documents refer, among other things, to free movement of European Community nationals throughout the Community. The documents precede the European economic area agreement, so will the Minister confirm that the right of movement and travel will be extended to citizens of the 19 countries of the European economic area?

Mr. Peter Lloyd *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Godman: I notice that the Minister is shaking his head. Is he saying that, as a result of that agreement, the citizens of the seven EFTA countries will not enjoy the rights outlined in article 8A and in articles 48 to 59? It seems to me that there is a case for suggesting that the citizens of the 19 countries will be given that freedom.

Mr. Lloyd: The treaty of Rome confers rights of movement on the nationals of EC countries, but it does not confer those rights on those who are not EC nationals.

Mr. Spearing: Not at the moment.

Dr. Godman: I note my hon. Friend's remark, but I am seeking to establish that the rights of movement contained in article 8A are confined to EC nationals and that the citizens of the seven EFTA nations will not be given those rights under the terms of the European economic area agreement.

Mr. Lloyd: That is our interpretation of article 8A. We must consider what rights of movement might be given to residents of the Community who are not EC nationals. Clearly, that is a matter for the intergovernmental discussions that will take place under the new pillar structure that has come about as a result of Maastricht.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the Minister for that explanation. However, the rights might be given by the European Commission in advance of membership being formally granted to the EFTA countries seeking membership of the European Community.

Mr. Lloyd: I shall try to clarify the point. Such residents will have rights within the countries party to the Schengen agreement, which have removed their internal frontiers. That is a matter for, and an agreement between, those countries. Our position is that that is not required by the treaty.

Dr. Godman: Again, I am grateful to the Minister.

In an earlier intervention, I asked the Secretary of State about the rights of third-country nationals long domiciled within the European Community, and whether different classes of citizens would arise. For example, would those from north African countries now living in France and immigrant workers from countries such as Turkey and Yugoslavia, who have been long domiciled in Germany, be given inferior status in comparison with the nationals of the 12 nations that make up the European Community?

The euphemistically named gastarbeiter in Germany and the immigrants working in France will not be given the same freedom of movement under article 8A and articles 48 to 59. If they are to be denied such rights to movement, will they be confined within the borders of the countries in which they now live? That would seem to be the case for several millions of people, many of whom have lived in such countries for many years.

In Germany, the Government actively encouraged people to move from countries such as Spain, Yugoslavia and Turkey to take up work when the German economy was booming. Some of those people have lived in Germany for more than 30 years. The same could be said of many people living in France.

I am concerned that those people will be denied the rights of free movement, travel and work in the 12 Community countries. We will be left with a group of people who will not have the rights given to all EC nationals. That is a matter for considerable concern.

The secretary to the Immigration Law Practitioners Association, Elspeth Guild, has written to me to say:

> "It is not conducive to the completion of the internal market that long term resident third country nationals should be subject to a fundamentally different regime in EC law as regards family life, deportation, employment or other immigration matters than EC nationals exercising free movement rights."

As I said to the Secretary of State earlier, many of the recent racist attacks in Germany and France have been directed against those migrant workers and their families. If the EC treats such people as inferior citizens, that encourages the vicious and horrible treatment that is meted out to them by their fellow EC citizens.

Those workers were encouraged to work in the EC just as many West Indians were encouraged to come here to work for the national health service, London Transport and other public agencies. After migrant workers have been resident in the EC for perhaps seven years, they should have equal rights to those enjoyed by EC nationals under the terms of the articles that I mentioned. I appreciate that we do not have such workers within the borders of the United Kingdom, but I should be interested to discover the Government's position on the status of immigrant workers.

Under the terms of the new directory—one could call it the "Yellow Pages"—and assuming that it goes any further, if one of my constituents chose to live and work in any of the 11 EC countries, he or she would have the right to vote in municipal elections. That Greenockian would also have the right to vote in elections to the European Parliament. I suspect that the next stage would be the right to vote in domestic elections to national legislatures.

My constituents will have the right to travel freely throughout the other 11 countries of the Community—I suspect that they will be given the right to travel freely throughout the whole of the European economic area, despite the reservations that the Under-Secretary of State voiced—whereas immigrant workers long domiciled within the European Community, having been encouraged to come and work here, will be denied such rights. That is shameful.

The European Commission has much to answer for, because the measure will affect not only the immigrant workers and their families but also members of their families who still reside in their country of origin. It is difficult for immigrant workers in the European Community to encourage members of their families to visit them from their countries of origin. Such discrimination should be eliminated on the basis of a period of residence within the European Community. Nothing less will do.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. May I remind hon. Members of Mr. Speaker's appeal for brief speeches?

5.22 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I shall make a brief speech, because there is just a small issue to consider. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will answer the point clearly and precisely. The only issue that really matters is: if the European Court overturns the lovely outline of policies set out by the Home Secretary in his splendid speech, what will the Government do?

This debate is about the fact that our whole immigration control policy could disappear so that we would have no effective parliamentary or governmental control. We all know that that is the issue. I also want to know why we are having this debate at such a good time. There is one reporter in the Press Gallery and plenty of people listening in the Public Gallery.

Why, when the Government usually have all the filthy, rotten, dirty, expensive, undemocratic issues in Europe discussed after 11 o'clock at night, is this issue being discussed in the afternoon when people can hear about it? We all know that the reason is that we have a decent Home Secretary who wants to fight for our rights and for democracy. He knows that it will be a tough battle with the European Community, and he is looking for support. However, he is not getting much support, with only a handful of hon. Members present, because most hon. Members do not like talking about the EEC.

The Home Secretary will agree that the issue is terribly important. If the British people appreciate—as they will —the fact that our control of immigration is likely to disappear, they will be concerned about good race relations. Conservative and Opposition Members who, like me, want to keep good race relations in Britain know that that depends on people feeling that we have matters under control.

Much has already gone. We have heard about the double lock in Maastricht—it sounds wonderful—but, sadly, we add to that what we committed ourselves to discussing and agreeing so quickly at Maastricht. It is all set out in the official documents: harmonisation of policies on admission; harmonisation of admission for other purposes; harmonisation of legal provisions; and a common approach to illegal immigration. We have committed ourselves to working out agreements on what should go.

We now know that we have made a commitment that European nationals will be free to move. We must remember what an EEC national is—not just nice people who live in France, Germany and Italy. If the Community is extended, EEC nationals will include eastern Europeans. I am sure that the civil servants who give such splendid advice will tell us that many European nationals do not even live in Europe. For example, only a few miles from Hong Kong is a Portuguese territory with Portuguese citizens who will shortly have the right to enter Britain, while the people of Hong Kong, which until now has been a British colony, will not have the same right. Citizens of French territories will also be allowed to enter Britain in the same way.

What will the Government do on the European scene? They believe that, because of the Maastricht agreement and other legislation, Britain and its European partners will have the power to decide what is allowed and what is not allowed. The Home Secretary set that out in his speech. He said that the Government think that they have control, having ensured a double lock at Maastricht, but he and many others know that the European Commission challenges that absolutely and fundamentally, and has energetically disputed our interpretation of the legislation. it understands what the single European act says.

Some of my hon. Friends who voted so enthusiastically for the Act should tell their constituents what they agreed to—the free movement of goods, people, services and capital. The Commission says that that means something else—if the free movement of people is to be guaranteed and because the majority of MPs voted for it, the controls that we think we have will not be enforced.

Who will decide? Sadly, the Home Secretary will not decide. Rather, the European Court will do so, and we must warn people in Britain that the European Court is not like our courts but is a political court. At almost every opportunity, it gives more power and control to the institutions of the Community. As certainly as night follows day, on the basis of reading all its judgments and interpretations, I believe that it will find against Britain.

Individuals may follow Mr. Bangemann's advice and go to the court and say, "Please sir, the British law is rubbish." However, after 1 January 1993, the Commission will promote that case, and I am certain that the British Government will lose. People may say that I am a fatalist, and that I always think that we shall lose but that we may win; but what will happen if the Government lose? Will we simply say that the decision is fair enough, we shall scrap our immigration control and it does not matter? Ultimately, we must state our policy now.

Conservative Members are becoming well aware of the fact that the power and authority of British elected Governments are not only fading away because of the policies to which we have agreed but slipping away because of the interpretations of the court. After the next election—we do not know who will win—we must start to ask where we should go on Europe. Are we willing simply to sit back and let all the power of our democratic assembly simply go to non-elected bodies? People—including my hon. enthusiastic Euro-Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), who is always promoting the EEC—who think that the European Parliament will fill that gap should know that they are kidding themselves. There is no way in which the European Parliament could fill that gap unless we were to start over again.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir Teddy Taylor: I promised to speak briefly, but if my hon. Friend insists, I shall give way.

Mr. Budgen: Is not one of the problems the fact that people think of judges as highly qualified and wise technicians whereas, unfortunately, the judges of the European Court of Justice are part-lawyers, part-politicians? They interpret the treaty in a way that gives it extra impetus, and, as a result, the alliance between the court and the Commission always extends the power of the EC.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Those are wise words, but I am not sure whether the public will listen to them.

There is a real danger that our immigration control laws will be switched to Brussels and therefore become useless. If anyone doubts that, he should consider the control of immigration in Italy, for example, and the spasmodic control of immigration in Greece. Given the fact that that will be our boundary, the matter is important.

The Government should say what they will do if Britain loses in the European Court. They can do something in a positive European way. First, to make it clear that they have everyone on their side, they should publish a statement by our Law Officers saying that they support the views of the Home Secretary and explaining why they support those views. If we had a clear indication that the Government and the Law Officers were united, that would strengthen our purpose.

Secondly, if the Government fundamentally believe that immigration control is still to be a United Kingdom matter, they should use the presidency of the Council to put forward an emergency proposal or treaty saying that, for the avoidance of doubt should the Commission disagree, we wish to make it abundantly clear that the control of who comes into our country is a matter for our Government and our laws.

I am glad that the Government had the courage to discuss a difficult Euro-issue at a time when people will hear what is happening. We cannot run away from the issue; the EEC is taking more and more control over it. But if responsibility for the control of who comes into this country is transferred to the EEC, national sovereignty will effectively disappear. It will not be enough to say that

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

we shall have new cards stating, "I am a Euro-citizen," and giving the holder certain entitlements. Even if we tried to the best of our ability not to allow forged identity cards for citizens of a United Europe, we would not solve the problem of who comes into this country and how. The Government must stand firm.

I watch Ministers, and I believe that, in my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, we have someone who is prepared to have a fight and have a go. I believe that he will not merely pass the issue to a committee to have another look. If my judgment is right, I am delighted that my right hon. Friend is prepared to stand firm and have a go. If that is his intention, he should first ask for a statement from the Law Officers giving the Government's view and the reasons for it. Secondly, we should have a new treaty under the British presidency stating that the matter of who comes into a country is one for elected national Governments. If he does that, it will be a step forward for democracy, Britain and Europe.

5.32 pm

Sir Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): It is absolutely right that we should debate this subject today, and that it should be debated in a tone remarkably free from the electioneering which accompanies almost everything that happens in the House at present. We have had a sensible and serious debate. We know that problems are caused by the pressure of large numbers of potential asylum seekers, that the Government's Asylum Bill is proceeding through Parliament, and what happened at Maastricht. Nobody could doubt the seriousness of what is taking place in many parts of the world, such as Africa, the middle east and eastern Europe, where events are all liable enormously to step up pressure to migrate.

We are faced with terrific difficulties. We have a tradition of dealing with refugees fairly and seriously, and it would be sad if we were ever to abandon that, but we cannot simply accept everyone who comes from a country where there is civil war, famine or poverty. So far as possible, we must act through our aid and development programmes—hon. Members have been right to stress that—but we must also recognise that the most intense pressure at present comes not from strictly economic refugees, but from those fleeing the civil wars that are breaking out, causing chaos and cruelty in places such as Africa, Sri Lanka and Iraq. Therefore, it is not simply an economic refugee problem.

We must also press throughout the world, through aid and development programmes, for human rights. One of the wise moves of the Government, led by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, is the way in which they have been willing to couple the notion of good human and civil rights with the provision of aid for development. We are moving into an era in which not only our aid programmes, but the United Nations, are having to be a bit more interventionist than they were in the years of post-war dispensation.

The debate is about how the Government and the European Community are responding to the pressures. I believe that on the whole we have got it about right. The policy that is developing is basically sensible. I support the Asylum Bill, the need for it and, generally, the measures postulated to accompany it. Those measures have been activated by the need to cope with the pressures that I have already mentioned and the need to speed up the handling of asylum cases, which is enormously important. I know as well as everyone else the delays which can occur in the Home Office.

The report of the Select Committee on European Legislation reminded us that the handling of cases is an important part of the Asylum Bill. The report states:

"the Asylum Bill is mainly concerned to provide a right of appeal in asylum cases."

We should remember that it is not just a restrictionist measure, but states that when people come to this country and apply for asylum, there should be a proper and more effective system of appeal than the one that we have had.

As one who has previously argued for better appeal rights for asylum seekers, I am glad that the Bill provides that. I accept that some people would like it to go further and believe that the appeal rights are not sufficient. One can argue that, but asylum seekers will gain in terms of human liberty for asylum seekers under the provisions provided, which is why I support the Bill.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and other Government Members who said, when dealing with the Bill, that they were willing to be flexible and respond if it is suggested that there are inadequacies and elements within the package which are not sufficiently fair to any group of asylum seekers. A number of important changes have been made, all of which are to the credit of my right hon. and hon. Friends.

The Government have been taking exactly the right steps on the issue, but what about the European Community's position, the subject of today's debate? My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary explained in his opening speech that the Community has competence over the rights of free movement and residence for EC nationals, which is accepted. There is a more difficult question about the families of EC nationals, as they too have rights which are governed by EC rules.

When the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) spoke of the objective tests that a Labour Government would apply, he was somewhat cloudy on the issue. We all know that the primary purpose rule is difficult to interpret. I was at the Home Office when it was introduced and I do not think that I had any illusions then, but I realised that it would cause difficulties. Anybody with a substantial number of immigrants—particularly Asian ones—in their constituency will know that it is not easy to interpret the primary purpose rule.

The idea that the Labour party, if in power, would set the matter on an objective basis is a fanciful and pie-in-the-sky idea. At the very least, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), the Front-Bench spokesman, should tell the House exactly what is meant by objective tests and how they would work. We must ask questions about that.

Apart from the establishment of a common list of visa countries and a standardised format, most of the important questions have rightly been left to the realm of political co-operation outside the treaty. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) queried whether that could be maintained and whether the European Court might not throw the whole thing out of the window. I do not think that it is realistic to ask Ministers to state what they would do if that were to happen—we devoutly hope that it will not—and it would be injudicious on their part to do so. It is right that matters such as asylum policy, border controls and the immigration of third-country nationals should be dealt with by political co-operation. Such issues are better left in the realm of national competence.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has been right to insist that we retain frontier controls. To abandon them would bring enormous risks. We know all too well the dangers of terrorism today. We also know, as we look around the European Community, that there would be some pretty weak links in the chain. Without particularising the matter, we could not rely on some countries to have effective border controls, and we are absolutely right to take a cautious view.

I also believe that we should be cautious about accepting the notion that any non-European Community national with a right of residence should be able to work anywhere in the European Community—the point raised by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). He asked why people from third, non-European countries who have the right to live here and who may have lived here for a long time should not have the freedom to move anywhere or seek work anywhere in the European Community. That view is being expressed by the Commission for Racial Equality, too.

The answer is that the circumstances of these different groups of non-Community nationals vary enormously. The reasons why ours are here are particular to our own circumstances—to do with the history of the British empire. Our non-nationals are from the new Commonwealth and Pakistan. They came here for reasons to do with the empire and in many ways they have retained their special character. It would be wrong to say that what has been suitable for us should necessarily be accepted by all other European countries as suitable for them. Their histories differ from ours—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Budgen) says helpfully that the same applies in reverse. The history of north African migration is particular to France, and so on.

It would be a mistake to adopt the view advanced by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow. The notion of subsidiarity is relevant in this context. If, for the sake of argument, someone comes from Pakistan and lawfully settles here, he will after a period be able to acquire British nationality. That is open to him. The proper way for a man or woman to achieve what the hon. Gentleman desires is to do exactly that: to live here for a period, to be settled in this country, to have a commitment to this country, and then to acquire citizenship.

I know that there are some difficulties because certain countries—India, for instance—choose not to allow dual nationality. That is really not our fault; we cannot help it if the Indian Government insist on forbidding dual nationality to their citizens. Perhaps Indians should, at a certain stage, have to commit themselves to living in Europe even if that means relinquishing their Indian citizenship and then acquire United Kingdom citizenship—and in the process acquire the rights that pertain to a citizen of the United Kingdom. The stance that we are adopting on this is perfectly tenable; to move away from it in the direction advocated by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow could cause difficulties.

The Government are proceeding on the right lines in this respect. It is enormously important that there should be no question of playing the issue as an election card—it would do nothing but harm if, in some mysterious way, issues of race or immigration became puffed up at election time. The Government are perfectly entitled to bring back the Asylum Bill after the election if it does not reach the statute book before then. I would support such a move, but time has shown that it is possible to handle these issues with a mixture of firmness and sensitivity.

Perhaps I am parti pris, but looking back on the period since 1979 during which we have handled the matter in Government by the frequently mentioned combination of firm control and a positive commitment to building up good race relations, I think that our method has worked. It is to the credit of the Conservative Administration since that time that we have pursued those policies. It has not always been easy, given the many emotive pressures involved, but it has paid off. There are still blots on the landscape, such as the vicious and deplorable racial attacks, but overall the policy has worked. We have a fairly good degree of racial harmony in this country, and it would be fatal to do anything to damage it.

5.44 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): It is a privilege to follow my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Sir T. Raison), who had a distinguished career in the Home Office as an Under-Secretary of State——

Mr. Budgen: Minister of State.

Mr. Carlisle: Yes, he was promoted halfway through. He was enormously helpful to my constituents and those of many of my right hon. and hon. Friends. We respect his views and the knowledge that he brings to our proceedings. I am pleased to follow what may have been his valedictory oration to the House, in which he has served as a distinguished Member for many years.

On a note of slight dissention from my right hon. Friend's views, I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) will agree with me that this issue will be talked about in the forthcoming general election campaign, especially in constituencies such as mine, where, in the constituency town although not in my actual constituency, about 20 per cent. of the inhabitants are of ethnic origin, albeit third or fourth generation.

This matter worries a lot of people, and it is one on which the two parties of opposition and the Government are miles apart. That was well highlighted in this afternoon's speech by the right hon. Member for Birmingham. Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who once again failed to answer the relevant questions put by Front and Back-Bench Conservatives.

The representative from the Liberal Democrats, the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), saw fit to grace our proceedings—[HON. MEMBERS:"Where is he?"] My hon. Friends are right to ask. He came in 16 minutes late with a lame excuse for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. He stayed for part of my right hon. Friend's speech and then disappeared; yet I have no doubt that on doorsteps over the next few weeks, as we go to ask the country for its support, many Liberal Democrat candidates will be expounding policies which are obviously a matter of shame to the hon. Gentleman, who is not here to defend them.

I remember the contribution by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland to the Second Reading debate

[Mr. Carlisle]

on the Asylum Bill; many of us who were here will recall that it was the longest diatribe we had had the misfortune to listen to——

Sir John Wheeler: And the most boring.

Mr. Carlisle: Certainly, and the longest in centuries.

The fact that none of the hon. Gentleman's party is here to defend policy or to comment on this important issue is an insult to the House and to the electorate, who I hope will remember this fact when these matters are brought up, as they inevitably will be, on people's doorsteps and in discussions of national policy.

The two major parties are certainly poles apart, which is why most of us welcome the opportunity of this debate, which has once again highlighted the fact that Labour has no answers to the questions that might arise if the European Court went against the Government on this issue or on immigration in general.

Many of us remember—it was not that long ago—how a Labour Government granted not one but two amnesties to illegal overstayers. Regrettably, there are probably still several thousand of them even under the strict immigration rules of this Government, but they must be taking some comfort from the idea that, if a Labour Government are returned, they will receive similar treatment this time.

I remember asking the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook on Second Reading of the Asylum Bill what Labour would do about an amnesty. He ducked the issue again. Probably the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), who is shaking his head, will offer us some clarification on whether he will rule out any form of amnesty for illegal overstayers or for those who have been caught by asylum procedures. I note that the hon. Gentleman remains rigidly stuck to his seat, but we look forward to some reaction from him.

This issue is so important because over the years it has changed the character of many of our towns and cities. To some extent, it has enriched their cultures, but many people understandably still fear that if the numbers increase substantially—I am sad to see that they did in the past few years, having dipped a bit in the mid-1980s—then, as my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) said, the excellent race relations in our towns and cities could worsen. I am proud of the record of my constituency town, incidentally. In this case, this explains why the fear that will be expressed on people's doorsteps is ever present.

We are absolutely right to resist any attempt by the European Commission or the European Court to relax the immigration laws for which we have fought long and hard and which have been consistently opposed by both Opposition parties.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my hon. Friend agree that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) said, this incursion into our laws by the European Community will have to be resisted because it would cause immense damage and disruption in the United Kingdom? Does my hon. Friend recall that not long ago Chancellor Kohl suggested immigration quotas in the Community to absorb additional immigration into Germany? However, Mr. Genscher has pursued a policy of dispersing such people to the rest of the Community. That is completely crazy and not at all communautaire.

Mr. Carlisle: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for bringing that to our attention. He was not able to be here for the earlier part of the debate when the fear was expressed that even the new breakdown of frontiers for EC nationals will cause enormous trouble, especially if other countries relax their frontier controls and permit the entry of third-country immigrants. I am glad that the Government have a strong line on this issue.

Either the brief of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was so short or his knowledge of the asylum issue was so short that he spent most of his time on the Asylum Bill rather than speaking about the rules that are before the House. We are all aware of asylum abuse and the anger that is generated by abuses of the system. I am pleased to note that, when we return to government after the election, we shall correct the generosity of the system. The anger against asylum seekers is felt not only by members of the indigenous population but by those who have to come to our country from far off shores. That anger is directed against overstayers and illegal immigrants who have been permitted to stay here by previous Labour Governments. That anger is understandable, because those people are breaking the rules.

Regrettably, to a certain extent immigration is all about numbers. About 1,000 a week now apply to come to this country. Of those, 70, 75 or even 80 per cent. are found to be or suspected to be illegal asylum seekers. That makes the situation worse, and the country should be grateful and will remember in the coming election campaign that only the Conservative party has stood firm against bogus asylum seekers and has decided to do something about them.

The main issue before the House is the worry about immigration, and it is accentuated by Commissioner Bangemann's pronouncements because he was almost inviting those who are refused entry to seek some remission in the European Court. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East was right to say that we should know what the Government intend to do if judgments go against us. In the past, we have been given assurances with little authority—they were possibly whistling in the wind—that the court actions would not go against us.

However, we should have some sort of contingency plan. We will be asked on the doorsteps about what will happen if the European Court overturns all the frontier controls that we are trying desperately to hold. What will be the reaction of the next Government, assuming that they are Conservative? Of course we know what the reaction of a Labour Government would be, because it was outlined by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook in the debate and by him and his party in documents.

Labour would abolish the primary purpose rule. That is in the document "Meet the Challenge: Make the Change" and has not been denied in the debate. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central nods—perhaps in response to that or in response to something else. We seek clarification from him because the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook will not clarify what Labour would do about the primary purpose rule. If that rule is abolished, the gates and doors will open wide to any itinerant traveller who chooses to come to this country, and the number of immigrants will increase dramatically. For many of them, entry to this country is attractive.

Few members of the Labour party are interested in these subjects or willing to put their heads above the parapet. When I speak about such matters, there are usually Opposition shouts of "racist" or "nationalist". I stand purely on the basis of being nationalist and for the protection of my communities. Over the years, those communities have accepted itinerant travellers, genuine immigrants, people from different lands and cultures. They have been accepted with a good grace and we have had extremely good race relations. If frontier controls were reduced or abandoned, those relations would suffer, especially if the primary purpose rule were abolished, as I think that it would be by a Labour Government.

It was encouraging to hear my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary say that the Government will resist any lessening of frontier controls or relaxation of immigration rules. The Conservative party has a proud record, and it will be put to the test in the general election. I am confident that what my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has said will encourage all citizens to accept that the Conservative party intends to apply fair and strong immigration rules and is willing to say at times, as it may have to, that enough is enough.

5.56 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I should like to place on record an observation that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) will have an opportunity to read. He said that the Home Secretary had been guilty of calumny in suggesting that the Liberal Democrats had an open-door policy on immigration. I understand why the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was unable to be present at any of the sittings of the Committee on the Asylum Bill, but if he had been there, he would have gained the same impression as those of us who were present throughout the sittings—that the Liberal Democrat party, which, sadly, is not represented in the Chamber for this debate, has no policy at all on immigration other than to say that anyone who wants to come here can do so because there is no way to stop him. If that is not an open-door policy, I do not know what is.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and his hon. Friend on the Opposition Front Bench, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), have performed a considerable U-turn since the start of the Asylum Bill to which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook devoted so much of his speech. He has described it as a nasty, racist measure but, perhaps with the thought of a general election in mind, Labour Front-Bench spokesmen have suddenly espoused the Bill and wished it speedy progress.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): The hon. Gentleman should have listened to what my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook said, because he set out the grounds on which we still oppose the Asylum Bill. The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and I sat for many hours in Committee considering the Asylum Bill, and he knows that we expressed a number of concerns about it. My right hon. Friend was simply pointing to those concerns, which we thought the Government might be prepared to meet, as we both agree that some legislation is required.

Mr. Gale: I listened with great care to the right hon. Gentleman's dissertation on the Asylum Bill, and I heard no answers to the questions put to him by my hon. Friends. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central will shortly have an opportunity to speak, when no doubt he will answer those questions on behalf of his right hon. Friend. We shall listen with bated breath to his responses.

The Home Secretary said that asylum must not be a back door to immigration. We must decide whether asylum will be a back door to Europe in the context of the documents that we have been asked to consider. The Select Committee on Home Affairs, on which I have the honour to serve with my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), who spoke so well earlier in the debate, recently visited a number of countries in the European Community in the course of an inquiry into Europe's external frontiers. We first visited Brussels and we spoke with Herr Bangemann's directorate, the civil servants responsible for the policy.

I was left in no doubt that the European Commissioner responsible, and his team, regard the removal of the internal frontiers as an integral part of the single market. I was also left in no doubt that they regard any check at any internal frontiers on European Community nationals travelling within the European Community as unlawful. I believe that the European Commissioner will move, as Mr. Bangemann has said he will, heaven and earth to ensure that there are no checks at internal frontiers.

The explanatory memorandum submitted by the Government for the debate says that the Government intend

> "to continue to apply a control to all arriving non-EC nationals . . . EC nationals are not subject to a substantive immigration control, but it will be necessary to ask them to show a passport or national identity card in order to distinguish them from non-EC nationals."

The European Commissioner believes that we shall have no right to do that. I do not understand how it will be possible to check the arrival of non-European Community nationals in this country, by whatever means, unless we are also able first to ascertain who is a European Community national.

My hon. Friend and parliamentary neighbour the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), said much earlier that he believed that we were on a collision course with the European Commission over this issue. Having visited Brussels with the Select Committee and taken evidence, I am certain that he is right. The Commission is determined that we shall not check internally.

The Select Committee has also taken evidence from the Association of Chief Police Officers, as my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North said earlier. Incidentally, the association has changed its view on identity cards, and I shall come to that later. Members of the association described to the Committee what they believe to be the likely effects of the removal of internal frontiers. It is abundantly plain that those upon whom we place the burden of the enforcement of law, and those of their colleagues who share that burden throughout the Community, believe that the removal of internal frontiers will have a devastating effect on the control of illegal immigration, trafficking in drugs and international financial fraud. There is no doubt at all of their view.

In the course of our inquiry, we moved from Brussels through Berlin and east Germany to Frankfurt an der Oder, on the east German-Polish border. We talked to

[Mr. Gale]

immigration and customs officials and the police. We walked into Poland and saw the 18-mile queue of lorries waiting to come into the European Community across the border that, from 1993, will be the United Kingdom border. On average, those lorries wait for eight hours; on a bad day, they wait 18 to 20 hours; and on occasion—we saw this happen—the customs officers will take a lorry to pieces searching for illegal contraband and drugs—there is an amphetamine factory just over the border. It is inconceivable that those checks can be maintained. European Community policy—the policy concocted by the Commission—was dreamt up before the Berlin wall came down, and it is wholly inappropriate to the needs of today.

We went from Frankfurt an der Oder to Genoa, in northern Italy, on the Italian riviera and spoke to police and customs officers there. We learned from them that, in the past year alone, the police had obtained 700 deportation orders for illegal immigrants but that only 80 of them were implemented, because the other 620 illegal immigrants could not be found. The Italians made it plain to us that they regarded immigration as part of a natural process that satisfied their need for employees. For many years, Italians have been emigrants as well. They regard visitors' visas as a light matter.

A traveller through Genoa into the European Community on a three-month Italian visitors' visa can disappear anywhere within the Community, and if the Commission has its way, he can do so without any check. He can come to the United Kingdom, he can head for the lights and the financial benefit of Germany, or he can go to France, Spain, or anywhere in the Community. When the visa has expired, how in heaven's name can the Italian authorities begin to find that person?

Mr. John Carlisle: When he was in Europe, did my hon. Friend or the Committee make any inquiries as to the medical checks on these travellers? He might recall a famous case a few months ago when some travellers from Bangladesh came through Europe to the United Kingdom. Two of them finished up in my constituency having jumped bail, and both were typhoid carriers. Did the Select Committee examine the possible medical dangers if there are no checks at the frontiers, or if, as is the case with the Italians, illegal immigration is encouraged?

Mr. Gale: The honest answer is no, we did not. We confined ourselves wholly to external frontier matters as they related to immigration. I accept what my hon. Friend says about health matters, but what we discovered was hair-raising enough in its own right.

The Italians to whom we spoke mentioned their economic need for illegal immigrants, who do the jobs the Italians do not wish to do at salaries that Italians would not accept. That is likely to become the norm throughout the European Community. Any attempt to impose on the European Community the statutory minimum wage that the Opposition intend to introduce will exacerbate that trend.

Mr. Carlisle: And it is unenforceable.

Mr. Gale: My hon. Friend is right. It would also increase the black economy, as those who wish to do so will employ illegal immigrants for cash rather than employing legally on the open market, which is what most of us would like to see them do.

I came away from that visit of inquiry with a distinct impression of the need for an identity card to serve the United Kingdom, and preferably a Europewide standard identity card. I am sorry that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary showed his opposition to that suggestion. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will extend the argument and tell us why any Government should be opposed to the sort of document that my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North defined in his excellent speech.

The Home Affairs Select Committee has consistently recommended the introduction of an identity card—initially voluntary, although one that might well become mandatory. It would be a facilitating document that could carry medical and personal documents if the holder so wishes. It would provide instant identity and serve as a travel document throughout the European Community.

Much has been made of the internal frontiers convention—another product of the European Community. The explanatory memorandum offered by the Government for this afternoon's debate says:

> "The draft External Frontiers Convention, which has not yet been signed but about which written evidence has recently been given to the Home Affairs Committee's inquiry on migration controls . . . affords the prospect of improved collective defences against illegal entry to the European Community and of reduced visa formalities for genuine visitors and persons resident in Member States."

Does that mean "improved collective defences" along the entire River Oder, over which we flew in a helicopter and saw mile after mile of open frontier that anybody could cross without let or hindrance? Are there to be improved defences for Genoa along the entire coast of northern Italy, into which any boat can sail carrying immigrants from north Africa with impunity? Are there to be improved external defences around every Greek island, or around the shores of the United Kingdom, France or Ireland?

That concept does not exist. The compensatory measures upon which Community policy has been based do not provide for that which is needed. The policy was dreamt up before the fall of the Berlin wall. To remove the internal frontiers of Europe now would be every bit as dangerous as removing the watertight bulkheads of a ship while there was a gaping hole in the bow.

No doubt some of us will be accused of racist overtones or undertones. The Select Committee on which I serve has been and seen, and I fear for what I have seen. The European proposals that we are considering will cause immense damage to race relations in the United Kingdom and throughout the European Community.

6.11 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): First, I apologise to the House for being absent from the Chamber for most of the debate. I was attending a meeting of the Select Committee on Social Security. Perhaps I should apologise to the Minister for returning, because he does not seem awfully pleased to see me.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Corbyn: Obviously, I misjudged the Minister. As I have said, I had to attend a sitting of a Select Committee, so I could not be in my place in the Chamber for much of the debate.

I am glad that there is a debate on asylum and immigration policies throughout Europe, for it is time that one should take place in a calm atmosphere. Popular newspapers have been discussing the subject over the past few months, and much of that material seems to have rested upon unattributable anecdotal evidence about the alleged misdemeanours of a few who are seeking political asylum. This "evidence" is blown up and becomes part of common parlance. In other words, it becomes common currency. It is repeated at the Dispatch Box by the Home Secretary, who then says that he does not want to stir up feeling on these matters. However, he continues to repeat the "evidence".

I recall that, on Second Reading of the Asylum Bill, *The Daily Mail* chose as a front-page story the allegation that somebody seeking asylum had defrauded British Telecom of £120,000. It occurred to me that that newspaper might have done well to report that the chairman of British Telecom is paid £550,000: that would have put things into perspective.

There has been a stream of stories of that sort—perhaps, in a sense, to give credibility to the Asylum Bill, which I sincerely hope will be lost. It is my wish that the general election will arrive and spare us that awful legislation. We are not discussing the specific terms of that Bill, but I think that we should put on record once again our continuing opposition to the measure.

The Asylum Bill would not give proper rights of appeal to those who are refused political asylum. It would introduce a twin-track policy. It would introduce fingerprinting of all those who seek political asylum, including their children. When pressed on that issue, the Under-Secretary of State was unable to say what would be the minimum age at which a child would be fingerprinted. The Bill would ensure that those who sought political asylum could not obtain permanent housing until their cases had been resolved. That means that the children of asylum seekers in London, and especially in the part of it that I represent, would be in bed-and-breakfast hotels or other substandard accommodation. A lack of temporary accommodation means exactly that.

The consequences of the provisions to which I have referred are compounded when we remember the deliberate punishment of asylum seekers that was meted out by the Prime Minister when he was a junior Minister at the Department of Health and Social Security. The right hon. Gentleman introduced the concept of 90 per cent. payments only of income support for those who were asylum seekers. There is no logic behind that policy, but it is set out in social security legislation.

Mr. John Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman rightly says that the issue of permanent housing was discussed during the passage of the Asylum Bill. I wonder what he tells those who are on the council waiting list—I have no doubt that there are a considerable number in his constituency, as there are in mine—who would have to wait even longer for a home because asylum seekers, under his policy, would be put in front of them at the head of the queue. I wonder what he says to those who are on the waiting list who see him at his advice centres.

Mr. Corbyn: I tell those who are on the housing waiting list in my constituency—I hope that the hon. Gentleman does the same—that everybody should be housed according to need. I say that those who are homeless should be housed. I tell them that there is no discrimination when it comes to housing. I say that allocations are made on the basis of need, irrespective of where their parents come from, where they come from or where their children come from.

I explain that the borough within my constituency needs a capital building programme of about £80 million a year if it is to deal with serious housing shortages within the area, and add that it has never received more than 25 per cent. of what is needed from central Government. Authorisation is needed before it is possible to build. I try to make people aware that continual pressure on the authority to sell council houses exacerbates the housing problem. Those people who sleep on the streets of London did not sleep on them 10 years ago. They are there now because of cuts in the house-building programme, the deregulation of private-sector rents and the sale of council-owned property in areas of high housing stress. That is what I tell the people who are on the waiting list. I believe that it is the honest answer, and I shall continue to give it.

There are many other aspects of the Asylum Bill to which my colleagues and I take the strongest possible objection, and I hope that those in the other place will be able to amend it. As I have said, however, I hope that we shall hear no more of the Bill. It was guided by a deliberate misuse of statistics by the Home Secretary at last year's Tory party conference—not by good purpose or good intent—and a wish by the popular press to wind up the asylum issue. We need to have an informed debate about political asylum.

It is necessary also to debate the rise of racism throughout Europe. It is extremely serious that, across Europe, there is a rapid and frightening growth in racist and neo-fascist activities and parties. In Germany, between August and December 1991, there were 800 recorded attacks on the dwellings of non-European nationals legally living in the country—guest workers or whatever one wants to call them.

The level of Nazi-style activity in parts of former East Germany is frightening. Many brave people have stood up against racist violence and racist attacks in Germany, and it is sad that the outrages still continue. It was highly appropriate that last year, on the anniversary of Kristallnacht, there was a demonstration outside the German embassy. We demanded that the German Government should take much stronger action against the perpetrators of racist violence.

It is frightening also that one of the supposedly more popular politicians in France, which suffered so grievously from Nazi aggression between 1939 and 1945, should be that awful character Jean-Marie Le Pen, who unfortunately visited Britain last year. He represents all that is vile about fascism and racism throughout Europe.

The growth of racism is not confined to France and Germany. There is a growth of racist parties in Austria, and the recent general election in Sweden was dominated by a sort of anti-asylum-seeker tide. If we try to appease these forces and tides, they will not go away. Racist violence does not disappear because someone says, "We

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should understand people's feelings." There has to be an understanding that any appeasement of racism has a ratchet effect and racism increases.

We are not without the problem in this country. Racial violence is, unfortunately, quite common in our major cities. In this country, a racial attack takes place roughly every 30 minutes. That is one too many in any circumstances. We need to end the implicit approval of racial violence that too many people show.

We are also talking about the rights of people in Europe. There are 15 million non-European nationals living within the European Economic Community. They do not have the rights that the rest of us enjoy. They live in western Europe, they pay their taxes in western Europe, and they contribute to the economic well-being of western Europe. They are positive and supportive members of the community, yet they are denied the right to vote and the right of free movement within western Europe that is implicit in the rights of EEC citizens.

Dr. Godman: Does my hon. Friend agree that the European Community, in the shape of the European Commission, by failing to take care of the rights of those people, is creating an underclass of permanent residents of the European Community?

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend is right. The Community is creating an underclass through its refusal to grant civil and political rights to many of those people. Also, there is a failure to understand the position of people who, in legal terms, are illegal immigrants. There are people who live in the major cities of western Europe and of this country who lead a twilight existence. They are afraid to go anywhere or to do anything for fear of being deported. They are grievously exploited by unscrupulous employers who know that they can exploit their current situation. There must be an understanding that, if it is to be a civilised continent after 1992, something must be done about the underclass of people who are so abominably treated throughout Europe.

I deal with a large number of cases relating to immigration and asylum law in my constituency. Some of the unhappiest people who come to see me are those who came from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh—often many years ago—whose children and partners, usually the wives, are left behind at home. They go through the awful misery of the entry clearance queue, which can take years and years to be resolved. There is the misery of living on remittances sent home while somebody works extremely hard in this country and is denied the right of family reunion. That matter should be addressed far more vigorously by the British Government. The right of family reunion is clearly within the European convention.

There are also the rights of family union of asylum seekers. I raised that matter with the Home Secretary during an intervention. At the moment, a group of Kurdish asylum seekers are camped outside the Home Office, demanding the right of family reunion. Most of them have been here since 1989, when they fled oppression in Turkey and sought asylum in this country. Their applications are being processed. In the meantime, their families are extremely vulnerable at home. The plight of families who may not themselves merit asylum within the terms of the 1951 Geneva convention or indeed any other legislation at least deserves consideration.

The 1951 Geneva convention was drawn up in a different atmosphere in a different time. It was drawn up because large numbers of people were seeking political asylum in various countries. They were usually from what is now eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union. The movement of people in search of political asylum has changed. It is now third-world countries that are having to support refugees who have sought asylum. Often, their own regimes drive people out. People have been driven out of Somalia, Zaire, Ethiopia and other African countries. In the past, people have been driven out of Chile and, more recently, El Salvador. There is a range of countries that people have to leave in order to seek their own safety.

We must recognise the right to seek political safety. We also have the responsibility to ensure that they are able to get to that safety. Many of them, tragically, do not. We have a duty to play our part in ensuring that people seek political asylum. We also have a duty to pursue a foreign policy objective that does not give succour and comfort to the most oppressive regimes.

Throughout the time that he was in power before the invasion of Kuwait, Saddam Hussein was not heavily criticised by the British Government—no way. People were fleeing Saddam Hussein from the time he came to power. I am glad to say that some of them managed to obtain political asylum in this country. Saddam Hussein was given arms, aid, ammunition and credit by western European Governments, and he was not alone in that. We should seek to be a little more rational and reasonable.

One of my constituents from Turkey sought political asylum in this country. He was threatened with deportation, and he never went back; the reason he did not go back was that he committed suicide. He took his own life rather than go back. His name was Siho Iyogouen. I hope that, in memory of such people, who felt that they could not cope any more, we will have a slightly more humane attitude to asylum seekers than the Asylum Bill or many Conservative Members appear to have.

6.25 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I am very grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to say a few words about a subject that is very important to my constituents. I feel some sadness in taking part in a debate for the last time with my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Sir T. Raison). There is no doubt that, in 1974, when I was first elected to the House, there was a widespread feeling, certainly in my constituency and in many others, that there was a comfortable consensus between the Tory and Labour Front Benches, dominated most of all by Lord Jenkins of Hillhead, who treated Lord Whitelaw, as he has become, with kindly condescension—a kindly condescension which, on the whole, Lord Whitelaw accepted.

It was a large part of my political life to make it plain that Wolverhampton and the west midlands demanded tighter controls on immigration. Those who suggested that there should be tighter controls on immigration were regarded as most disagreeable and uncivilised racists. Although it was always thought to be a political necessity, it was always thought to be extremely vulgar to suggest that necessity. In the course of those activities, I spent much time criticising my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury, who was at his most distinguished when he was Lord Whitelaw's understrapper at the Home Office. Having spent much time criticising my right hon. Friend, I am bound to say that even though it may be that some of the loopholes have been left unblocked, my right hon. Friend's overall objective has been achieved.

My right hon. Friend did not come to the problem with the same interests and prejudices with which I came to it. He came, most of all, from a liberal standpoint, but he recognised at an early stage that good race relations depend upon tight controls on immigration and that such tight controls must be understood to be in position by all parts of the community, both by the indigenous white population and also by the new immigrants. It is a tribute to my right hon. Friend's political career that, to a great extent, the policy that he has put in place has worked and that tension has much diminished.

One of the difficult matters that my right hon. Friend had to decide concerned the arranged marriage, the relationship between this country and India, the important historic ties that all of us felt—my family had soldiered in India for some generations, and I think that I understand them as well as anybody—and the difference between the attractions of the love marriage and the arranged marriage, which is often a more stable relationship than the so-called western love marriage.

There are the problems which occur among young Asian girls who are torn between their strong family religion and culture and the new culture in which they are brought up at school. There is the agony of those westernised girls who believe that they can have a love marriage, but who find themselves forced into an arranged marriage, sometimes at financial advantage to their families. Those are all difficult problems but, in general, my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury struck the right balance. I like to think that we helped him to achieve it, by prodding him all the way. That balance has more or less stuck.

It is perhaps rather dangerous to suggest, as Labour does, that there can be a major change in immigration law, because that gives the impression to the indigenous community that there will be a relaxation when there will not. Alternatively, it is hypocritical and unkind to the Asian community for Labour to make such a suggestion. In general, that community has accepted the existing arrangements, and to give the impression that it will be much easier to gain entry to this country by an arranged marriage is dangerous.

All those questions involve difficult judgments in which conflicting principles must be weighed. That task is essentially one that should be accomplished by domestic legislation, which should take account of the country's conditions, and the conditions in which it ruled other parts of the globe. Legislation needs to reconcile different religions and different systems of government. That is neither an easy nor a precise art, but the present arrangements are more or less sustainable and have the effect of much reducing racial tension.

The EEC proposals illustrate the way in which our continental neighbours seek not, as I put it earlier, to muddle their way through on a step-by-step basis with a sovereign Parliament doing its best in the circumstances—being well aware that one Act may be inconsistent with another—but to proclaim great principles that they hold to be both absolute and immutable.

In paragraph 57 of the Commission's communication of 23 October 1991, Commissioner Bangemann states:

> "There is also a pressing need to adopt common principles concerning the reuniting of families, taking account of fundamental rights such as are already enshrined in various areas of case law. The right to live with one's family is a fundamental right which cannot be denied by authorities."

Where does the primary purpose rule fit in there? What is a family? Is there such a thing as a fundamental right to join a family that may have been created by an arranged marriage? Does an arranged marriage have the same status in this country as it does in India, for example? Those are all issues on which the House ought to reach a decision. They ought not to be decided by the Commission. It is grossly arrogant for the Commission to present paragraph 57.

I hesitate to say this, but our system of muddling through, and of trying—in a decent and honourable, if perhaps illogical way—to reconcile great and difficult principles has not done too badly. We do not have quite the same reputation and history as Germany, for example, and in many respects we have a rather better history of muddling through difficulties than the French. For a Commissioner to tell us that there are certain immutable principles which ought to be applied to agonising decisions in all circumstances is grossly arrogant. It is dangerously arrogant because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) pointed out, there is—and I put it as high as this—a conspiracy between the Commission and the European Court of Justice whereby the EEC's proposed federal powers could be further extended. Let us have no more of that nonsense.

This country's cohesion and sense of community depend first of all on preserving tight but fair immigration controls. We may not have made a perfect job of that, and I dare say that there have been occasional cases of injustice. We shall need to keep muddling our way through in response to changing social conditions, but we must avoid above all the Commissioners' arrogant impertinence.

6.35 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): As ever when we discuss European instruments, today's debate has been attended by some of the Government's most assiduous anti-Europeans. To give the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) his due, he attends all such debates. Today he said that immigration control was likely to go if the logic of the documents was followed to its conclusion. That is simply not true. No EEC member is advocating such a course. The opposite is happening throughout Europe. There is likely to be increasing co-operation, and more and more controls and procedures will become common, because that is the logic of the Single European Act, which a Conservative Government guillotined through the House five years ago.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman at least study the statements made by Mr. Bangemann, a copy of which I can let him have, in which that Commissioner urges individuals to challenge Britain's rights of control? It is clear that the Commission itself will be taking action after next January.

Mr. Darling: I have read those remarks, but the hon. Gentleman must acknowledge that, if Europe follows the single European market, obviously more and more

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immigration and custom controls will become common. That does not mean that individual member states cannot maintain regimes to suit their particular requirements. We argue that, and so do the Government. There is common ground between us in that regard.

If there is to be a single European market, the logic is that there will be fewer frontier and other controls, but individual member states will be able to maintain their own immigration regimes to meet their own requirements. Every other member state recognises that. I am sure that the hon. Member for Southend, East acknowledges also that, in continental Europe in particular, there is a certain logic to reducing barriers between member states so that it will be easier to cross from one to another. There are immigration controls at Europe's external boundaries, but that does not mean that our own immigration rules and regulations cannot be maintained as we see fit.

As there is convergence in some cases and the application of individual rules in others, it will be open to the British Government to maintain our view that there ought to be frontier control around the United Kingdom, while at the same time accepting that there are implications in our membership of the Community.

This debate embraces both asylum and immigration. There is a difference. Asylum concerns the way in which we treat those who come to this country because they fear persecution, whereas immigration determines those laws and regulations that we impose in deciding who should and should not be allowed to enter this country. I emphasise that difference, because the two are often confused—particularly by Conservative Members.

First, let us look at the question of asylum. I think that we all accept that a major problem exists, in that a growing number of people are seeking asylum not only in the United Kingdom, but throughout the European Community. The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) mentioned that. Having heard his account of the trip undertaken by the Select Committee on Home Affairs, many hon. Members may want to become members of that Committee. It seems to be a case of "Join the Home Affairs Committee and see the world," given the hon. Gentleman's description of travels throughout Europe and helicopter excursions to see the extent of the problem.

Mr. Gale: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Darling: I am sorry if all his travelling has aroused the hon. Gentleman. Perhaps he will wait for a moment.

I accept—as, I believe, do all hon. Members—that the EC in general faces a migration problem. Pressure will be exerted both by those who seek to escape the economic misfortunes which have befallen them, and by those who seek to escape persecution, starvation or some other threat. The question is not whether the threat exists, but how we should deal with it. That is the difference between the two sides.

Mr. Gale: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, although I am not entirely certain that everyone would consider that standing freezing on the east German border constitutes a rest cure. The German Government treat any illegal immigrant—economic or otherwise—who arrives in the republic and asks for asylum as an asylum seeker, and pay benefit. That means that, as well as receiving money, such people can travel to any country in the European Community without any further checks.

Mr. Darling: Two points arise from that. First, the Germans are in the process of changing their asylum regime, precisely because of the problems to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. Secondly, if an individual is given the right of abode within a certain EC state, that does not guarantee the right to move around Europe as a whole. That is the main thrust of the debate.

Mr. Gale: There is no frontier.

Mr. Darling: There is a frontier around the United Kingdom, which both main parties—I cannot speak for the Liberal Democrats—want to maintain. Anyone wishing to enter the United Kingdom must be identified. EC members in continental Europe have chosen a different party: they have opted for reduced frontier controls, preferring to rely on identity cards. The hon. Gentleman favours the same option—although, to give him his due, he would like both frontier controls and identity cards.

Everyone accepts that a problem exists, and that it needs to be addressed. Unfortunately, as was pointed out by the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Sir T. Raison), if we want to stop the problem at source, we must consider the nature of the regimes which cause people to move. Some regimes are so brutal that populations are terrorised into seeking to escape. We must also not forget the issue of economic development. That applies not only to the developing world, but to the countries mentioned by the hon. Member for Thanet, North—the former members of the eastern European bloc. Unless they are given economic assistance and encouragement, more and more people will be forced to try to escape from starvation or other privations, and to seek a better life. Immigration and asylum control can deal only with the tip of the problem, not with the root cause.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has made clear our position on the Asylum Bill. I cannot understand why the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State was so defensive about the concessions that he made in Committee and subsequently—I should have thought that he would be only too pleased to claim credit for them. Certainly, the Government made concessions, some of which were forced on them.

In the case of the plan to scrap legal advice and assistance for those seeking asylum, for instance, they had no alternative because the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service simply could not have dealt with the provision of such assistance; the Government have now been obliged to climb down, and to ensure that it will be available. There were other concessions, however. For instance, there was the insertion into the Bill of an amendment having regard to the provisions of a United Nations convention, and further concessions relating to the rules.

I remind the House that the draft rules—both in terms of procedure, and in terms of the substantive immigration provisions—have to be read part and parcel with the Bill. During the four weeks in which we discussed the matter in Committee, those rules were probably mentioned more often than the Bill itself: without them, the Bill would not work.

The Under-Secretary of State should not be so reluctant to accept that concessions were made. I appreciate that some of his right-wing colleagues may wish to take their revenge, and he may not consider it very helpful of me to refer to the substantial concessions that he made. None the less, they were made.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook has made it clear that, if the Government want the Asylum Bill to go on to the statute book, they need only move a little further towards meeting the other objections expressed by the Opposition and by groups outside the House. Certain amendments will need to be made to a Bill which both sides agree must be introduced—for there is no doubt that an asylum Bill of some sort will be necessary to deal with the growing number of applications. The Government need only talk to us, and decide whether they can meet the outstanding objections set out by my right hon. Friend.

What has happened to the Bill? It would be interesting to find that out from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. If the Government set such store by the legislation —I believe that it was described as flagship legislation in the autumn—why have they let it run into the sand in the House of Lords? They are responsible for Government business here and in the other place. If the Bill is so important, why was it just left in the House of Lords?

I understand that the Committee stage does not even start until the end of next week, just four days before we expect the Prime Minister to announce that he is going to the country. It is very odd that a Bill in which the Home Secretary took such an interest in July, and at the Tory party conference, has apparently been allowed to die the death in the House of Lords. Perhaps the Under-Secretary of State will tell us when we can expect to see it return —if, indeed, it is to return.

The second strand of today's debate has been the question of immigration procedures. I repeat the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook about the way in which we discuss such matters. The hon. Member for Southend, East and others have complained bitterly about the way in which the EC draws up regulations and expects member states to follow them. I find it just as invidious that such matters should be dealt with by means of discussions between the appropriate Ministers and the EC.

In one of the most recent documents to emerge from the Commission in Brussels, attention is drawn to the fact that much criticism has been made of the way in which discussions have often been made in secret. Information about the discussions which took place in the Schengen and Trevi groups of Ministers has tended to come out by accident rather than by design. It would be far better if Ministers were prepared to make statements in the House after entering into agreements on behalf of this country, so that they could be questioned and, if necessary, challenged. Certainly, my party will undertake to do that in future.

I believe—this is directly relevant to the discussions that have taken place—that, if we are to discuss the visa regime, two points should be borne in mind. First, I think that it is more likely than not that the use of visas will increase in the EC, rather than decreasing; but, if we are to have visas, it is surely essential for them to be granted far more quickly than at present, so that urgent visits can be carried out without people having to wait several months to find out whether a visa will be granted.

Secondly, if a visa is granted, I feel that it should carry the right of entry. At present, an individual who obtains a visa and comes to the country is frequently refused entry, possibly for one of the reasons that were canvassed at the time of the initial application. Surely it would be better either to exercise control at the frontier, or—if we are to use visas—to make it clear that, if a visa is granted, the country will be expected to honour the issue of that visa.

As I said earlier, we intend to maintain frontier control. Given that this is an island, there is a certain logic in such action. As and when the channel tunnel starts to operate, however, we may—I use the word advisedly—have to review the position. If the logic of the tunnel is to work, it would be absurd to empty the train of passengers when it arrives at Dover, Waterloo or Stratford, if the nations and regions of the United Kingdom are to benefit. The Government will have to consider that eventually—although, thanks to the present Government's lack of progress and preparedness for the tunnel, it may not arise for some years.

If we abandon frontier controls, the logic of the introduction of identity cards will become overwhelming. Identity cards are unnecessary and will create more difficulties than they will solve. Individual freedom should not be infringed any more than is necessary. I should have thought that the Conservative party, which introduced the poll tax, might think long and hard before introducing another measure that would be as much resented as the poll tax was. That may be why the Home Secretary, who had a hand in the poll tax if I am not mistaken, has at least shied away from that proposal.

The hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) advocated the carrying of identity cards. I do not want my whole life to be reduced to a magnetic strip on a plastic card. I do not want to carry an identity card, because it is not necessary for me to do so. Those who advocate identity cards should think long and hard before continuing to do so.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook made an important point on family unity. A Frenchman or a German has more rights to family unity in this country than an Englishman, a Scotsman or a Welshman has. I remind the House that it was not long ago that the Government introduced a measure to allow EC nationals to come here not only with their spouses, but with their dependants. Few Conservative Members were present, but I remember the legislation going through the House. It is ludicrous that British citizens are disadvantaged in that way.

The position of third-country nationals should be considered. I am not sure what the solution is. It is odd that someone who has lived in this country for 30 or 40 years, but who has, perhaps for reasons of sentiment, kept his original passport—such as a Jamaican passport—can be stopped before leaving this country to go to France, for example. The right hon. Member for Aylesbury said that the remedy was to acquire British citizenship. I accept that, but I believe that, if there is no objective difference between that individual now and that individual once he has acquired citizenship, it is logical to consider making his life easier without his having to take that step.

When this country assumes the EC presidency later this year, it should take the opportunity to consider certain matters. If the common frontier regime is implemented with a common information system, under which someone who is stopped at Athens will, in effect, be refused entry to the whole of western Europe, counter-balancing rights

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such as freedom of information legislation across Europe must be given to citizens so that people can see what information is held on them.

Sir John Wheeler *rose*——

Mr. Darling: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will wait a moment.

Data protection legislation is also essential to ensure that information is not wrongly held on individuals which discriminates against them. If there are to be controls, there must be corresponding rights.

The right hon. Member for Aylesbury commented that the debate has been conducted without rancour and said that he hoped that the matter would not be party political, especially during the election. He should tell that to Conservative central office, to the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) and to the Home Secretary. All these matters would be dealt with far better on the basis of consensus and without party politics. That would benefit many people in this country and in the rest of Europe. There is common ground if only there is a will to find it. We have made it clear that we are prepared to consider a satisfactory regime on asylum which would suit all of us. I hope that the Government are equal to that challenge.

Sir John Wheeler: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Hon. Members: He has finished.

6.55 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): Before I respond to the specific points raised in the debate—which, although it was no doubt fully in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at times took wing quite beyond the two documents of which we are taking note—I will reiterate the general points that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made about the provenance of the documents.

He said that they were communications from the Commission to the Council and to the European Parliament. They give the Commission's views on matters which are not within the competence of the treaty of Rome and which cannot, therefore, be proposals for Community action or the basis for Community decision. They were designed as discussion papers for use in preparing for the Maastricht summit. Although the Commission has no responsibility in asylum and immigration matters, there was a strong lobby for transferring those matters from national Governments to the competence of the treaty of Rome, and thus of the Commission and the European Court.

One of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's signal successes at Maastricht was to ensure that these matters, apart from the list of visa countries, remain with national Governments. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) and others should take some comfort. Family reunion policy has not gone to Mr. Bangemann; it remains with national Governments. The new treaty will confirm that immigration and asylum continue to be matters for intergovernmental co-operation, although discussion and decision will be more coherently structured in the interior and justice pillar which is being created. That means that Governments will decide by unanimity. They will thus remain responsible to national Parliaments.

Although decisions will continue to belong to national Governments, with no obligation to concur with measures that they judge not to be in their countries' interests, there is general acceptance that in the matter of immigration and asylum, all the countries of Europe face, in different ways and to different degrees, the same pressures and difficulties. It makes sense to consider them together and, when appropriate, to act together. I am glad to say that that seemed to be the view of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), if I understood him correctly.

There is a programme of work, endorsed by Governments at Maastricht, on which the Interior and Justice Ministers will embark. The comprehensive agenda is summarised on pages 4 to 10 in the Immigration Ministers' report to the Maastricht summit. That is a heavy programme of work and it is unlikely to be completed for some years. At this stage, it is not possible to say what changes the decisions will bring in train to our current rules and practices.

The spirit in which we enter the discussions is pragmatic and positive. We do not seek, and we will not agree to, harmonisation merely for its own sake, but we believe that there is advantage to us in a common approach to common problems. We shall be anxious to find agreement with our partners when it is helpful for us to do so.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) asked about the progress of the Asylum Bill. Its Committee stage is down for 13 and 17 March. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, there must be gaps between various stages in the other place in which the normal business can be brought forward. It is possible with the agreement of both sides somewhat to concertina the process, so there is just time for the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends to ensure that the Bill is on the statute book before the general election, if they put their deathbed repentance into practice.

I enjoyed the claim by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook that he and his hon. Friends have forced fundamental changes to the Asylum Bill. If that enables him to support the Bill at this late stage, I shall be happy. He showed, as usual, an imperfect grasp of what is in the Bill. I realise that he has to fill his speeches with reports of famous victories. If he cares to puff himself up like a bullfrog and call a clarification a concession, that is up to him. It looked only risible to us, but it may impress some of his hon. Friends and some journalists who have not followed the Bill.

I noted that the right hon. Gentleman appeared to want to weaken the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987, the primary purpose rule and the Asylum Bill. Everything that he advocated would reduce the effectiveness of our immigration controls. There was nothing in what he said that gave any confidence on that score.

I was interested in what my hon. friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) said about identity cards as a guarantee of freedom. I merely remark that no European country which has had identity cards for long finds that they are particularly effective in dealing with illegal immigration. Other countries have their own means and their different practices. But they all have greater problems than we have.

The hon. Member for Greenock——

Dr. Godman: Greenock, not "Grennock".

Mr. Lloyd: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman and to Greenock. The Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) was worried about the position of non-Community nationals in the EC. That is an issue to be addressed by the interior and justice pillar. We want to achieve an arrangement by which those people can at least move around as visitors from the Community if they have established residency in a Community country. We believe that that will be a great advantage and that our minority groups should enjoy that right. However, of course, in Britain they have the opportunity to become British citizens when they have been here for the requisite period.

It being Seven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [21 February].*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8810/91, relating to the right of asylum and 8811/91, relating to immigration and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Home Office on 27th February 1992; endorses the Government's view that harmonisation of substantive immigration and asylum policies among the Member States of the European Community should be taken forward inter-governmentally outside the Treaty of Rome; and welcomes the wide recognition of this principle at Maastricht.

Sittings of the House

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

[Proposed subject for debate: Report from the Select Committee on Sittings of the House (HC20].

7 pm

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmoreland and Lonsdale): The topic for the debate tonight is the report of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask your advice on how wide the debate can go? An Adjournment Debate allows fairly wide discussion. I wonder whether the debate is limited simply to the points in the report.

Mr. Speaker: An Adjournment debate is wide, but it is, of course, limited to the report of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House.

Mr. Jopling: The Select Committee was set up last July and the report was laid before the House a week last Friday. I begin by expressing my gratitude to the members of the Committee, who were extremely hard-working and co-operative. We had 17 meetings in the short time that the Committee was in existence. We have several extremely busy people on the Committee, including the chairman of the 1922 Committee, the chairman of the parliamentary Labour party and the Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure. We also had two extremely helpful ladies who told us about the problems of lady members. We received a great deal of evidence, for which we are grateful. We were supported by an excellent team of Clerks, led by Mr. Sweetman.

One of the first matters which the Committee had very much in mind was that, when considering altering parliamentary procedure, it is important to seek to do it on the basis of consensus. Many hon. Members will recall that the lack of consensus was probably the reason why the Crossman experiment failed so dismally—I remember it well from when I first entered the House. So I am pleased to report that we have an agreed report. Several votes were taken in coming to that conclusion, but the House will notice from the report that in not one of those votes was the Committee split entirely along party lines. So there was a great deal of agreement, and at the end the report was unanimous.

The first step that we took was to issue a questionnaire to Members. We had a large response—probably the largest of all time. Strong feelings were expressed. It reflected the basic background to the work of the House, which we included in our report. It is that the House of Commons sits for more days and more hours than any other legislative body in any of the large democracies.

In the strongest expression of view, 83 per cent. of those who responded to the questionnaire said that they wanted fewer late night sittings. We all hear continual complaints about the fact that Parliament sometimes sits all night. People say, "How can you reach sensible decisions at 4 am?" Therefore, the Committee's central conclusion is that the main business should end in future at 10 pm. We would like the Government to declare their intention to do that at the start of each Session. Under our proposals, some business could continue after 10 pm, but we hope

[Mr. Jopling]

that that will be rare and that normally the only business after 10 pm would be Divisions arising from the business up until 10 pm, and the half-hour Adjournment.

Most Members were happy with the existing balance between the time allocated to the Government, the Opposition and private Members. I hope that the report reflects that continuing balance. If the recommendations of the report are implemented, as I hope, there might be one exception to that balance: the report is very much a charter for the Back Bencher. We have proposed that we should extract various pieces of private Members' business —namely, the Consolidated Fund Bill, private Members' motions, the three-hour recess debates and the final day recess Adjournment debates. Some of that business goes on before 10 pm and some goes on after 10 pm. Some of it goes on all night. We believe that it should be extracted and put on during prime time on Wednesday mornings in a sitting beginning at 10 am and ending at 2.30 pm, when Question Time would start in the normal way.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Has the Committee considered the implications of the sittings of the new European Committees, which always sit on Wednesday mornings and already face competition from other events?

Mr. Jopling: That is a good argument for never having morning sittings, and we considered it. But we felt that Wednesday morning might be an appropriate time for private Members' business, because there would be no need for heavy ministerial presence or heavy whipping, and at the same time and there would be the minimum disruption to the line of route.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jopling: No. The Committee has recommended that speeches by those introducing debates should be no longer than 20 minutes, and I do not intend to get caught on that one.

The Committee examined the possibility of moving the whole parliamentary day forward to start at 11.30 am. We decided against it, for very much the reasons that the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) just mentioned. It would be a mistake to start at 11.30 am, with questions from 11.30 am to 12.30 pm, statements from 12.30 to 1 pm or 1.30 pm, at a time, particularly on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, when up to 200 Members may be engaged upstairs in the Standing and Select Committees.

Mr. Clelland: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jopling: No, I will not give way. I may give way a little later, but I must get on now.

It was the view of the Committee that that great opportunity in prime time for private Members to raise matters that concern them, together with the 24 hours under the new procedure which we believe will be necessary in future for private Bills, almost exactly matches the present period provided in the once-a-week four-and-a-half-hour sessions.

The Committee's proposals largely maintain the remaining balance between Government and Opposition time in the business of the House. Of course, there will be a considerable loss of time if we do not sit after 10 pm. Therefore, the Committee suggested that, to compensate in part, we should shorten some of the set-piece debates. It recommended that the Queen's Speech debate should be shortened by one day, the Budget debate by one day, the debates on the armed services by one day, other Government debates by two days and the total of Opposition days by another two days. That would reduce those set-piece debates by seven days.

Therefore, paragraph 61 states that 71 hours of business would be lost if the House did not sit after 10 o'clock. The Committee has suggested a number of ways in which that can be made up, principally by more widespread timetabling of Bills after Second Reading. I hope that hon. Members will distinguish between timetabling and guillotining, which is a different matter, is by order of the Government, and would remain.

We propose that timetabling should either be arranged by a new Committee—set to take care of it—or that each Standing Committee could allot time for all stages of the Bill. Ultimately, the progress of Bills would remain in the hands of the Government.

I must draw hon. Members' attention to the part of our report where we state that we would deplore it if the Government of the day used the device of timetabling to put more Bills into the system.

Mr. Clelland: I should like the right hon. Member to expand on two matters. First, I believe that he is saying that one of the reasons for not having an 11.30 am start would be the complication of having Question Time when many hon. Members are in Committee. Surely that could take place at the normal time of 2.30 pm, even if the main business in the House started at 11.30am. Has the Committee considered that? Secondly, in an intervention, my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said that morning sittings would clash with Committees, but they meet in the afternoons at 4 o'clock now, and that does not seem to prevent us from carrying on with business.

Mr. Jopling: Yes, but in general afternoon Committees meet when essential business on the Floor of the House —Question Time and statements—is over. We considered the hon. Member's other proposition, but we arrived at this consensus and I hope that the House will approve it.

Other time-saving measures would be: first, to refer affirmative statutory instruments upstairs automatically; and secondly, to limit statutory instruments and European documents to one and half hours, regardless of the time at which they begin. Thirdly, we suggest wider discretion for the Speaker to apply the ten-minute rule Bill. [HON. MEMBERS: "No, the 10-minutes rule."] I am sorry, I meant the 10-minutes rule on speeches.

Finally, Ministers should be encouraged to make shorter speeches, and we recommend the abolition of the second Adjournment debate.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jopling: I must get on. The hon. Gentleman kindly gave evidence to the Committee.

The Committee was conscious of Members' responsibilities to their families. During our deliberations, we heard a good deal about the point of view of women, and we thought a great deal about it. The Committee was anxious to implant more certainty into the parliamentary year. For that reason, we decided that we would recommend that, early in the Session, 10 Fridays should be designated when the House would not sit, so that Members could make firm appointments in their diaries to visit schools or other institutions which do not function on Saturdays, and would know that they were not likely to have to cancel such appointments, as such cancellations are often not understood.

We also recommend that, on the Thursday preceding Fridays when we do not sit, business should end at 7 o'clock. I believe that that would be for the convenience of the House. I know that many hon. Members cannot get home if they do not get away by 7 o'clock on Thursday or after a vote at 10 o'clock. If they have to go home the following day, the morning is practically over before they get back to their constituencies. I believe that that change would be very much in Members' interests.

We recommend other changes which would make the parliamentary timetable more certain. The Leader of the House should announce at the start of the Session firm dates for the Christmas, Easter, and Whitsun recesses. We believe that a date should be set for rising in the summer, around mid-July. If necessary, we could return during September and October to complete business lost in July. The Leader of the House should start an experiment to announce two weeks business in advance on Thursdays to give us better warning of what is to happen.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): I welcome the fact that the right hon. Gentleman has mentioned family responsibilities, because that is one reason why there are so few women in the House. Does he recognise that, while the report is a step in the right direction, if we are to make the House more representative of women, we must have more radical reform?

Mr. Jopling: The Committee was somewhat disappointed that, although around 69 per cent. of Members responded to our questionnaire, unfortunately only 59 per cent. of the ladies responded, which we found rather strange.

The Committee has tried hard not to erect buffers in parliamentary procedures, such as an absolute rule that business would end at 10 o'clock or at any other time, or a firm decision to rise on a specific date in July, because we were aware that, if one puts up a buffer in terms of time, one provides a clear challenge for the Opposition of the day to drive the Government into those buffers.

To sum up, the Committee has devised rules to allow the House to proceed with its business as effectively as it does now, recognising the rights of both Government and Opposition, within a modern, sensible time scale. That is the core of our report, which follows fairly closely the advice that we were given helpfully by the Leader of the House, the shadow Leader of the House and the Liberal Democrat Chief Whip, to whom we are grateful. It follows closely on what they advised us individually.

I hope that the report will be acceptable now and after the election, when I hope it will be discussed again quickly, and I commend it to the House.

7.18 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): I welcome the report as a member of the Select Committee. The proposals are extremely modest. I am not a revolutionary. We must be careful when we consider the procedures of the House and consider taking one brick out. If we are not careful, without that brick we may bring the place down.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Show me the brick.

Mr. Orme: If my hon. Friend will bear with me, I shall do just that.

The report and hon. Members' experience show that, with each new Parliament, each new group of Members is dissatisfied with the procedures of the House or how it is run.

These proposals are modest, and include two or three central points. One is that Members do not see any value in sitting through the night, as we have often done night after night. Our electorate think that we are made to do it. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] It does not serve any political purpose at the end of the Session. Moreover, as we know, the Government get their business through in any case. We considered that, and have recommended that we should finish at 10 pm on most evenings. That should be the norm, although sometimes it will have to be extended. That is one of the central recommendations of the report.

Linked with that is the proposal that we should know the length of a Session and the dates of recesses. We should have advance information. We should finish in mid-July. That is of particular importance to Members with young families. That is another central recommendation.

In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), the recommendation of an experiment with morning sittings on Wednesday is worthy, and we should take it into account. We considered bringing the whole parliamentary day forward to start at 11.30 am, but there was not a consensus within the Committee for it. I assure her that some of us argued for such a proposal.

We concluded that, where possible, on Thursdays we should finish at 7 or 7.30 pm. It is proposed that that should happen on 10 Thursdays throughout the year, and that on the following Friday there should be no business. The media do not seem to realise that the work of a Member of Parliament is changing.

Mr. Skinner: Where are they?

Mr. Orme: I agree with my hon. Friend: the media are not here.

Constituency pressures are increasing rather than decreasing. Consequently, members are expected to deal with an increasing number of constituency cases. It is not always possible to do so at the weekend, as schools, businesses, factories, shops and so on are not always open. It is important to have Friday for that. We are not saying that Members should have more time off; we are saying that Members should deploy their time more intelligently. Frankly, our time is not employed intelligently now.

The timetabling of Bills is a controversial issue. We need a more intelligent approach to Standing Committees on Bills. Over the years, I have spent time battling my way through those Committees, and we need to change our approach. Sometimes we spend hundreds of hours in Committee, and to what useful purpose? At the end of the day, the Government of the day get their legislation through, however much it is opposed. The Opposition

[Mr. Orme]

have a right to oppose it as strongly as possible. That happens now. We need to give serious consideration to Standing Committees.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Of course there is an abuse of the Standing Committee system. Does my hon. Friend agree, however, that occasionally, in particular when outside bodies give us expert opinions, a Government can be highly embarrassed, or potentially embarrassed, in Committee? Does he further agree that wholesale timetabling, as distinct from selective timetabling, would reduce that? As the report states that timetabling will tilt the balance to the advantage of the Government, does my hon. Friend think that Back-Bench Members or the public would think that that would keep powers in this House rather than in Whitehall?

Mr. Orme: My hon. Friend makes a fair point, and we discussed the matter in detail in the Committee. There is no easy answer. Therefore, we have suggested that timetabling might be considered by the Standing Committee itself: if it is prepared to timetable the Bill, it could do so. I should like Select Committees to interview witnesses before such debates. The difficulty about that suggestion is that the Government of the day, irrespective of who they are, are opposed to it. There is a conflict between Back-Bench Members who, rightly, want these matters discussed, and the Government, who say, "No, no. We are not having that. We want to get the business through."

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): Further to that point, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is of no advantage to the Opposition or to pressure groups dealing with them to debate anything until 4 am or 5 am? Perhaps I am slightly influenced by the fact that I have had two doses of that on two major Bills this Session. My hon. Friend has much more experience than me, so he has had to put up with this for a great deal longer. Is it not now time that we say to new Members before they become accustomed to the place that they show their radicalism and change our procedures from those of the 19th century to those of the 21st century?

Mr. Orme: I welcome my hon. Friend's intervention. I hope that I am not taking a no-change attitude on account of my experience. Indeed, I want to see change, and I believe that the pressure for change will be greater than ever in the next Parliament.

On that basis, I recommend the report to the House. It is possible to implement its recommendations before the general election, but I hope that after the election these modest proposals will be put into effect. Let us see how Parliament can carry these proposals forward next Session.

7.27 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) on the way in which he chaired the Select Committee and on the report that he has produced for the consideration of the House.

First, let me answer the question raised by the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) about lady Members. We spent a lot of time in Committee considering how to address the need to encourage more ladies to become Members of the House. One of the points that was made very definitely to us was that morning sittings would not encourage young mothers into the House. They are much more able to have time with their children in the morning than in the evening when their children are in bed. We considered that the present hours of the House might well be more helpful to young mothers than a major change.

Secondly, as is obvious from some voices in this House, a small number of Members are well able to frustrate the working of the House, without any reform. Too often a few voices have stopped reform when a large majority of Members, not attending this debate, are in favour of the report and would like to see its recommendations implemented.

Before I consider the report, I wish to deal with two matters to which it does not refer. By its terms of reference, the Committee was precluded from examining the size of the House of Commons. We are the largest parliamentary assembly or congress in the free world. I accept that Germany has had to bring together in the Bundestag members from east and west, but it will reduce that number by the emergency resolution on the amalgamation.

There is no doubt that the House sits more days and longer hours than any other Parliament. I wonder whether it would not be more convenient for the country and the House if, after the next election, the House were made up not of 651 hon. Members but of only 450.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Why?

Sir Peter Emery: Because many of the problems that arise would come to nothing if there were fewer hon. Members. It may be difficult to get chickens to vote for chicken pie, but if Parliament decided to order the Boundary Commission to achieve that in 10 years' time, through wastage, positive thinking could bring that about.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: My hon. Friend suggests 200 fewer hon. Members, but how many people know who their MEP is? I do not, and, do not need to. Constituents want their individual problems to be dealt with and that is an important job of an hon. Member. If there are fewer hon. Members, those individual problems will be dealt with less well.

Sir Peter Emery: I am not surprised that my hon. Friend does not know who his MEP is, but that is another matter. My hon. Friend has not taken into consideration the fact that, when the House was made up of 450 hon. Members, hon. Members were frequently able to deal with the constituency size that resulted. Bill van Straubenzee was a good example of such an hon. Member.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Bill who?

Sir Peter Emery: The Select Committee on the Sittings of the House did not give enough thought to the fact that the work load of a Member of Parliament has vastly altered. The amount of constituency correspondence and the demands on the Member to be in the constituency has altered so much since I first came to the House in 1959. I was then the Member for Reading and worked in Parliament. Today, an hon. Member is meant to be the Member of Parliament in the constituency.

The demands of the work load of the House have changed considerably, and our sitting hours make it very difficult for an hon. Member representing a constituency a long way from Westminster to spend time in his constituency on a Friday. That is why the Committee recommended that the House should not sit on at least 10 Fridays. We shall have to consider the sitting hours of the House again before long when the House reassembles after the election.

The report contains 13 recommendations, and the majority of them have been mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale. Of the 13 recommendations, seven were recommendations made to the House by the Select Committee on Procedure over the past three years. They include the recommendations on the allocation of time, affirmative resolutions for Standing Committees, those on statutory instruments and European documents, shorter speeches from the Front Benches—something that the House might accept—length of the parliamentary calendar, greater latitude for Mr. Speaker to use the 10-minute limit, and second Adjournments.

As an aside to the Lord President, I suggest that the reports of the Procedure Committee should be debated far more quickly than they have been in the past. I give my right hon. Friend the greatest praise because he has done more to implement the reports of that Committee than any other Leader of the House for a long time. My right hon. Friend deserves credit for that.

Is the House willing to consider some reform? To suggest that the reforms proposed by the Committee are a major revolution is nonsense. They are just a small move forward. One thing that I have learnt as Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure—Chairman for longer than any other hon. Member since the great war—is that it takes considerable time to change our procedures. We move slowly. Such matters need to be considered and thought out with great care, but most of the Committee's recommendations have been around for a long time.

I believe that it is right and proper to move in that direction, and I believe that the opportunity to do so will arise after the next general election. I ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and the shadow Leader of the House to give a commitment to reconsider this matter immediately the House returns after the election. I also ask the Leader of the House to ensure that the Clerk and the Clerks' Department have ready for us all the alterations in the Standing Orders that would be necessary for us to proceed. If my right hon. Friend, whatever position he may subsequently hold, urges that this matter be dealt with swiftly after the election, he should know that the members of the Procedure Committee will give every support to try to ensure that the changes are introduced.

7.36 pm

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): The House of Commons sits for more days in the year and for more hours in the day than any other legislature in the western world. The American Senate and the Canadian House of Commons sit for half as long, while the Parliaments of France, Germany and Italy sit for one third as long as we do.

One matter not addressed in what I consider to be a timid and disappointing report is why we sit for so many hours. It has been held that we scrutinise more detailed legislation than any other legislature. The report does not consider what increase or diminution in hours is likely in future because of, for example, the transfer of legislative powers to the European Council. I assume that that transfer of powers must be accompanied by a movement of powers of scrutiny to the European Parliament. Those issues were not put properly in context.

The report contains a number of worthwhile proposals. I agree with the timetabling of Government Bills, which would put an end to the absolutely fruitless guillotine debates. The guillotine was used 22 times between 1945 and 1977. In the 11-year reign of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) it was used 66 times and she had the nerve to lecture us not so long ago about the supremacy of Parliament. We did not see much of that when her boot was on Parliament's neck. I also agree with the earlier announcement of recesses and the proposal to rise in mid-July. I believe that we should finish even earlier and come back earlier in the autumn.

The 10 sitting-free Fridays are tokenism. How many hon. Members attend the House for more than a handful of Fridays anyway? The Friday concession is a diversion from the real issue of whether Parliament should work normal hours.

Parliament was much more robust about such matters 25 years ago. The Procedure Committee of 1966 considered different ways in which the hours of the House could be reduced. In the end, the Committee settled for moving some business to two mornings a week. The Leader of the House, Mr. Richard Crossman, set out a number of proposals for change, including trial morning sittings. I must say that Richard Crossman was a real Leader of the House, unlike some of the recent holders of that title who have seemed to behave like major-domos of the Cabinet. The result was that the House decided to meet on Monday and Wednesday mornings from 10 am to 12.30 pm.

Mr. Crossman intelligently observed that opposition to the proposals came from hon. Members who saw the experiment as

> "the thin end of the wedge which, if driven home . . . might exclude the part-time MP from the House altogether."

There are probably more part-time MPs now than there were then but the matter is delicately skirted in the report. On 14 December 1966, Crossman said:

> "Up till now, if we are frank, our time-table has been designed to suit the convenience of those part-timers who earn their living outside in the mornings and the whole-timers, often without these economic advantages, have had to lump it . . .is it not time we gave some consideration to the needs of those who keep the House of Commons going during the morning hours when the part-timers are earning their living?"—[*Official Report*, 14 December 1966; Vol. 738, c. 492-93.]

As the House knows, Crossman's experiment failed because filibustering by Conservative Members kept the House up late at night, as it had been before. Despite the morning sittings, the extent of late night sittings increased. As Crossman pointed out, the Government gained from the experiment. In 46 short morning sittings, they secured 20 Second Readings, 12 Committee stages, 18 Report stages and Third Readings, 24 orders and four considerations of Lords amendments.

It is always alleged that there was not enough business for the Crossman morning sessions, but that simply is not true. They were destroyed by Conservative Members who wanted to earn their livings outside the House in the mornings.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Garrett: No. I have sworn to Mr. Speaker that I shall speak for only 10 minutes.

The same matter was raised by the so-called "epoch-making" Procedure Committee of 1977-78. In that Committee, which introduced the present arrangements on Select Committees and on which the present Home Secretary, the present Chancellor and Mr. Enoch Powell served, I moved an amendment to that epoch-making report. I shall quote it because it is always worth recycling good material:

> "We consider that the work of an assiduous Member of Parliament has increased so greatly that it should now be seen as a full-time job and that the arrangement of Parliamentary sittings to enable members to pursue outside employment on the excuse that they need to 'keep in touch' with the everyday world of the Courts and the City is contradictory to our idea of a modern and effective Parliamentary system . . . The present hours of the House are also a deterrent to legislative efficiency, and are probably harmful to health and disruptive of family life. We therefore propose that the general rule should be that the House should meet in the mornings, afternoons and evenings up to 7.30 pm and not at night. We are convinced that the present pattern of sittings is quite unnecessary, that it is left over from a more leisurely age when Parliament was dominated by the tradition of the gentleman amateur."

The vote on that amendment was a tie, with Labour Members voting for it and Conservative and Liberal Members voting against it. The Labour Chairman—a lawyer—used his casting vote to defeat it.

We shall never be an effective legislature while so many hon. Members have outside careers. I leave aside the conflict of interests that can arise, particularly given the growth of parliamentary lobbyists and public relations consultants. Until we have full-time Members of Parliament, we shall never have adequate accommodation, equipment and facilities.

I agree with my hon. Friend the shadow Leader of the House that there should be morning sittings from 10.30 am, that 7 pm should be the end of the main business on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, and that we should not sit on Fridays. I expect a Labour Government to offer the House a vote on those matters. Actually, a vote is not necessary, because Crossman left behind a Standing Order that could still be activated to convene the House at 10 am.

A further matter is the gruesome business of dying or very ill Members being inspected by Whips for signs of life —*[Laughter.]* It is true. They are brought into the House by ambulance and inspected by Whips to see whether they show any signs of life before they can be counted as able to vote. The Procedure Committee recommended 32 years ago that that practice should end.

I should like hon. Members to read—I do not have time to read it now—a letter from the Leader of the House to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House, in appendix 11, page 169 of the Select Committee's report. It is entitled "Proxy voting for seriously ill Members". They will see that it is a masterpiece of double-talk. I cannot conceive why the Leader of the House could not agree to proxy voting for terminally or seriously ill Members. To require them to be brought in by ambulance and have their pulses felt by Whips to see whether they can vote is simply grotesque. I do not know how the Leader of the House could write such a letter.

All that bears out the conclusion to which I have come in the past couple of years—many of the powers of the Leader of the House over our domestic arrangements should be transferred to the Speaker. We are too much under the Government's thumb, and this is another example of it.

7.46 pm

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): Anyone who was in the House at the time of the Crossman experiment—many such hon. Members are here this evening—will agree that the description of it by the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) was a travesty of the truth. The Crossman morning sittings were an utter disaster from start to finish. Moreover, the proof of the pudding was in the eating—subsequent Labour Governments never attempted to revive them, because they knew that they were a total disaster. The lesson to be learned from that is not that morning sittings are necessarily disastrous but that, when procedural reforms are rammed through against the wishes of a large minority in the House, they simply will not work.

As someone who did not sit on the Committee, I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) because, when I read the list of Committee members, I thought that it was a miracle that he got them to agree unanimously to the report. Naturally, there were some Divisions in the middle of the Committee's proceedings, but the report's unanimous acceptance is an astonishing achievement.

My message tonight is that the House would be mad if it did not just say yes to the report, even it it thinks that it is a transitory measure. One day a Government may wish to make a more radical reforms. That will be fair enough, but the present reform is generally agreed by a large majority—certainly by a unanimous report of a Select Committee and, I suspect, by many hon. Members, including those who are not here this evening. Whoever is in power after the next general election should try the reform as an experiment, see what happens and then review the matter after a decent period, because the report is full of common sense.

We are in danger of talking about our own convenience in this debate. Surely the whole point is that we must combine our convenience with providing effective scrutiny over the Government. Our opinions are likely to change depending on whether we are in government or in opposition. I have known hon. Members' opinions to change radically when they have changed sides of the Chamber. One wants to be as objective as one can about how one would react on the other side of the House. I consider that the report is a good idea. In recent years, late night sittings, to which most hon. Members are opposed, are much less frequent. We have far fewer all-night sittings, which is a result of the House regulating itself, as it often does with great success.

When trying to reform the sittings of the House, there is a direct conflict of interest between two groups of hon. Members: those who live near to London and want to get home in the evenings and those who come from miles away and want to get home to the north or the south-west, having been stuck here all week. The latter are less interested in whether the House rises early. A compromise that would suit both parties now, even it it does not last, would too good to be true. Already, as a result of the conflict between the two shades of Members, we have seen that in recent years parliamentary business is now far more concentrated on Tuesdays and Wednesdays than it was when I first came into the House. People complain about Divisions on Mondays and Thursdays now, whereas they were commonplace in the past. Indeed, we sometimes had Divisions on Fridays——

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): These days, we sometimes have Divisions on Fridays.

Mr. Channon: As my hon. Friend says, we occasionally have them now, but people mind. Nowadays, most hon. Members expect business to be concentrated into a long Tuesday, and a long Wednesday, if necessary. The practice in the House has changed considerably.

The most crucial proposal of all is the timetabling of all Bills. That is a good proposal, and I would think so even if I were in opposition. I can think of almost no occasion on which the Opposition have been able to stop a Bill by talking and talking. Perhaps the only exception was the Bill to reform the House of Lords, when the Labour Government of the day could not obtain a guillotine. I can think of no other example when a Bill was stopped by people talking, either in the Chamber or in Committee, for so long that the Government gave up. The proposal would meet the balance of advantages much better.

Governments are also against that proposal. They have been against the timetabling of all Bills, often because they think that they can get the legislation through the House quicker than a timetable would allow. In the not too distant past, the Select Committee on Procedure suggested the timetabling of Bills, but its proposal was turned down by large numbers of hon. Members. Some were Government Members, and I cannot imagine why they had such a sudden interest in the matter that evening.

Such a proposal would mean that the Opposition would have to change their tactics, but they have already. They would have to concentrate on the earlier half of the day —Question Time and Prime Minister's questions—which is exactly what happens at present. That practice has been very much encouraged by television.

It is clearly stated in the report that most Members think that the present length and balance of recesses is about right. However, I note that the Committee makes the happy suggestion that we should rise two weeks earlier in July. It also implies—I thought that my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale said something different today—that it would be impossible to come back earlier in the autumn, so where would the two weeks be made up? Would they simply disappear? I should like to have some information on that important issue.

I agree with the suggestion of rising earlier in July. I think that it is intolerable for hon. Members, particularly Scottish Members, should be forced to take the recess so late that they have no time at all with their children during the school holidays.

Mr. Jopling: If my right hon. Friend would be kind enough to look at paragraph 85 of the report, he will see that the matter is mentioned here.

Mr. Channon: It states that it is for the House to decide, but it continues with other arguments as to why that would be pretty well impossible. I shall not weary the House by reading the report, but it is an important issue that should be cleared up. Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale is right.

We all have different opinions, but the point that I feel most strongly about is that it is ridiculous that, in a modern Chamber, we do not know on a Wednesday afternoon what we shall be debating the following Tuesday. How can that be sensible? I urge my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to let us have more notice of the business of the House. I am sure that he will try to do so—he may have already said that he will. It is terrible that Members do not know whether they have to be here or whether they can fulfil a constituency engagement or meet some other appointment.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): That applies to the general election.

Mr. Channon: That may be true, but it only happens every four or five years. I am talking about something that happens every week. The system works well in another place. However, I urge my right hon. Friend not only to allow us more notice of recesses—which would be good, and to our convenience—but, for the convenience of the House, to give notice of what the business may be two or three weeks in advance. Of course, in an emergency the business would have to be changed, but I suspect that that would happen infrequently.

As the hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said, this is a modest report, but it has been accepted by a Select Committee representing all shades of opinion in the House. I suspect that many hon. Members accept it. Whichever party wins the election should experiment with the system for a year, see what happens and return to the subject after that period.

7.56 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I endorse the comments of the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon). The proposal is modest and was no doubt achieved through compromise, and give and take by both sides. I accept what he said at the outset—that it is, perhaps, a transient report, but that we should implement it.

I congratulate the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) and the Committee on reaching an agreement so quickly, and I congratulate the Leader of the House on bringing the report before us so quickly. I would very much regret it and consider it a wasted opportunity, as well as a waste of time and effort, if we were not to implement some or all of the report's proposals if it can be shown, as it has so far in the debate —although I am sure that there is a long way to go—that they command widespread support throughout the House.

I find it difficult to object to many of the substantive proposals of the Committee, to which I gave evidence, bearing in mind the proposals that I submitted on behalf of the Liberal Democrats. We submitted the proposal that, on Mondays, the House should not start earlier than it does at present, because of the difficulties of Members getting here on time. We also suggested that, wherever possible, the House should try to finish its business by 7 pm on Thursdays. That proposal was substantially accepted, particularly in relation to those Thursdays when there was to be no sitting on the following day, Friday. We

[Mr. James Wallace]

recommended that, even on other Thursdays, every effort should be made to allow Members to leave that evening if possible.

We suggested that Friday sittings should be abandoned, to allow Members more time to be in their constituencies, when offices, factories and schools were open. Alternatively, we suggested adopting the Australian method, whereby alternate Fridays and Mondays are taken off to give extended weekends. The Committee has not gone as far as that, but the proposal to announce at the beginning of the Session the 10 Fridays what will be clear will give people the opportunity to make appointments in their diaries on those Fridays. That proposal will be welcomed by many hon. Members.

At present, for good reasons, there are often great pressures on hon. Members to be here on a Friday, and equally good reasons for them to be in their constituency on the same day. If some forward planning could help us to resolve the problems of those competing pressures, it would, I hope, enhance the quality of work that we are able to do on our constituents' behalf.

I also proposed that, wherever possible, we should aim to finish between 7 and 8 pm. I understand the pressure from London Members to have a 9-to-5 day——

Mr. Tony Banks: Not all of them.

Mr. Wallace: I think some of them suggested it, although I accept that the hon. Gentleman personally has not made that proposal.

Those of us who cannot possibly return home in the evening accept that working to a reasonable hour is not, in itself, unreasonable, but peoplle object when we sit until 2, 3, 4 or 5 am. It brings the House and its work into disrepute. Apart from anything else, I do not believe that, with the best will in the world, we can do a good job at that time in the morning.

Perhaps we do not like to admit it, but we all know that, if we are discussing a Bill on Report, the initial amendments and new clauses are given a fairly thorough debate, but by 11 pm, anyone trying to make a serious contribution that lasts for more than 10 minutes will be told to sit down so that we can complete the business quickly. The later amendments seldom attract the same attention as the earlier ones, although they should do. I welcome the Report's intent that there should be a cut-off point at 10 pm. However, I am afraid that, at present, it will be only an intent—albeit a formalised one.

As I understand it, the process will take the form of a resolution of the House and a statement of intent on the part of the Leader of the House. But, as we all know, it is the easiest thing in the world for the Government to table a motion to allow business that is not exempt to carry on beyond 10 pm. We shall have to exercise strong self-restraint and discipline if the intent is to be translated into something that works and allows the business of the House to finish at 10 pm, followed by a half-hour Adjournment debate.

To that end, we must face up to the timetabling of primary legislation—from which, I suspect, Opposition parties hold back on the basis that time is often their only weapon. There is no doubt that that is more often the case in a hung or balanced Parliament, but it is rare for the weapon of time to stop a Bill, perhaps with the exception of the legislation on reforming the House of Lords. It is a sad reflection on our democracy if the only effective Opposition weapon is time.

It would be far too radical for the Select Committee or the House to consider immediately or in the immediately foreseeable future the proposals worked out by the Scottish Constitutional Convention in the event of a Scottish Parliament. We could examine how procedures for a Scottish Parliament could be adapted to make Parliament work in ways that would enhance the principles of accountability, balance, efficiency and participation. It would clearly be impossible to translate them into use for this place. That is more a reflection on this place and the way in which it has developed and worked over the years than on the proposals of the constitutional convention.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The hon. Gentleman is discounting the effect of open discussion of certain points in Bills. The sheer physical act of stopping a Bill has to do not only with power here but with letting people outside know what is happening so that they can respond. That is the purpose of the Opposition continually raising points about Bills; it is an enormous power, which should not be abandoned lightly.

Mr. Wallace: It is perfectly clear that certain parts of most Bills can be identified as important. The trouble is that, when guillotines are brought in, some parts of Bills lose the automatic right to be considered at all. Twice in this Session, the Government have tried to timetable Bills from the outset—the Local Government Finance Bill and more recently the Further and Higher Education Bill. My party has supported that idea for some time, but it must be put into effect with the consent of the House. There is no point in debating only what the Government want debated. The process must take due account not only of the official Opposition but of all the minority parties and of Conservative Back Benchers.

If a Select Committee on Business of the House is to be set up, it must ensure a proper balance and not operate in the usual narrow channels that we have to put up with when timetabling Bills.

I have noted the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). I am not sure what the thinking behind it was, but I agree with the idea of pre-legislative scrutiny in a Select Committee—we already have provision for such a Committee in our Standing Orders. That would offer a far more effective way of allowing Opposition and other Back-Bench Members to scrutinise legislation properly.

We welcome the idea of announcing business two weeks in advance; that too does not require changes in our Standing Orders. Perhaps the Leader of the House will be tempted to tell us what we will be doing two days from tonight—many of us would be interested to know. The right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) tried to introduce firm recess dates, with mixed success, while he was Leader of the House. That certainly assists planning.

As a Scottish Member, I welcome the commitment to bring the summer recess forward to mid-July. A week earlier would be even more welcome, but it is an important move. The issue has been discussed every year that I have been in the House. The Leader of the House has shown some sympathy with the idea, and it is pleasing to see a firm recommendation to that effect.

The hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) mentioned a suggestion which I hope that your successor, Mr. Speaker, will act on in the next Parliament, having convened a meeting of all parties to discuss the matter. It has not happened since 1979, I think, but I remember witnessing the problem as an interested outsider. It certainly did not enhance the image of Parliament when we heard about ambulances queuing up in New Palace yard containing sick Members who could then be nodded through the Lobbies.

The hon. Member for Norwich, South also mentioned that our business will be increasingly scrutinised and debated in the European Parliament, but he singularly failed to say that more of the business of this House should be debated in Parliaments to be set up in Scotland, Wales and possibly in Northern Ireland—not to mention the regions of England. Such a move would relieve the House of a great burden of legislation with which it now has to deal.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: This evening I have heard one whingeing Member after another. If any of us dropped dead tomorrow, 300 to 500 people would be clamouring to take our place. If this place is so bad, why is that?

Mr. Wallace: That is not a particularly good point. Just because people want to become Members of Parliament, to debate legislation and scrutinise the work of the Executive, that does not mean that we should not be able to do it more efficiently. Earlier, the hon. Gentleman questioned whether, with larger constituencies, Members of Parliament would be able to offer the same service. Scottish Members, for instance, would give a far better service if issues such as Scottish health, Scottish education and Scottish transport were dealt with by Members of a Scottish Parliament sitting in Edinburgh, and if this House became a federal House dealing with macroeconomics and defence and foreign policy.

The hours lost and gained under these proposals do not seem to add up. Only decentralisation of power from Westminster will ultimately relieve this place of the overload from which it undoubtedly suffers at the moment.

8.5 pm

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): I very much agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) that there can be no question but that this House is too big. I share his view that 450 Members would be about right, and I am sorry that the Select Committee did not have more time to deal with that. The role of welfare officer takes an increasing amount of Members' time, and so long as the House provides adequate secretarial and other support, much of it can be dealt with without any deterioration in service—as a brief glance at the United States Congress will show.

Another crucial point with which the Committee was not required to deal, but which is germane, is the amount of legislation that we pass every year. I do not have the figures at my fingertips, but I understand that the Bundestag passes about one tenth the amount of our endless stream of laws each year, many of which we cannot even remember the following week. I hope that at some future date the whole question of how we handle legislation will come under the scrutiny of a Select Committee. Much of our legislation is produced by lawyers for lawyers. If Ministers were a little stronger when managing their Departments, I suspect that we could do perfectly well with rather less legislation.

On the subject of Wednesdays, may I put in a small plea for Select Committees? When first I had the honour to be elected Chairman of the Select Committee on Agriculture, we discussed at length when we should meet. I was tipped off that it would be much better, from the point of view of attracting attention to my Committee, if we did not meet on Wednesday mornings. We tried for some months not to, but with Standing Committees on Tuesdays and Thursdays, not to mention all the other pressures of this place, like every other Select Committee we inevitably finished up meeting on Wednesday mornings.

I have no strong feelings about Fridays. The 10 o'clock vote on Thursday prevents me from getting home on Thursday night, and the idea of the seven o'clock finish on Thursday is very attractive. On the other hand, I do not believe that Friday business often adds to the disruption of Members' lives. Friday business is a problem when private Members' Bills are controversial; as I understand it, the Select Committee did not suggest that such Bills would not be discussed on Fridays, so I doubt whether the suggestion is as meritorious as it might seem on the face of it.

I am a strong supporter of the proposal to timetable all legislation, and I was particularly pleased to hear the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) support that view. Although I had just entered the House when the Parliament (No. 2) Bill was going through, I can count the years that I have spent listening to utter waffle being delivered by hon. Members merely to clock up hours in some hopeless gesture of opposition which proves ultimately futile. We do a great many silly things in this place, but that is surely one of the silliest. Even the public think that it is silly, it has been silly for many years and it is time that it was brought to an end. I therefore commend the suggestion of the Select Committee.

I am worried about statutory instruments, especially those which arouse much cross-party opposition. I have on the Order Paper a prayer with more than 85 signatures against a statutory instrument. It has not been debated in the House or in Committee, and I do not think that the Government propose to find time for it. That is wrong. There should be some sort of unwritten rule about the number of Members who can pray against a statutory instrument and a requirement that time be found for it upstairs. The public do not understand that we legislate largely by statutory instrument and not by laws. Hon. Members would be surprised by the number of issues that statutory instruments change in a year.

Mr. Tony Banks: I support the hon. Gentleman's suggestion. Would he support one of mine—that, if an early-day motion, of which there are many, attracts, say, 200 signatures draw from all parties, it should have the opportunity of some debate? If not, what is the point of collecting so many signatures as an expression of opinion?

Mr. Wiggin: I accept that a prayer is in the form of an early-day motion. The difference is that an early-day motion chooses its subject, while a prayer prays against legislation. The early-day motion procedure has been

[Mr. Wiggin]

totally abused. If we all took them much more seriously, the Government would start to do so, but that is another matter.

The principal topic of my speech is the summer recess. I had an Adjournment debate as long ago as 1973 on the subject and I have since brought up my family with the difficulties of an extremely tiresome month of July. Last July was as bad as any. July is hot and London is full of tourists. We become bad-tempered and the Government are pushing against the end of the Session; yet year after year we insist on sitting through July.

Why should we sit in July? We do so because, if we rose at the beginning of July and come back in the middle of September, we would be forced to adjourn again for the party conferences. So what? The party conferences are so large that they have to be held off season in seaside towns, and by mutual consent the time for them is fixed. Are we really so uncivilised that we suspect that a Government would insist on driving on through the Opposition's party conference? I do not think that that would happen, and if we wrote into our Standing Orders that it must not happen, that would solve the problem.

Many Scottish schools go back at the end of the first week in August. The whole of London could well do without us, those who support us and Whitehall. If it is practical to rise in the middle of July, it is practical to rise at the beginning of July. I hope that the Leader of the House will not say that the Finance Bill causes the delay, because the Treasury have made it quite clear that, provided that the Bill is introduced sufficiently early, it can be through before the beginning of July. It is a question of timing. I cannot understand why we should have to go through the heat and misery of July when we could perfectly well rise and come back in September.

I have attended many of these debates and have found that we always debate our own affairs better than anything else because we feel strongly about such matters and speak from the heart. The Leader of the House has heard unanimous agreement from many hon. Members. May we please have some action?

8.13 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The report will not be decided by this Parliament. I therefore wish to address the incoming Parliament, of which I hope to be a Member. It would be wrong to let this occasion pass without paying tribute to the last survivor of the 1945 Parliament, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) —or Ebbw Vale, which is how I still think of his constituency. My right hon. Friend is the last Member who served in a Parliament which brought here hundreds of new Members who were dissatisfied with the way in which Parliament worked. That led to Herbert Morrison's reforms.

Fortunately, this is an Adjournment debate, and therefore wide-ranging, so almost every issue has been raised. We should be clear when talking about ourselves that the House is a strange place, in that the arguments divide in quite unusual ways. The television reports debates between left and right. There are Government and Opposition, Front Benchers and Back Benchers, London Members and other Members, men and women Members and, of course full-time and part-time Members. But no one has mentioned the electors. We are here to represent people. We may not like to be here in July when it is hot, but there are many people with problems and, as I am sure many hon. Members agree, those people want their problems raised in Parliament.

This is an insulting Chamber. We refer to the Strangers Gallery when it should be called the Electors Gallery. We have not yet accommodated the changes which occurred in 1832 or, indeed, in 1918 when women got the vote. We still refer to them as ladies. Anyone who wants to see the real division in society should go to the House of Lords, where the lavatories differentiate between peeresses and ladies, lest ladies think that they may go into the lavatories reserved for peeresses. That is a division. We have women Members and we represent women—the assertion that "ladies" have made representations on this or that is insulting.

I will try to relate the proposals to the change in the functions of Parliament. I was elected in 1950—I believe that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and I are the oldest survivors of that election. I have broken service, so I shall have to invent some new category—great-uncle of the House, perhaps—after the election. When we arrived here, this was the centre of an empire and we ran a huge chunk of the world. When I was born, about 20 per cent. of the world's population were governed from this Chamber. I remember the campaigns, and there were colonial questions twice a week. Many questions were put down by Fenner Brockway and others, including me.

Britain does not have an empire any more—we are a province. Most of the legislation which affects us increasingly comes through Brussels, and Jacques Delors cannot be bothered to sign it in every language. We are observers of legislation that is never presented to the House. I have views on that, but I shall not go into them now. We have lost the power to determine what we do.

During my lifetime and that of most other older Members, there has been an enormous growth in the power of the Executive. I once worked out the figures and published them, but I have forgotten them. The growth of public expenditure from 1925 until now has gone up by, I think, 6,000 per cent. Yet Parliament still has the same number of Members. The democratic deficit in this country is that Executive power has grown and to some extent Parliament has become a spectator.

The Select Committees do a good job, but there should be far more opportunities for Members to raise matters of urgency. I once moved a motion of censure against your predecessor, Mr. Speaker, because he refused me a Standing Order No. 9 debate about the bombing of Oman. The House is reluctant to discuss current matters. We have not discussed the Gulf war since before it began, and it was difficult to get a debate on the miners' strike. We prefer to go through our regular business rather than discuss matters of concern.

I see this place as a forum where argument is put. I would not mind us meeting every morning as the House of Commons debating society, so that we could discuss the issues brought to us by our constituents. It is almost impossible to explain to a constituent with a problem why it cannot be raised on the Floor of the House. People say, "Tony, why not raise my problem in Parliament?" A few days ago, I was asked why the Prime Minister gets a standing ovation when he sits down. The questioner did not quite understand that Members stand in the hope of asking the Prime Minister a question. People thought that the Prime Minister was so popular that on Tuesdays and Thursdays everyone rose to his every reply. I tell them that that is a sign of the urgency felt by hon. Members who need to raise matters of concern.

Radio and television have changed Parliament. I shall be candid—I say this outside the House, so I will say it inside the House. What is the point in being a Member of Parliament when decisions are taken in Brussels and the Executive gets away with it? The point is to represent people—to come here and argue their case. We have a secretarial allowance so that we can represent people, although it is inadequate for the volume of mail that we get. We have the opportunity to get a speech in the only newspaper not owned by Rupert Murdoch—*Hansard*, which is still a publicly owned newspaper. It is not edited —I am a great *Hansard* man—and I can photocopy speeches so that people can see what has been said. We can get on television without pleasing the BBC or being cut off by Robin Day—not that one's contribution always gets on the air.

These are not minor matters. It is of no surprise that even the existence of an early Parliament was a threat to the Royal Executive, because while people were discussing in public what he was doing he had to be careful. That is what we are here to do.

I will go over my recommendations so quickly that even you, Mr. Speaker, in your last remaining hours as Speaker, will not rebuke me. If this were a proper debate, I would make several changes. We should be a federal Parliament. The argument for a Scottish Parliament—and others—is overwhelming. We should have a fixed-term Parliament, to get away from all this absurdity of a Government changing the election date so as to manipulate the economy. I believe that 50 per cent. of Members of Parliament should be women. The hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) said that he thought that the number of Members of Parliament should be cut by half. I pledge to give him my full support on polling day if we could experiment with his party to see whether we would do better if it had only half its current number of Members.

We should have amendable statutory instruments instead of the absurdity of First Reading, Second Reading, Committee stage and the rest. All we should do is look at a measure, decide whether we want to amend it, and pass it once we have done so. That would greatly save time. We could do without the ludicrous debate that we shall have later tonight on Church of England legislation. What are we discussing? It is an absurdity that we should be staying late to discuss arrangements for funerals and the retirement of archdeacons and canons.

I am in favour of timetabling, but for an interesting reason. It is that when one has timetabling——

Dame Elaine Kellet-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: If the hon. Lady will allow me, I should like to continue.

Timetabling allows the Opposition to decide what to debate, and that must be right. We should allow the circulation of undelivered speeches in the *Official Report*. That would get rid of the abuse of early-day motions. They are simply a means of putting one's opinions on paper because they cannot appear anywhere else. The United States Congress allows the circulation of speeches, and I believe that that is a good thing.

Ministers should circulate on the Order Paper the answers that they are giving to questions as well as the questions. We would then be able to make more use of them. I am in favour of proxy votes. It is an outrage that sick people should be dragged in and that Members on business abroad should be brought back. I remember a Minister having to come back from Tokyo because we thought that there was to be a vote. We must be serious about this. There are other things to do besides play the voting game.

We should have proper secretarial facilities and proper offices. There should be creches not just for the children of women Members but for those of others who work in the House—far more women than men work in the Palace of Westminster. Facilities for staff are appalling, and should be improved. I do not know how many people do as I do, and wander through the bowels of the House. Has any other hon. Member been below Annie's Bar? I was there the other night—it is like wandering around a 19th century battleship.

After 41 years here, let me say this: this place is an old museum. I bring school parties round. The school children know you very well, Mr. Speaker. They love you. They know that you wear a wig, but they do not know what goes on in this place. If one asks them, they say, "We like the decorations. We saw the statues. Who was that over there? Who was Mr. Gladstone?" But they do not know what we do. I often wonder how long it was before the Beefeaters realised that they were not part of the defence force. They must for years have gone on at the Tower of London, marching up and down with their halberds or whatever they carry, thinking that they were defending us. We still behave as though we were a modern, democratic assembly, but we are not: we are a museum, but because it is a museum with a kindly chairman we can sometimes make our case and sometimes the message gets across.

I hope that the anger of the new generation does not subside as quickly as the anger of every previous generation. I see new Members furious with all these things. A year later, one sees them with a party saying, "That is where King Charles I dropped his glove, and that is where Cromwell did this or that." They are so easily corrupted by the club atmosphere. If that anger is not retained and used to turn us into a modern Parliament, we shall have betrayed democracy. My speech is addressed to the new Members. I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to make it to the generation who will come here after polling day—many of whom, I hope, will be replacing Tory Members.

8.25 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I have found the Standing Orders of this Chamber, like those of any other legislative body that I have come across, as incomprehensible as they are unfathomable. My colleagues who were given the task of reviewing our sittings have done a worthy job, but the outcome of their deliberations is based a design that trims or tickles around the edges of the problem, and their report has been written with the interests of the legislature in mind rather than those of the people who work in it—us, the Members of Parliament.

[Mrs. Teresa Gorman]

I make a strong plea for the hours of the House to be regular rather than having this popping in and out at different times on different days. Like the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), I address my plea to the new Members. Our eight-hour day could be set between 11 in the morning and 7 in the evening. Those hon. Members who feel incapable of safely occupying their evenings thereafter could surely use their time in their offices doing work or even perhaps watching a bit of television so as to find out what the rest of the world and the rest of the country are interested in.

For most people, politics is peripheral to their lives. Thank goodness, they do not spend all their time wondering what we are up to. It is important that, as human beings, we keep in touch with what the rest of humanity is interested in. By the time we have spent Friday, Saturday and sometimes even Sunday working in our constituencies, there is not much time left for those with families—both men and women—to know what the rest of the world is doing, to enjoy the ordinary small pleasures of life and to spend time with their families. An 11 o'clock start would give early birds time to get up and do three hours work in the office before the House sat, while a 7 o'clock finish would allow late owls to work into the night while not keeping the rest of us out of bed.

I remind the House of the Peter principle, that work expands to fill the time available. My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) made a strong case for limiting the amount of legislation that is passed by limiting the hours available to do so. Almost every piece of legislation that is passed robs some group of citizens of part of their basic freedoms. We are normally regulating to restrict people's activities in some way or another—certainly a great deal of socialist legislation did so. I am pleased to say that the Conservative Government are trying to liberate us from much of that, but we do not need to be here into the small hours of the morning to do that.

Our constituents do not know that we have been up until 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, and they start ringing us at 8 o'clock, expecting us to be bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. They do not expect us to sound thick—in voice, if not in mind—because we have only just woken up after another late-night session.

I am concerned especially about the recommendations that bear on private Members' time, such as ten-minute Bills and Friday sittings. I have been a Back-Bench Member for five years, and I quite welcome the possibility that I shall never rise to the dizzy heights or fall to the depths, of the Front Bench. Against that background, I consider it extremely important that private Members' time should be safeguarded. The ten-minute Bill procedure is most important to all Back-Bench Members, and sometimes to our constituents and others. Under the procedure, no one can stop us taking 10 minutes of the time of the House. No one—not even your venerable self, Mr. Speaker—can interrupt us. Those who feel from time to time that they are not getting a fair crack of the whip—they might feel that they are not able to catch Mr. Speaker's eye—can make their point by the simple procedure of tabling a ten-minute Bill. It is a procedure that I do not disparage.

I am sorry that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House said that he thought that the ten-minute Bill procedure as rather a waste of time. I have not often found myself at one with my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), but he recognised the importance of the facility for private Members, and I am grateful to him for that. I think that all Back-Bench Members welcome the opportunity that the facility provides. Why should there not be three ten-minute Bills a week—on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays?

We all know that we do not have to attend the House on Friday, but Friday sittings can provide important opportunities for us to air subjects in which those outside the House are much more interested than they are in the issues that we consider to be important. For example, there was an important debate on the Alton Bill. For many reasons, Government often will not want to allocate time for subjects that are debated on Fridays, but we are given the opportunity on Fridays to express our interests by using some of our relatively free time to express our support for and interest in various issues. We can show the citizenry that we are taking a subject seriously. Often the issues are subjective and concern the lives of individuals. In other words, they are not related to the rather mechanical legislation that we so often deal with.

We shall come to decide exactly what we shall do apart from regulating time and giving Members more time to be with their families, if they can return home. That is an important consideration. It is to be hoped that there will be more time for us to live like normal people. If they want to, the chaps can go to their gentlemen's clubs. Those who want to work late in their offices will be able to do so. Those who want to take on second jobs can do so in the evenings. I know that the lawyers might be upset, but it is possible to do a little bit of moonlighting if that is what an hon. Member wants to do.

It is most important that the House should safeguard the opportunity for private Members to speak on subjects that may not be currently of interest to the Government. Many of my ten-minute Bills have been ridiculed and derided by my right hon. and hon. Friends, but my post bag tells me that they have received a warm reception outside the House. I have a terrific post bag. I have had the opportunity to persuade my Front-Bench colleagues, against their better judgment, as they see it, to change their minds. I would not be so immodest as to boast of what I have said while presenting ten-minute Bills—things that have moved centre stage and are likely to appear in the Conservative party manifesto for the general election—but that is an example of what can happen.

That is extremely important for Back-Bench Members. We can say to groups of citizens, however small a minority they may be, "I shall introduce a ten-minute Bill on that subject for you." They love it. It is their chance, through us, to have a say in this place, irrespective of whether it is liked by the Government or the Opposition. I beg the House to hang on to the small amount of time that is available to Back Benchers. It is our time, and I hope that no one can take it from us.

8.33 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It is interesting—this perhaps demonstrates the priorities of the Leader of the House—that we are talking about our position and our conveniences rather than important issues such as commercial lobbying. There are two reports from the

Select Committee on Members' Interests and I recall that I drew the attention of the Leader of the House to the issue of outside interests pressurising this place.

I am pleased that the Select Committee wishes to retain ten-minute Bills and that it will not take notice of the Leader of the House or of my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), the shadow Leader of the House, by seeking to place a limit on business questions. I share the view of the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) that private Members' time is important. Similarly, I think that Fridays are important. I do not share the view of the Select Committee that we should abolish 10 Fridays per Session. That would significantly curtail the likely amount of time available to private Members.

There has been much comment about the waste that is attached to all-night debates. That is not always so. I can recall an all-night debate in 1981 when we were discussing a Consolidated Fund Bill. The House sat throughout the night, largely at the initiative of the Opposition. As a consequence, the Government did a deal which had the effect of removing old people's dwellings from the compulsory purchase procedure. That is one of the most significant gains for the Opposition over the past 10 years or so. It was achieved because of the Opposition's work. All-night sittings do not always take place just for the sake of it. We often sit all night to try to achieve an improvement or a change, or a curtailment of legislation.

In 1981, both the Government and Opposition Front Benches found it inconvenient that Back-Bench Members wished to talk at length about old people's dwellings and compulsory purchase orders, so Consolidated Fund Bills were, in effect, abolished. We now have a series of timed Adjournment debates. The change was designed to remove the opportunity of a further successful initiative.

If a Bill is subject to a timetable, irrespective of whether it is called a guillotine, the initiative shifts to the Government. That is because hon. Members on the Government Benches can take part in the debate and use up time. If time is sucked up by those Members during the hours that are provided by a guillotine or timetable motion, that leads inevitably to the advantage of the Government and is to their satisfaction. The Chairman of the Select Committee, the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), did not explain the difference, to anybody's satisfaction, between guillotining and timetabling. By and large, they are identical devices. I have strong reservations about the timetabling recommendation.

When I gave evidence to the Select Committee, I recommended that a voluntary arrangement—there was one when the Broadcasting Bill, as it then was, was considered—should be followed. The voluntary arrangement for the consideration of the Broadcasting Bill was agreed in exchange for an extra day's consideration on the Floor of the House. If it is said that timetabling is necessary because of the imperfection that is achieved in allocating time for various sections of Bills during the various stages, it should be remembered that an important section of the Broadcasting Bill was not reached.

Sir Gerard Neale (Cornwall, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cryer: I shall not give way. Several hon. Members wish to take part in the debate, and I do not want to speak for too long.

The hon. Member for Billericay made some generalised suggestions, including the proposal that we should sit at 11 o'clock—a convenient time after a cup of coffee—and rise at 7 o'clock. The reality is that this place has a responsibility to those outside. Ministers are given powers through primary legislation to produce rules and regulations, which we call statutory instruments. Many of these instruments provide criminal penalties—in other words, people can be sent to prison. Individuals can be deprived of their liberty following the decisions of Ministers.

All Governments use statutory instruments, and if there are complaints about the amount of legislation that is being introduced and enacted, it should be understood that this Government have produced more than most. That has been the position since 1979. I have provided evidence for the Select Committee, and I shall not rehearse it: it is to be found in the second volume of the Select Committee's report, at page 101.

There has been talk about prayers as well as statutory instruments. Last year, about 115 prayers were put down, and only 25 were debated. Those who say that we do not have enough time to debate prayers are right. It is no good talking about reducing the sitting hours of the House for our convenience when it is supposed to exercise scrutiny, when Members want to scrutinise and when we currently fail to achieve that objective. That is so whether the wish to scrutinise is a whim of Members or the wish of those outside this place.

We must examine more ways of debating statutory instruments on the Floor of the House. The Committee's proposal is that all affirmative instruments would go automatically to a Committee upstairs unless the Government put down a motion. At the moment, Back-Bench Members can require an instrument to be dealt with on the Floor of the House—and why not? That is a very useful and important initiative in this place, so that we can stop them going upstairs into Committee, where, by and large, scrutiny exists, but it is not the most successful.

There are between 1,500 and 2,000 statutory instruments, such as the one I have here. It is 74 pages long, with seven schedules and 123 clauses. The explanatory note takes three pages. It is the Uncertificated Securities Regulations 1992, and is potentially quite important. It is an affirmative measure, so it will have time on the Floor of the House, but there are hundreds more like that every year. There are negative procedure instruments which are supposed to be subject to a prayer but, in practice, a negative procedure instrument is hardly ever debated in this place. The Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments deals with all of them, and some are up to 3 in thick—thicker than many primary Acts of Parliament.

That is a matter in which the House is seriously deficient. Until it has a method of properly scrutinising its own prayers, when they have more than a 50 per cent. chance of being debated, we cannot talk about reducing the hours of this place, because the position remains unsatisfactory. I emphasise that we are not talking about paltry bits of legislation just to fill the odd loophole: we are talking about major pieces of legislation which often

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impose criminal penalties on our citizens. We should have the right to make sure that there is adequate time for debate.

The idea of curtailing Thursday evening debates is all right for Londoners, but, by and large, several hon. Members cannot get home for tea and come back the next day. We should not talk about curtailing Thursdays, not least because of the argument that I outlined about the lack of time devoted to statutory instruments.

Fridays are important. Some hon. Members say, "If we have 10 Fridays off, we can go to our constituencies." Fridays are terribly flexible. We are not like factory workers or teachers who must be at work or in a classroom by 9 o'clock. We are in a privileged, flexible position. We are not accountable to anybody. We do not have a gaffer stood over us. Our gaffer is the electorate, and it is coming up shortly. If hon. Members want to be away for the Wild Mammals (Protection) Bill on a Friday, the electorate will tell them whether that is satisfactory. What is wrong with letters telling us to be here on Fridays? If there is a debate on London transport, for example, people in Bradford do not expect me to be here.

As hon. Members know, I attend the House pretty well —I am among the best—but we are highly flexible on Mondays, if there is a one-line Whip, and on Fridays. In any case, we are not here for at least 20 Fridays a year, because we are in recess. We already have a highly flexible position. I appreciate that many hon. Members want to go to their constituencies, but there is already a good opportunity. Therefore, I do not agree with the recommendation to get rid of Fridays.

There is an idea that changes would be better for Parliament, but I do not believe it. It is a question of the attitude of the political parties and of showing much greater encouragement. For example, the Labour party national executive could have expected all the women on the national executive committee to vote in every by-election to put a woman on the short list. That has not happened several times, so we can hardly say that a political party which is calling for more women in Parliament is consistent in its attitude.

The same is true, I am convinced, of the Conservative party. There is not the will in the administration of the Conservative party to ensure that women are elected to Parliament. Men or women, there will be the problem that Parliament is in London, and if hon. Members must travel from the provinces, they must travel 200 to 400 miles. The idea of shorter hours is okay for people who live in London, but it is not so good for people who live in the provinces.

It is not a matter of occupying ourselves in the evenings —there is lots of work for all hon. Members all the time. The idea that Parliament can abandon its responsibility for scrutinising legislation, for one thing, and for giving people the opportunity to hear their points of view expressed in debate, is important. The criterion for me and many hon. Members, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is what we represent for the people who sent us here. It is wrong to put our convenience first. We should be asking, "Can we deal with our constituents' problems—the problems of the nation —in the hours we have?" The real answer is that we cannot, so the idea of curtailing the hours is not practical.

8.45 pm

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): I rarely agree with the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), but I sympathise with him on the scandal of the scrutiny of statutory instruments. Obviously, something needs to be done about that matter, otherwise our procedures will become totally unwieldy.

I cannot claim to be as long-serving as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), but man and boy I have been here for 30 of the past 32 years and I hope still to be here, with any luck, in the next Parliament. In that time there have been enormous changes, but the one big thing that has not changed is the ridiculous hours. People outside regard as extraordinary the hours in which we conduct our business.

One of the things that has changed is Government business, which has expanded during my time in this place. Over the past 20 years, it has changed beyond recognition. There is far too much legislation. Much of it is ill digested, as we know, bearing in mind the tremendous number of amendments that must be made to major Bills, giving great opportunities to the Opposition—I say that quite fairly —to debate and to extend the proceedings. Governments of any colour should get their legislation more or less right before they bring it before the House.

I welcome the report, which I read with great interest. It will carry us not just a little step but a big step forward if it is implemented. My worry is that it will not be implemented in the spirit on which it was presented. I look forward to hearing my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House say whether there is a definite commitment to it by the Government. If, unexpectedly, the Labour party wins the election, I should like a similar commitment from the Opposition spokesman. When parties take over, they legislate very strongly indeed. I cannot imagine Labour Members easily giving up the chance of having open-ended commitments on many Bills. I believe that the Conservative party will remain in power—this is not a political debate—but my worry is that, if it stays in office, the Executive will still run the proceedings in the way that it wants.

I detect in the report the dead hand of buraucracy, not least in paragraph 84, which is about the summer recess. The Treasury does not like it. It says that we cannot have a fixed date in July and that the date must be brought back. Perhaps, as has been suggested, that is because it wants the Finance Bill to be passed earlier. The Treasury rules many things in this place and it has put its foot down in this case.

The other point in the report which irritated me tremendously is that those who organise the two main party conferences are absolutely against any change. The built-in bureaucracy of the Labour and Tory parties' conferences would not consider any possibility of the date being moved. I do not believe in such things. As we are making significant changes in the House, our own party machines should respond accordingly. If the worst comes to the worst, and changes cannot be made, I see nothing wrong in Parliament adjourning for the fortnight that would cover the two main party conferences.

I may be naive, but perhaps my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House can enlighten me as to what is meant by primary legislation. Is it every Government Bill that comes before the House and receives a Second Reading? If so, it would break the rule of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), and all such legislation would sail on past the 10 o'clock barrier on Report and Third Reading. Perhaps I am wrong, and primary legislation means only the most significant Bills in a particular Session—perhaps only one or two. However, as I take it, with all the legislation that is to come, a number of Bills may break the 10 o'clock barrier.

It has to be said again that the House needs sensible organisation in terms of a timetable. There is general agreement that there should be fewer late nights. We also need better debates. I disagree with the hon. Member for Bradford, South, because I believe that, when legislation is timetabled, our debates are better. Both sides are treated equally, instead of Government Members being told to shut up in Committee. The feelings of right hon. and hon. Members are more genuinely reflected in timetabled debates.

It would also be sensible to schedule less sensitive business out of prime time, when it can be considered, if not voted upon, by those right hon. and hon. Members who are particularly enthusiastic about it.

There is no secret about Fridays. When I sat as Member of Parliament for a London constituency for six and a half years, I attended the House every Friday and usually took part in debate. Now I rarely, if ever, attend the House on a Friday—not because I am playing hookey but because that is the only day on which I can see people in the constituency at their place of work during the working week. They expect me to be there. They are not at all interested in Friday debates, unless they concern an extraordinary Bill such as that which the House considered the Friday before last.

I welcome the proposal for shorter debates on the Budget and the Loyal Address, but I ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to consider why those particular debates are so popular. I believe that it is because they are not subject to the Whip, and right hon. and hon. Members take the opportunity to get away, unless they intend to participate.

I want all Government Bills to be timetabled, and I am sure that that will happen in due course. I am certain that, with the co-operation of Members of both Front Benches, we will have fewer late nights, and that that will work out well. I hope that there will be not an experiment but a definite commitment that will be added to as the years go by. I hope also that I am wrong, and that ultimately the Executive will not prevail and cut the Select Committee's proposals to a minuscule level.

8.52 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The Select Committee's report seems to set out to give right hon. and hon. Members more time to spend in their constituencies and to make their lives easier, by means of a briefer parliamentary day and shorter sittings. It also holds out the hope of longer notice of recesses, of which I certainly approve.

No one questions why right hon. and hon. Members need to spend more time in their constituencies. Reference was made to the tremendous expansion in the volume of Government legislation, but I believe that right hon. and hon. Members need to spend more time in their constituencies because the House is doing more and more of the work that should be the responsibility of local government.

We do not have a proper local government system in this country. Its structure has broken down, and Members of Parliament are the victims of the backlash. It may be that right hon. and hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies are more keenly aware of that than most, because Northern Ireland has no real local government. Instead, as the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said, its business must be dealt with by the Order in Council procedure, which is an abomination. Nothing can be properly scrutinised or rationally discussed in that way, and the sooner we are rid of it the better.

Most Northern Ireland business could be transacted by what we in Northern Ireland call the theft clause—such as that incorporated in the Theft Act 1978—whereby Northern Ireland can be included in British legislation by a short statement to the effect that its provisions extend to Northern Ireland. We have asked for that to be done during successive Conservative Administrations, and during the last Labour Government as well, but we did not get anywhere. There would be an enormous saving in the time of the House if that simple procedure were adopted. That could still be done, and it should have been done long since.

Another way of lifting the burden of parliamentary business would be to let local government deal with local matters. It is difficult to do that in a unitary state, although it was successfully achieved under the Stormont devolved system. However, it worked only because it was run by unionists. The Opposition consisted of nationalists. That same situation will inevitably be reached in Scotland, whether the Scots like it or not. If one has a devolved institution or more powerful local government, there is a responsibility to work with the Government of the day, regardless of their political complexion.

If much of the minutiae is delegated to local government, that will free right hon. and hon. Members to put more pressure on the Government. I am not sure that the Government want that. Governments do not like Members of Parliament breathing down their necks. It is our fault that we have become bogged down in detail. The sooner we shift it on to other shoulders, at a different level, the better.

Earlier, reference was made to the United States Congress. Congressmen are permitted to employ as many as 18 full-time staff, but they each represent as many as half a million people. No right hon. or hon. Member has half a million constituents. Few of us have 100,000 constituents. I did so once, and have just over 75,000 constituents now. That is quite enough, thank you. If we go on as we are, we must either shift some of our business on to local government or have a much larger staff. I do not see that the House could ever justify the vast increase in staff that would be needed.

It is difficult to make life easier for right hon. and hon. Members because the House has arrived at its present procedures after long experimentation and experience, during which the best way of performing the tasks that are the responsibility of the House have been refined. I do not take very kindly to hon. Members who complain about the conditions of employment that they find here. We are all here by choice. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) said that, if he or any other hon. Member fell off his perch, there would be 400 or 500 other people after his job. We all know that is true. No one has to stay here. Every right hon. and hon. Member could

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choose to leave tomorrow, permanently. None of us has to stand for election again; we could apply for the Chiltern Hundreds and leave.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Is it not important for the House to be as representative as possible of the population outside, and should not we therefore act in ways that will encourage a representative and not a peculiar group of people to become Members of Parliament?

Mr. Ross: I was just coming to that. Coming to this place is not an easy option for any man or woman; so why are we here? We are here because we strongly believe in certain things. We are here to put our points of view, and to argue for what we think is right—and we must make a harsh choice in order to do that.

Life would be much easier for me if I were back running my farm in Northern Ireland: I would not get up every morning knowing that I was a target. It would be much easier for all hon. Members to return to their offices, or to other nice, safe nine-to-five jobs. As I have said, we are here because we believe in certain things; that is the simple, straightforward reason why we became Members of Parliament. There is an old saying in Northern Ireland—if you make your bed, you lie in it. It is a bit like marriage. Having come here of our own choice, we should accept the conditions, work the system and make the best of it.

I believe that there are good reasons for the long-drawn-out debates, the all-night sittings and the rest of it. The aim is to put pressure on the Government, whichever party is in power: we are not here to make life easy for them. A large chunk of the report, however, seems to be intended to make life easy for the party managers. Every Back Bencher and every Opposition party should oppose the proposals for that reason.

The Leader of the House was nodding a few moments ago, but he did not like what he heard when it was brought home to him. I am sorry about that, because I believe that what I am saying is entirely accurate. We should use the opportunities that are presented to us, and I am happy for us to keep the House open all night every night to put pressure on the Government. Like every other hon. Member, I had to make sacrifices to come here, and I am prepared to put up with the conditions. Hon. Members who have not the guts for it should get out of the frying pan.

9 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) on the hard work that he and his Committee put into the report. I am afraid, however, that I have strong reservations about a number of points—some of them along the lines of those expressed by the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross).

We should judge the proposals on two criteria. First, what do they mean for the ordinary Member of Parliament? There are two ways of looking at his needs. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) cited the need for "slots" enabling hon. Members to intervene on urgent matters. Morning sittings could well provide extra time for those, but hon. Members also need to be able to join in on the big issues of the day. The debate on European matters which took place before Christmas is one of the most recent examples: I believe that only about half the number of hon. Members who wished to speak in that two-day debate were allowed to do so.

I think that I am right in saying that 11 days were allocated to the great debates on the Corn Laws in 1846, so that every hon. Member who wished to speak could do so. I feel that that principle should apply to all big debates. Every hon. Member who wishes to speak on one of the many major issues that arise should be able to do so, on behalf of his constituents. Unless a great many days are set aside for such debates—as used to be the case—the only way to fit in every speaker is to carry the debate past 10 pm. In most cases, such debates will probably need to be open-ended. That is my first reservation: I believe that ending debates at 10 pm could further curtail the time available for Members of Parliament to speak on major issues, and I do not see why such a hard and fast rule is necessary.

My main reservation, however, goes much deeper, and relates to an issue touched on by the hon. Member for Londonderry, East. Our Parliament, although not exactly unique, is rather different from most Parliaments around the world—and very different from, for instance, the American Congress. Here, we have not a division of powers between the Executive and the legislature, but an integration of powers. There are good historical reasons why the Executive controls the legislature, as in effect it does; there are sound constitutional reasons why that has come about over hundreds of years. In any event, by and large, that is what happens. If there is to be an independent or quasi-independent role for the legislature in our constitution—I do not accept that we have yet lost all our influence and power to the European Parliament, as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said, although I accept that we must fight back to preserve and strengthen this Parliament—the only weapon that those involved in legislation have at their disposal is time.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale said that one of the great attributes of the report was that it gave a degree of certainty. We do not want that; if we are legislating, we want the opposite. We want to be able to surprise the Executive on occasions. The whole purpose of Parliament is to some extent destroyed and demeaned if we have a Parliament which sits from 9 am to 10 pm. Presumably, we shall later have push-button voting to make ourselves even more modern. People have said that the proposals are a first step in the right direction. I presume that push-button voting will be the next good step in the move towards everything being clean, clinical and working perfectly. For whom? For the Executive—that is what making things more efficient means.

I argue strongly that if we are to have any type of independent Parliament, which is especially difficult under our constitutional system, there must be the capacity for hon. Members, either represented by their Whips or as individuals, to be able to negotiate with the Executive from time to time. The only basis on which negotiation can take place is on the aspect of surprise related to time. Time cannot be a totally predetermined commodity in Parliament.

Mr. Tony Banks: Did the hon. Gentleman hold those views when he was a Minister?

Mr. Spicer: I have always held those views. I spoke about them publicly when I was a Minister. I have been in opposition and in government, and I have been on the Back Benches and on the Front Benches. Throughout my 18 years in the House, I have held the view that Parliament must have independence, although that is difficult under our constitution. My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale has worked hard on the report. The proposal, which he identified as the core proposal, for the House to sit from 2.30 pm to 10 pm, is the one about which I have most reservations, for the reasons that I have given.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. So far in the debate, I have called hon. Members who were not members of the Committee. I wish to call some who were members of the Committee. I understand that Front-Bench Members will seek to rise at 9.40 pm and will take 10 minutes each. If hon. Members who are now rising limit their speeches to, say, five minutes during the next half hour, all of them are likely to be called.

9.7 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): A Whips Office is a very fearsome place. When I first came here, I was told that Whips should always be regarded with great care because they were the business managers. Their job was to get legislation on to the statute book or, in the case of the Opposition, to do whatever they could to snarl up the legislation. I regard that as a proper role, and I understand it. Those who seek to take from individual Back-Bench Members the powers that have remained fundamental for everyone in the country for many hundreds of years do so at great peril to our civil rights.

The point that most concerns me about the report is the fact that so many Front-Bench Members, both Government and Opposition, find it quite acceptable to cut the amount of time left for legislation and to move the number of days available. There seems to be an assumption that Back Benchers speak only on private Members' matters or concern themselves only with ten-minute Bills. Those are all important, but Back Benchers also speak on legislation when there is an important subject and a long debate.

Those who suggest that power should seep down to regional authorities and up to the European Parliament have a duty to tell the House how well those authorities do their existing work. It is clear that the European Parliament does not exercise even the powers that it has at present to audit the behaviour of many of the most expensive of the Community's institutions.

I believe that, if the report is implemented, we shall lose a great deal of private Members' time. If we want to change the way in which the House operates, let us seriously consider increasing the powers of the Select Committee, increasing the powers of individual Members to have a direct effect, and making it possible for them to involve themselves at every level.

Richard Crossman, who spoke all the time about the need to experiment with the House, did everything he could to shut down the Select Committees that he had helped to set up. That is a lesson that we should not forget. We should not always think of Front-Bench Members in terms of what they tell us they intend to do. We should think about what they have done and what they will do if they obtain extra powers.

Back-Bench Members in this place, whether male or female, tall, thin, quiet, overwhelmed, from a Northern Ireland background or from any other part of the United Kingdom, are the ones who matter most in the House. They are the people for whom the place was created. Their power derives entirely not from anything that Front-Bench Members organise but from those who elected them. The electors are the people who will be most damaged by a curtailment of the powers of private Members.

9.11 pm

Sir Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) has had considerable experience in the House on both the Back Benches and the Front Benches. She certainly speaks with considerable authority.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who is not in his place, said that he was against the timetabling of Bills. However, I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) and his colleagues on including it in the report. There is a fundamental difference between timetabling and guillotining. Timetabling means that, from the beginning of the consideration of a Bill, the time for considering the whole Bill is bracketed, whether it be 100 or 120 hours. With a guillotine there are 100 hours of debate on one clause or one and a half clauses, and the rest is whistled through in no time. That seems a bad way of dealing with Bills, so I support the principle of timetabling.

The point that I wish to make has been picked up by several colleagues, who referred to the word "certainty". The point is linked with that made by the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) about constituency representation. I come from a constituency in the far south-west. For the most part, members of the public have a healthy view of politics. As my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) said, politics is not an immediate part of their lives. People do not much care what we get up to between Mondays and Thursdays. If we want to sit all through the night, it is something that Members of Parliament do. But if they arrange a month or six weeks ahead for us to attend a meeting on a Friday, they expect us to keep our commitment to be there. In my experience, they do not respect the iffing and butting that they hear from the majority of us.

Irrespective of their party, Members of Parliament come from various walks of life in which they previously gave commitments to attend meetings. But when they become Members of Parliament, they get into the way of, being much less determined and using the way in which the House works with lack of certainty. That is not only unfortunate but unfair to those we represent.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will accept the report's recommendation that he should give more than one week's notice of the business of the House. In this day and age, it is ridiculous that we cannot plan better than that what goes on in the Chamber. I think I speak for hon. Members on both sides of the House when I say that, if we are to hold surgeries, quite apart from other meetings, as I do in many villages in my constituency—I know that some colleagues do not do so

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—they must be advertised in local newspapers and we must give notice of the times. They have to be dealt with ahead of time. It is ridiculous that we cannot plan our proceedings better. It causes considerable stress to the people that one arranges to meet in one's constituency, and to one's family. Lady Members of Parliament feel more strongly about that issue, and have alerted us to it more effectively than we male Members care to accept.

It is important to have more certainty, and the Committee should be congratulated on tackling the problem by suggesting that there should be 10 Fridays when we do not sit, and early closing at 7 pm on the preceding Thursdays. Perhaps that is not the best way to deal with the problem, but the Committee has given the matter considerable thought and has come up with a unanimous report. The House should accept that. I hope that, if nothing else, those on both Front Benches will press the Leader of the House to give more notice of future business, and to accept the Friday and Thursday early-closing suggestions.

9.16 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I shall try to follow the example of Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg rather than that of Fidel Castro, in terms of my contribution——

Sir Peter Emery: How long did Lincoln take?

Mr. Banks: Two minutes.

I do not like the idea of giving up Fridays. There is no need for the hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Sir G. Neale) to be here on Fridays, as we rarely vote on that day. I understand that the reason why Conservative Members like the idea of giving up Fridays is that it means a waste of time for some of them, due to some nervousness on the part of the Government Whips, who keep so many of them here on a Friday in case something embarrassing crops up.

Fridays are valuable for Members representing London constituencies, as it gives us an opportunity to speak. Quite a friendly crowd turn up on Fridays to debate matters which are not of great import, but which give us the chance to do what my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said we are here to do—to represent the interests of the people we are elected to represent.

There is no reason for hon. Members to be here on Fridays if they do not want to be. I do not like missing the opportunity to raise matters in the House. This is a peculiar place, as we probably all understand. It is one of the few places where one is penalised if one works harder. If we turn up regularly, as one or two of us do—I recognise a few hon. Members around the Chamber—we always see the same people, although there are 650 Members. I have always found that intriguing. I still from time to time bump into Members that I do not recognise.

The fact is that, if we come here regularly and work hard, we are told when we want to speak—by someone who occupies your seat, Mr. Speaker—that we have spoken x number of times. Why the hell are we supposed to come here, if it is not to speak and to vote? Yet some hon. Members stroll into the Chamber after six months of doing whatever they have been doing, and whoever is in the Chair calls them because they have not spoken for six months. They have no right to expect to be called by you, Mr. Speaker, if they have not been in here for six months. Those of us on what might be called the Stakhanovite wing of the party should not be penalised in quite the same way.

I have always supported the idea that whoever occupies the Chair should have the discretion to say, "We're running out of time; don't be greedy." It is surprising how selfish Members of Parliament are. They have prepared a speech and they are going to deliver it, come hell or high water, notwithstanding the fact that a large number of other hon. Members are sitting around waiting to speak. I have always found that one of the most unreceptive audiences is made up of people who are waiting for one to stop speaking so that they can start.

9.19 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): As requested, I shall be brief. First, I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) on his chairmanship of the Select Committee. Our comprehensive analysis of the brief presented to us has produced a balanced report, and I hope that the House will fully support our recommendations. To our critics, I would just say that it is not as easy as it looks.

For many years, there has been a notion, which was repeated this evening by the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman), that the sitting hours of the House have deterred women from seeking election because they fear that the long hours and late nights will interfere with and undermine their time with their family. It is not just women who suffer from that; male Members of Parliament also find our working hours burdensome. They have equal difficulty in arranging family life to fit in with the long hours that we are expected to work at Westminster and in our constituencies.

Some have suggested that, by moving the sitting hours of the House to fit the usual timetable of a working week, from 10 am to 7 pm, mothers would be able to get back to their families and spend some time at home in the evening, so the family would benefit. That is not a cure-all. They forget that very young children are usually in bed asleep in the early evening. As my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) said earlier, that being the case, it would surely be better for the young mother to be with her infants during their waking hours in the morning. As I have raised three children without the help of any nannies, I am probably qualified to make points on this matter.

The fact that more women are now presenting themselves for candidates' lists shows that there is no shortage of initiative and talent. Better education and wider career prospects have encouraged women to seek wider opportunities in political life. It is for the selection committees to give them a fair hearing. Let us make no mistake: being a Member of Parliament, whether male or female, is a very demanding job and will continue to be so even if the recommendations bring about changes in working practices in the House.

The recommendation that the main business should generally finish by 10 pm will be welcomed by everybody. It must be a step in the right direction.

The proposal that 10 Fridays should be designated at the beginning of the Session as non-sitting days, and the suggestion that we should finish business by 7 pm on the preceding Thursday will be of enormous help to Members, male and female, with distant constituencies—certainly in terms of family life. To finish business on Thursdays as often as possible by 7 pm will enable many Members to be with their family for a longer period. That must be right if Members are expected to participate in constituency work at the weekend. Even when children grow up, parents need to be around. Greater certainty of recess dates will also provide benefits for family life by reducing pressures on time that can be spent at home.

Some will argue that the recommendations do not go far enough. I am afraid that I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman): I believe that the recommendations are sensible, workable and sensitive to the needs of the Government, the Opposition and Back Benchers, as well as to our constituents and our families.

9.23 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): When I served on the Committee, I was particularly concerned about two issues. Democracy is not as strong here as we in the House sometimes try to pretend. Many people are sceptical about our democratic rights. I wanted to see how we could become more effective in the House and more representative of the population. Both are important elements of democracy. My main anxiety was that the Committee was so constrained in what we could consider that it was difficult to address those two issues.

The main way to achieve more representative government with more people interested in how and what decisions are taken is to have much more devolution. That is also a more effective way of getting more women and working-class people involved.

Anyone who wants to come to Westminster as a representative knows that he or she will not lead a normal life. If one wants a normal life, the last thing that one would do would be to put oneself forward as a Member of Parliament. However, although we are part of a system that means that normality is not an option, we still have a responsibility to know, understand and be part of as much of the life of our constituents as is humanely possible, given the constraints of the job.

In considering how Parliament could become more effective and representative, I listened carefully to those hon. Members who have experiences other than my own. I confess that my views are prejudiced by the fact that I have been a Member in a Parliament in which the Government have had a huge majority which they have been prepared to use ruthlessly. That means that I have not experienced the position in which a Government have had a tight majority and the Opposition have been able to use time as a weapon. In my experience, if the House sat for 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, we would not have an effective Parliament. It is not the length of time that is important; it is the way in which we use time most effectively, which will allow us to scrutinise legislation properly.

I should have liked the Committee to consider other matters, but its terms of reference were specific. However, I believe that the Committee took some steps forward and that it came down much more on the side of those hon. Members who have constituencies and families outside London. I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks): if his constituency and home were 250 miles from London, he would not enjoy Fridays in the same way.

We have a full-time job, but we have responsibilities in Parliament and in our constituencies. I employ people who work in my constituency. As an employer, I have the responsibility to meet my secretaries and assistants at least once a week. I should be able to do that without insisting that they should be as lunatic as me and work on Saturdays and Sundays as well. Being in the constituency on a Friday has become important to me. I want to do that without neglecting my responsibility to Parliament.

The Committee heard numerous views that it wished to accommodate. I was impressed by the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) and agree that our rights are critical for democracy and civil rights. However, sitting all the hours available is not the most effective way in which to defend those rights. If the House cannot organise itself effectively, what right do we have to pretend that we can organise the rest of the country?

9.27 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I have two brief comments to make. The first is about Members being forced to vote or being encouraged to vote when they are seriously ill. Some suggestions have been made to ameliorate the problem, and I very much reject the attitude —my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House hinted at it—that there is no such problem. That problem is not confined to those periods when normal arrangements break down or when the Government have a tight majority.

There have been occasions when the Conservative party has been the Government, with a normal and natural majority, and when there was pressure on hon. Members to risk their health by sitting in ambulances or in overheated taxis in New Palace Yard simply because of ineffective whipping or because a wrong view had been taken about the nature of the business. I remember it happening to me. I had the pleasure of sitting in New Palace Yard with a high temperature, when my doctor had insisted that I stay in bed, in order to form part of a majority of 126 on two separate votes.

Mr. Tony Banks: More fool you.

Mr. Stern: I agree, but unfortunately we are all, from time to time, at the mercy of the vagaries of those who are appointed to advise us on the nature of the business. The attitude so far evinced by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House on alternative systems of voting for sick Members is simply not good enough and needs to be reconsidered.

The second point that I wish to make concerns a group of Members who have not been considered so far in the debate. May I make a shameful admission? A few of my best friends are members of the Government. Although long sittings are inefficient from the point of view of ordinary Members, we should remember that they are not necessarily efficient for the good government of the country. When we play our party games here, we can make matters much more difficult for members of the Government to carry out the job which we ask them to do and for which they are paid. That is the role of the Opposition and of Back Benchers. I hope that, in considering the length of sittings, we shall also consider the

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fact that there is a group, who, although sometimes spoken for by Front-Bench Members on both sides, are entitled to consideration as Members of the House.

9.31 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I was privileged to serve on the Select Committee as a recently elected Member in 1987 and I congratulate the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) on his chairmanship. I learned a lot from sitting on the Committee.

It has already been said that any change recommended by the House usually results in an increase in Executive powers. I am worried that that may happen as a result of this report. We have a democratic deficit, as illustrated by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who called the House a museum. After sitting on the Committee for many hours and listening to experienced and inexperienced Committee members, I could not agree more. It is the hardest place in the world to change.

I tabled an amendment concerning sick Members. The Committee has received a reply from the Leader of the House on that issue, but his reply was nothing short of disgraceful. He has clearly not given his attention to the issue. We must consider whether we are a civilised Parliament and, if so, whether we should allow people to sit in ambulances in New Palace Yard. It is a grotesque spectacle that has never been dealt with before. The experienced members of the Committee were more against my amendment than inexperienced members. Perhaps that tells us that this place should be demolished so that we can start again, because it is extremely hard to get anything done here.

The amendment asked whether we could put our trust in a medical person, who has the trust of the House, to ensure that no sick or dying Member came to the House. Need we repeat the mistakes of the 1974-79 Government, when three hon. Members were brought to the House in that condition? One was the late Frank McElhone, who was forklifted on to a plane in Glasgow airport and brought here so that he could lie in a room and be passed as fit to vote. That action is inhuman and barbarian, and it must stop. I am glad to note that my amendment was passed, albeit with a slim margin of seven votes to six.

The holidays in July are another issue of concern to me as a Scottish Member. Last year on 29 July, as a member of the Select Committee on Defence, I was questioning the Secretary of State for Defence. One month previously, on 29 June, my family had their holidays and I had no time with them. I am expressing not just my point of view but that of other Scottish Members. If we have any interest in the welfare and well-being of Members and Members' families, surely we must do something about that aspect.

I was keen that we should have at least two weeks' notice of business. To be honest, I think that we should have more notice than that. A women's guild in my constituency sent me a letter last June inviting me to address the guild on the evening of Thursday 13 February this year. I wrong back to thank the guild for the kind invitation, but said that I could give a definite answer only the Friday before. That system must be changed. Can we make some advances so that we truly represent our constituents?

I accept the timetabling aspects of the Committee's proposals, which represent a good move, but the value of the Floor of the House for debate has been debased. We seek to scrutinise legislation and pin down the Executive. My experience over the past four or five years is that the Floor of the House has proved an inadequate place for me to air the cares and concerns of my constituents.

If this timid report is to do anything, it will advance change a little bit, so we should accept it. But as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield said, we are here to represent the electorate, who are insufficiently represented. The report makes only a small advance, and we must remember that.

9.37 pm

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I wish to make just three points. First, the Committee skilfully produced a report which cleverly reflects the views expressed by the House, particularly the concern about late hours, as well as more obvious follies.

Secondly, much to my surprise, I have come round to the view that limiting speeches to 10 minutes is an acceptable and sensible approach. That rule should be applied as the general rule, with a number of exceptions. It should certainly be widely used in a large number of debates.

The third point involves a serious reservation. I am glad that this debate puts down a marker for the new Parliament, rather than trying to impose suggestions on the new Parliament. The broad acceptance of timetabling —the difference between timetabling and guillotines is marginal—has come as a great surprise to me. Of course we take advantage of timetabling, and are always grateful when a timetable is imposed. However, I regard the general acceptance of timetabling as one of the greatest abdications of a Back Bencher's power over the Executive, and see it as a reflection of Governments with large majorities.

I would always choose to be on the side of a Government with a large majority, given that option. Often Parliaments are not like that, however, and there are Governments with small majorities. In those circumstances, for the Opposition to give up the right to use time is an enormous sacrifice. The next Parliament could look different, were there to be a majority of just 20 or 30 for either party, and to give up such a power for the sake of certainty and timetabling is dangerous.

It is not just a matter of defeating Governments, which does not happen often. Through the use of time, one can secure concessions, and deals can be struck between small numbers of rebels on either side. I recall when Opposition Members and I helped to defeat a Government Bill. Unfortunately, it came back the following year, but we used our power. If we give up that right, I believe that Back Benchers and Opposition Members will probably be surrendering one of their greatest powers. That issue should be carefully considered in the next Parliament, not determined in this one.

9.38 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I wish to speak about a couple of the amendments which I tabled to the report, but which were lost in Committee. Like the hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate), I warn against the guillotine or timetabling.

On occasions, we all take advantage of our next engagement. If we are out in our constituency, and people buttonhole us with awkward questions, it is always nice to be able to say that we would love to answer them, but are sorry we have got to be somewhere else within the next minute or so, so that we can duck away—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame!"] It is shameful, but I bet that we have all done it at least once, if not more often. The advantage to Ministers of guillotines or timetabling is that they can fill out the time.

Let us consider the performance of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) when she came to the Dispatch Box for 15 minutes. Sometimes people would say that she had gone on a bit answering this or that question, but it spun out the time and cut down the number of awkward questions that she had to answer. Guillotines and timetables let Ministers off the hook.

I do not support the idea of 10-minute speeches. Tonight's debate was a good example of self-discipline. I may have been called right at the end, with only a few seconds to go, but I prefer that to people being restricted to 10 minutes. They do not give way or take interventions, which spoils the debating atmosphere. If we are not going to give way, we might as well, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said, hand in our speeches at the Table Office and not bother coming to the debate. The whole point of this place is that it is a debating Chamber.

The House is always at its worst when there is consensus between Front Bench spokesmen. It is important to ensure that the minority view is well represented. To try to squeeze it into 10 minutes when two Front-Bench spokesmen have had an hour in which to make their case is unsatisfactory. I warn the House: beware of the 10-minute rule and make sure that plenty of discretion is allowed.

Our effectiveness in this place has to do partly with time spent in the Chamber and partly with resources. I understand that that Top Salaries Review Body has been looking at Members' secretarial allowances and other resources, and I hope that the Leader of the House will be able to give us some news about what has happened to that review. We need some reform of our procedures, but we also need the resources to do our job more effectively.

9.41 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): When the Select Committee was set up last July, I would not have given it much chance of having its report debated before the general election, not because I doubted the skills of the Members serving on it, but because I thought that the election would be much earlier. If by any chance the Prime Minister ducks out of 9 April, I hope that we shall have another debate on these matters so that we can make some decisions before the change of Government when we take over later this year. It would be nice to sort out some of the problems before that happens.

I welcome many of the Select Committee's recommendations, but I have strong reservations about others, not least because, as I said when we set up the Committee, the report puts the cart before the horse, as several of my hon. Friends said. I can think of no other institution in the world which would discuss how long it ought to work before discussing what it was trying to do and how effectively it was doing it. Those are the prior questions that should be dealt with. It is not so much a matter of whether the horse should be better fed or the cart wheels oiled as of whether the horse and cart are the best means of getting from A to B.

We perform many of the functions that we are supposed to carry out in this House badly. Although that is not a popular thing to say, it echoes the description of this place as a museum by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). For instance, do we scrutinise the Executive effectively? The answer is no. Do we scrutinise legislation effectively? Emphatically, no. How good are we are at redressing the grievances of constituents? There is even a fairly large question mark over that.

Mr. Cryer: That is because there is not enough time.

Mr. Grocott: I shall come to that.

How effective are we as a debating Chamber, as a forum for debate? I regret to say that we are pretty bad at that, too. This may not be a popular opinion, but "Question Time" on the BBC is often a more effective debate.

Mr. Tony Banks: One has to get on it first—it is even more difficult than catching Mr. Speaker's eye.

Mr. Grocott: Some are luckier than others.

We should, as I say, ask ourselves how effectively we are doing what we are supposed to be doing. For example, many of the assumptions behind the report and behind the ideas of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) seem to rest on the idea that a Bill given two days for Second Reading, 100 hours for Committee and four days for Report and Third Reading will be twice as good as a Bill given one day for Second Reading, 50 hours for Committee and two days for Report and Third Reading. That may be true, but I have seen no evidence to suggest that it is the case.

Even with endless scrutiny, the House produces appalling legislation. I am sorry to bring in a sour and partisan note, but in that context I refer to the poll tax legislation. Conservative Members now understand as well as we do that that was appalling legislation, which brought great discredit to the Conservative party. I am pleased about that, but regrettably it brought a fair amount of discredit to this place because people say, "What a ludicrous Bill—how on earth was it passed?"

Mr. Cryer: It was passed because the Government have a big majority.

Mr. Grocott: Yes, the Government have a big majority, but we must seek better ways to scrutinise legislation, so that the worst faults are ironed out. Debating Bills for longer and longer is not the answer.

That deals with the issue of how effectively we perform our functions. The other question, which has been answered in many ways by the Select Committee, is how Members' time should be split between time spent in the House and time spent on constituency work. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield spoke accurately about the enormous growth in the Executive's power. Do

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we deal with that simply by extending the sitting hours or should there be a better and more effective division of our time?

In that respect, the demands on Members have changed dramatically. I do not regret that, because I consider that time spent addressing meetings such as those described by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) is just as effective as, and more important than, time spent in the House late at night scrutinising legislation which ends up with no change whatever in its content. We must ask basic questions about what we are doing here and about the balance between time in this place and time spent outside.

I strongly support some of the Committee's recommendations, including the recommendation for more notice of parliamentary business. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton said that two weeks' notice is far too short, but it is a step in the right direction. The fact that we receive only a week's notice is in many ways an indication of the contempt that the House seems to have for the needs and rights of constituents. There is a feeling that the business of the House, however obscure, must take precedence over the demands of people outside.

I welcome greater notice of recesses and endorse the attention paid to Scottish Members and to Members from the north and the midlands. They make tremendous sacrifices to be here. The argument about school holidays applies to many areas, but especially to Scotland, and we should respect that. The suggestion that legislation should be timetabled is also important, but I accept the argument advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), who is a member of the Committee, that that risks giving tremendous power to the Government. After 9 April, I shall be much more sympathetic about giving tremendous power to the Government. However, I accept that there must be some balance in timetable motions, and the way to obtain that is to ensure that legislation is scrutinised by calling witnesses and following Select Committee-type procedures.

I disagree in many respects with the Select Committee's recommendations about the parliamentary day. We have heard again the arguments against late and morning sittings. This is probably the only job in the world—certainly the only job in Britain—where meeting after 10 o'clock is described as a late sitting. In any group of members that I represented as a trade unionist, 9 o'clock to 10 o'clock would be described as a late shift, as would 8 o'clock to 9 o'clock.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): This job is a lot easier than working down the pit.

Mr. Grocott: No one disputes that—of course it is easier. That is well established and understood, but as my hon. Friend knows, there are arguments for improving working conditions wherever work takes place.

Conservative Members have argued against morning sittings, using the excuse that Ministers would not have time to come to the House. Against that, I have a game, set and match argument. Fifteen Cabinet Ministers managed to come along on a Friday three weeks ago to ensure that the unspeakable could chase after the uneatable. If they can turn up on a Friday in such vast numbers, I am sure that Ministers would be able to come along on any other morning when that was required, either to answer questions or to deal with debates. I see no good grounds for not having morning sittings, and I hope that we shall move towards that when the earlier recommendations have been implemented.

I endorse the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield. In many ways, this place is a museum. It is time that we recognised that the world outside has changed and that we should be better able to reflect its needs. I welcome the report as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough and I ask for further improvements.

9.50 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): I warmly congratulate, yet again, my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) and all the members of his Committee on the speed and thoroughness of their work. When I invited the House on 9 July to set up the Select Committee, I made it clear that I had received many representations from all parts of the House about the need for parliamentary reform, but that it was also clear that there was little agreement as to what reforms were necessary. That dichotomy has been reflected in the debate and draws attention to the excellent way in which my right hon. Friend's Committee has performed. It is to be congratulated on achieving a unanimous report in what is, by common consent, a most complex matter. Another complex job is arranging the business of the House. Anyone who has tried to do it will know that it is not as simple as it sounds to arrange and announce business weeks ahead, because many demands are made at the last minute.

I do not agree with the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) that this is a modest report. He did less than justice to himself and to his fellow Committee members. The report has covered a wide range of subjects. It is notable for being practical, as I would expect from my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale, a former Chief Whip. Often, we make advances by practical steps that can be achieved and realised in performance.

We have had a good debate. I am delighted that hon. Members exercised self-restraint and enabled everyone who wished to do so to speak. It has been noticeable that there has not been agreement on several issues, and that draws attention to the difficulties that the House will face in reaching decisions on the report and recommendations.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) suggested that the report made things easier for the Government and my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) questioned some aspects of the report from a similar point of view. I do not see it that way. The Committee was originally set up because of the pressure put on me from Members of Parliament on both sides of the House who wanted me to make parliamentary reforms in the interests of Parliament and of Members of Parliament. I should like to disabuse everyone of the notions that the Committee was set up to make the life of the Government easier and that it will necessarily do that.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale spoke about the balance between the

Government, the Opposition and Back Benchers. Paragraph 7 outlines the principles that the Committee had in mind in looking at that balance. They include:

> "(i) the Government of the day must get its business, and within that principle must ultimately control the *time* of the House;
>
> (ii) the Opposition must have enough opportunity to scrutinise the actions of the Government and to approve or oppose its legislation as it thinks fit; and
>
> (iii) backbench Members on both sides of the Chamber should have reasonable opportunities to raise matters of concern to them and to their constituents."

That sets out the aims that the reforms are trying to achieve. The Committee, in approaching its work and in the recommendations that it has made, has kept that balance in mind.

The other important part of the balance is the amount of time given in the House to each of those different interests. In my paper to the Committee, I analysed how that time had been divided in recent sessions. I do not make this point to criticise, because it is right that we should do so, but it is a fact that we give more time to Back Benchers than practically any other legislature in the world. That was made clear to me when I visited Australia and New Zealand recently.

When considering the hours and sittings of the House it is important that we endeavour to keep the balance between the Government, the Opposition and Back Benchers. That was very much a theme which I took up in my remarks, and I think that it is reflected in the report.

It is clear from the comments of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members this evening—this is very much a theme of the report, and it appears at the beginning of it —that we must take into account constituency duties, a work load that has increased. I think that we would all say amen to that. That has been emphasised by the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) and others. I very much disagree with the view of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that by restricting some of our sitting hours to enable Members to attend to their constituency duties we are introducing a three-and-a-half day week, or whatever. I believe strongly that it is right to say that constituency duties have increased and that we are all spending more time on them. The report reflects my belief.

It has been kindly said that the report follows my advice closely. It clearly follows the endeavour to keep the balance between the Government, the Opposition and Back Benchers. I am grateful that some of the personal points of view that I expressed have been taken up in the report. It is right, however—I defend the independence of the Select Committee—that it has rejected some of my views, and certainly I have reservations about some of the recommendations. Those reservations can be dealt with later when we come to consider in detail what we shall do about the report.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) talked about the impact of the report and the need to consider the issues raised from the point of view of having more women Members. I am on record as having said on many occasions that I want to see many more women Members, and I think that my hon. Friend made many sensible comments in that respect, as did the hon. Member for Durham, North-West.

The fact remains that a Member's job will always be a heavy one. As the hon. Member for Durham, North-West said, it is not a normal life. Although we may make it easier for some women to participate in parliamentary activities through some reforms, that is only a part of the process.

One of the most interesting features of the debate—certainly until the later stages—was the degree of support for timetabling Bills in Committee. There is a distinction between timetabling and guillotining. A personal view that I expressed to the Select Committee is that timetabling enables the House to do a more effective job in its scrutiny of Bills. We all know that in the past the House and Committees have not done an effective job in considering a number of Bills. We have all been involved in that. Far too much time has been spent on the earlier parts of Bills, for whatever reason. One of the things that emerged most clearly during the debate was support for timetabling. I suspect that that reflects a change from the outcome of previous discussions on the issue.

An important matter that the Select Committee reflected strongly in its recommendations, and which I reiterate, is emphasised in paragraph 8. The passage reads:

> "The House, frontbenchers and backbenchers, must be united in its determination to use these procedural reforms to secure both reasonable hours and effective scrutiny. Otherwise our proposals for the more effective conduct of business of the House will mean little or nothing."

I am convinced that that is right. As I said in evidence to the Committee, whatever may eventually be agreed on arrangements for sittings of the House, their success will depend on the co-operation and self-discipline of Members. Whether Members will regularly see the House adjourn in the evening will rest to a large degree with Members. I agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) when he said that a small number of Members can frustrate the workings of the House. That is a view that we must have in mind when we approach the reforms.

I made it clear on 20 February that we shall go into the details later—I am not going into detailed recommendations tonight. I made it clear also on 20 February that I was keen that the House should have an early opportunity to express its view on the report as soon as possible. I believe that the House has welcomed the chance to hold this debate before we decide how to move forward on the specific recommendations. I felt that it was important that the House should have an early opportunity to express views, and this opportunity has been valuable.

The fact that I set up the Committee shows that we recognise the need for parliamentary reforms and that we have accepted in principle a willingness to undertake appropriate reforms. I can cite examples in relation to European Select Committees, the Transport and Works Bill and many others in which, in this Session alone, we have carried through a number of reforms. There is, however, no commitment—that was clear tonight—to any of the recommendations in the report. There will need to be further detailed consideration of those recommendations. Differing views have been expressed. It will be a fairly complex process to reach agreement on all the reforms. The views of the new House, before we decide how to take the issues forward, will also have to be taken into account, but tonight's debate has been a valuable first step.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions)

Mr. Speaker: We now come to the Church of England Measures.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it on this matter?

Mr. Cryer: It is not on this matter, it is on another matter connected to the Palace of Westminister. The Government have been defeated on the Education (Schools) Bill, and that raises important issues. I wonder whether you have had an application from the Department of Education and Science to make a statement to the House about the Government's defeat in the House of Lords on what they regard an important privatisation measure. If Government support is crumbling on the wing down the corridor—the geriatric wing of the Palace of Westminster—and if it is crumbling everywhere, we should know about it.

Mr. Speaker: That has some relevance to the previous debate. I know nothing about what has gone on in another place.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It was not a point of order for me. If the Government have been defeated in the other place, presumably we shall debate that when we consider Lords amendments.

Mr. Bennett: As the Leader of the House is present, I wonder whether he has asked you whether he can make a statement about any change of business, because we are under considerable pressure with various guillotines and other business that must proceed this week. It would be very helpful if the Leader of the House could tell us whether it will be necessary, in view of that defeat in the House of Lords, for there to be any change of business this week.

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the House was present throughout the previous debate, as I was, and will be as much in the dark as I am about what went on in another place.

10.2 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): I beg to move,

That the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for Her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

As its short title suggests, the Measure contains provisions on a wide range of matters, most of which are neither controversial nor exciting but will be extremely useful in their own ways. I do not want to detain the House by attempting to deal with all of them, but perhaps I may mention one or two. Schedule 1, for example, deals with parochial registers and records, some of which are very ancient. Quite apart from their importance to the Church, the documents are of great interest to historians and genealogists, so it is important that they should be properly preserved and cared for. The amendment in schedule 1 will help to ensure that.

On a completely different subject, clauses 2 and 3 will help to ensure that the rector or vicar of a parish will normally be responsible, if requested, for the funerals of his own parishioners, even if their funerals are to be held in a cemetery or a crematorium which lies outside his own parish boundaries. They will also help ecclesiastical law to deal more adequately with the ever more widespread practice of cremation.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am grateful to the blessed and holy Member for giving way. This is a genuine inquiry, which is not my usual form of inquiry. Is it possible for me to be buried at the end of my garden if I so choose? Does the ground have to be consecrated? If I were to be cremated—*[Interruption.]* I am not anticipating anything unfortunate happening on 9 April. My parrot is buried at the end of the garden, so why cannot I be?

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman can be buried at sea if he wants. There is a good deal of flexibility as to where the hon. Gentleman may prescribe that his remains should be disposed of—although long may that day be delayed. The limited purpose of the clause is to ensure that a vicar who wants to bury a parishioner with whom he had a particular association in another parish, away from his own, cannot be prevented from so doing by some obstreperous incumbent forbidding him to cross the constituency boundary, so to speak.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I remind my right hon. Friend that a Member of another place was convinced that, when he died, his remains should be fed to dogs.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): He must have been a Liberal.

Dame Jill Knight: My hon. Friend is right. We will pass over any suggestion that the noble Lord's wishes reflected his mental condition. Does the measure incorporate the regulation that forbade that Member of another place to be eaten by dogs after his demise?

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend has managed, by a subtle side wind, to introduce the topic of the Wild Mammals (Protection) Bill into this debate. I hastily ask for your protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in being invited to follow that line. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) that the narrow ambit of the measure relating to burials has nothing to do with the technicalities of the way in which the poor deceased's body may be disposed of, but entirely concerns the right of a parish priest to secure the funeral of someone who was a member of his flock in a cemetery or crematorium that lies in another parson's constituency, so to speak—and to prevent that parson from objecting to an outsider working on his territory.

I will attempt to take the House away from those rather sombre aspects of the Bill. The main intention behind clauses 1 and 11 is to save unnecesary paperwork, and thus unwelcome expense, when a rector or vicar resigns, or when a parish is temporarily without a rector or vicar for some other reason.

Turning to Church of England activities on a broader front, clause 6 will help it to forge closer links with

Churches abroad. That reflects current efforts to improve relations with other Christian Churches in Europe, but also in this country.

Right hon. and hon. Members who had an opportunity to examine the Bill will know that schedule 4 lists a number of provisions in statutes and measures dating back to at least 1803 that are being repealed because they are no longer needed. I am advised that, at present, the standard volume of ecclesiastical law, statutes, and measures occupies about 1,300 pages—and that only goes up to mid-1985, and does not include a good deal of recent legislation. The pruning effected by schedule 4 represents a welcome simplification of the law.

Three clauses relating to the appointment of deacons to various posts gave rise to some concern among some members of the General Synod and of the House's own ecclesiastical committee. The main background to those provisions is to be found in section 10 of the Act of Uniformity 1662, which provides that holders of certain offices in the Church must have been ordained as priests.

Clause 14 provides that, in spite of anything in section 10 of the 1662 Act, deacons may be appointed as rural deans. The clause says that it is for the avoidance of doubt, and that is exactly its purpose. Some ecclesiastical lawyers take the view that it is already lawful to appoint deacons to such posts, and that section 10 of the 1662 Act contains nothing to prevent it, as some experienced deacons have already been appointed as rural deans on that basis. On the other hand, some ecclesiastical lawyers take a different view, and it therefore seemed desirable to clarify the legal position.

The office of rural dean is a responsible one, but his role is essentially pastoral. It does not involve the supervision of priests in the rural deanery, or the carrying out of essentially priestly functions. As a matter of law, the rural dean's main task is to report various matters to the bishop, such as illness or distress among the clergy, or instances in which a church is in a poor or dangerous state of repair. I see no reason why that task should not be carried out by experienced deacons.

Clause 15 makes it possible to appoint a deacon who has been ordained for at least six years as residentiary canon of a cathedral. That represents a change in the law. The position of residentiary canon is a senior one, but mature and experienced deacons are already able to hold —and, indeed, do hold—senior posts in the dioceses: for example, as directors of ordinands, directors of education and directors of social responsibility.

Posts of that kind, however, are often linked to cathedral canonries, partly for financial reasons and partly because it is desirable for senior people in a diocese to have a spiritual home in the life of the mother church of that diocese. At present, deacons are excluded from the posts in question, which means that the best available person cannot necessarily be appointed. Clause 15 would open the way to the appointment of deacons both to residentiary canonries and to diocesan posts linked with them. It would also ensure that, when it is thought desirable to appoint a deacon but the cathedral's constitution and statutes mirror the existing law and require a residentiary canon to be a priest, the cathedral will not need to go through the lengthy process of having its constitution and statutes amended.

Nevertheless, the clause makes it clear that deacons who are residentiary canons will not be entitled or required to perform exclusively priestly functions, such as celebrating holy communion or giving absolution. For that reason, there can be no question of all the residentiary cannons of a particular cathedral being deacons, as there would then be no one to fulfil the canons' sacramental duties.

Mr. Harris: Does not that highlight a major inconsistency? Obviously, the reason for the measure is the current existence of a number of female deacons. Is my right hon. Friend saying that a woman deacon can become a canon of a cathedral—can, indeed, become a director of ordinands—and still not be able to administer holy communion? Is that not absolute nonsense?

Mr. Alison: Whether it remains absolute nonsense is a question for the future. It is conceivable that the General Synod of the Church of England will decide to remove that disability: in future, a woman deacon who has spent six years as a diaconate may be able to become not merely a canon, but a fully officiating canon. That remains to be seen, however. It does not make it undesirable for a women who may already be the director of education in a diocese, or hold a similar senior post, to be given a place as a canon, provided that she has had at least six years' experience—even if she is not fully fledged and able to carry out the full priestly function. That holds out to women a further prospect of significant honour and advancement which the General Synod of the Church of England thought—and I am sure it was right—was entirely laudable and desirable.

Clause 16 deals with non-residentiary canons. The office of a non-residentiary canon is mainly honorary and is normally intended to give some recognition to clergy who have played a significant part in the life of the Church and the diocese. Deacons who have had an effective ministry for some time may well be considered suitable persons to appoint. Most ecclesiastical lawyers consider that the 1662 Act does not prevent a deacon from holding that office. Several deacons have been appointed as non-residentiary canons in various cathedrals.

The object of clause 16 is to set at rest the few doubts expressed about the legal position and to ensure, as in the case of residentiary canons, that, if a cathedral's constitution and statutes stipulate that the non-residentiary canons must be priests, the cathedral will not need to go through the process of having them altered. The clause makes it clear that non-residentiary canons who are deacons are not entitled or to be required to perform exclusively priestly functions.

Although the position may change, it is well known that most male deacons regard their office as a stepping stone to the priesthood. As a result, the real relevance of clauses 14, 15 and 16 is to women deacons. Some members of our Ecclesiastical Committee, of whom my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) is one, were concerned that the clauses were an attempt to edge towards the ordination of women to the priesthood by the back door. I assure the House that that is not the case.

The offices covered by the three clauses do not, as I have explained, involve carrying out exclusively priestly functions. The supporters of the clauses in the Synod included some people who were opposed to the ordination of women to the priesthood but who thought it important to allow mature and experienced women clergy to progress to posts of responsibility in the Church which they could

[Mr. Alison]

properly hold as deacons, rather than leaving them to feel that the only way forward for them in their ministry was to be ordained as priests.

At first sight, it may seem surprising that a deacon would be able to hold those responsible posts, but could not be an ordinary vicar or rector. The office of rector or vicar of a parish is one of the most honourable and important offices in the Church, because it involves the cure of the souls of the parishioners and is the cornerstone of the parochial system which is such an essential feature of the Church of England.

The Measure was debated at length and in detail by the Synod, and it was passed by substantial majorities in all three of the Synod's houses. It contains many provisions which will undoubtedly be for the benefit of the Church of England and for those whom the Church serves. It was passed by our Ecclesiastical Committee with the recommendation that it was expedient.

10.17 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I welcome the Measure, especially clauses 14, 15 and 16. As hon. Members have just heard, we are beginning to build a career structure in the Church for women priests. It is not a substitute for the main Measure, which I hope will come to the House at some stage, to allow women to be priests, but it is a step in that direction. It will stand whether that Measure is passed by Synod and comes to this place or not. If Synod sends us a Measure to allow women to be ordained as priests, it will gain a huge majority in the House.

I make my comment with one proviso. People may have heard a debate in which my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and I took part last week. My right hon. Friend said that he had never voted against a Church Measure in this place. He also said that he was wholly in favour of women priests. However, he said that if the Measure came here linked to and indivisible from the compensation Measure, he would be sorely pressed not to vote for that Measure.

The debate allows us to send friendly signals to Synod. The House of Bishops has a chance of splitting that Measure, should it wish to send it to us, so that we consider the women priests Measure and the compensation Measure separately. I hope that it will consider the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield carefully. Although I believe that there would be a thumping majority in the House of Commons in favour of women priests, the House would not look so favourably on a measure to pay people up to £55,000 if they wished to exercise their conscience and leave. The House believes that people should exercise their conscience and leave without being paid such handsome sums for doing so.

The only other point that I wish to make is about the title of this Measure. It is an important Measure. It is not the main Measure about women priests, but clauses 14, 15 and 16 are important. Yet it is another example of Synod trying either our intelligence or our patience. It seems discourteous, to say the least, to dress up the Measure as a miscellaneous Measure. It is about developing a career structure for women deacons and it should have come over as such. Synod should have been proud to send that Measure to the House.

Several diligent Members of Parliament look carefully at what Synod proposes. If Synod thought that the Measure would go past without comment or opposition from those who oppose giving women a greater say in the church, that is a reflection either of its intelligence or of its folly.

For the reasons that I have given, I hope that this miscellaneous Measure will begin to provide a proper career structure for the valuable service that women deacons already give in the Church. For that reason alone, I hope that the House will pass the Measure. But I hope that Synod will take on board the points about compensation and about the silly behaviour of dressing up significant Measures with innocuous titles.

10.21 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on the last point. It is one reason why some of us who serve on the Ecclesiastical Committee were a little angry about the Measure. It is not what it appears on the outside. The hon. Gentleman and I are in accord on that point. The Measure is designed to do one main thing. It is designed to advance the cause of women in the Church.

Some of us who serve on the Ecclesiastical Committee were disturbed that the measure seemed to anticipate a further decision of Synod and, indeed, of the House. It would be fair to say that those who were disturbed included some who support the ordination of women and some who, like me, have grave reservations about that move. We are talking about posts of real seniority in the Church of England. There is no point in anyone denying that.

A rural dean is a position of seniority within our parochial system. It is unthinkable that a male deacon would ever be a rural dean. A rural dean is almost always an experienced parish priest who has been an incumbent for many years and is therefore reckoned to be well qualified to help to administer a group of parishes and to be in effect the presiding priest over a group of his colleagues. That is a position of seniority and it should not be dressed up otherwise. It should be occupied by a senior priest. I use the word carefully. That is not to say that if women become priests they should not become rural deans. Indeed, if they become priests it would be entirely proper that the position of rural dean and other positions of seniority should be open to them.

The same applies, one might say to an even greater extent, in the case of canons of cathedrals. It is a high honour to be a canon of a cathedral in the Church of England. Many of the most distinguished churchmen in our history have never held a more senior position— people such as Sydney Smith—and many have never aspired to any higher position. It would be unthinkable for a male deacon to become a canon of a cathedral.

I spell those matters out carefully, and I hope without too much emotion, because it is important that, while the House has a responsibility for these matters, we should face them fairly and squarely.

Some members of the Ecclesiastical Committee felt that the Measure was anticipating future decisions of Synod and of the House. First, we were disturbed that the Measure should have come to us with this seemingly innocuous title. We were then doubly disturbed to find that this measure was being proposed many months in advance of the Synod making a final decision on women priests, and many months—perhaps a couple of years—in advance of the House being asked to endorse such a decision. I do not like it, and that is why, in company with my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) and some other members of the Ecclesiastical Committee, I voted against it on that occasion, and our votes were recorded.

As the hon. Member for Birkenhead has rightly said, now is not the time to debate in detail the ordination of women. I doubt not that there will come a time when the House will be asked to debate it. I suspect that, when this measure is debated in the General Synod in the late autumn of this year, there will probably be the requisite majority. However, this issue must be thought about and prayed about carefully. It is an issue which will divide people within the Church of England, and there are people whom I deeply respect on both sides of the argument.

Some people are utterly convinced that there is no bar to a woman exercising the priestly function. There are others who take a contrary view and who properly recognise that the words "priest" and "minister" are not synonymous. There are others who believe that it would be divisive to proceed with that within the Church of England at this time.

Among those who take that view, a considerable number believe that the cost of conscience has to be counted. It was a good thing that the hon. Member for Birkenhead introduced that issue into his speech. Above all, he is an honest and honourable man who does not seek to hide what he believes or what he wishes to achieve, and I honour and respect him for that.

In the months which lie between this decision and the decision that will be taken by Synod in November—and the decision that we may well be called on to take thereafter—I ask the hon. Gentleman to think carefully about what he has said, and about those men who will feel that they can no longer be at home within the Church of England, although many of them have given decades of their lives to it as vicars and rectors—men who have never been paid any great sum of money because we do not pay our priests very much in the Church of England, and men who will feel that they cannot, in all conscience, continue to exercise their vocation. Are they and their families to be punished for a decision which was never even in prospect when they were ordained?

We have to face that issue and deal with it with clarity and humility. Now is not the time to expand on that subject, although it was proper for the hon. Member for Birkenhead to introduce it and it is equally proper that I should respond, but I ask him and every other hon. Member in this Chamber to think carefully about that before we come finally to debate it.

I shall not seek to divide the House this evening because there is no point in so doing. It is clear to me that the majority of Members present this evening would feel that the measure is indeed expedient, although I do not think that it is, for the reasons that I have sought to explain.

I come back to where I began and where the hon. Gentleman finished his speech. It is important that the General Synod of the Church of England and those who lead it and seek to speak for it should behave wholly honestly in every way. That means saying what they are about and not dressing up significant Measures in spurious garments. That way lies further division and further justifiable anger as a result of provocation.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), who introduced the Measure with his customary elegance and moderation, will take that message back to his fellow commissioners and others in the hierarchy of the Church of England.

10.30 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I rise to speak in favour of the motion and the proposals in the Measure. Although I have been present at the committee meetings on almost all occasions, unfortunately I was unable to attend this time, but I would have taken the same view. It was a useful exercise in exploring the issues and hearing the evidence which, as the committee often finds, was helpful.

To follow on the speech of the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), the Measure seems to tiptoe round the three controversial clauses, particularly the difficult issue of the ordination of women priests. I support the ordination of woman priests. I was interested to hear the answer of the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) to me the other day on the personnel implications. It advanced the important argument that the total number of people coming forward for ordination had increased, but that the number of men coming forward had decreased. It does not take the genius of a Newton to work out that the advantage to the Church of having women ordained would be considerable: it would give a plus rather than a minus final figure.

I have always taken the view that there are enormous numbers of people out there who wish to give service as ordained members of the ministry. I remember going to the first service of the ordination of women as deacons at Southwark cathedral and seeing a great tide of women coming through the gates to that new form of ministry. I was enormously impressed by that. I realised how we hold back, to our detriment, those who feel that that sort of ministry is their vocation. When the Measure comes before us, as we expect that it will within a year, it not only will have my support, but will enjoy widespread support on both sides of each House.

I agree with the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) that the issue of principle behind whether women should be ordained priests should be taken separately. Now is not the right time to get into the detailed debates that follow from that, but as this is probably the last chance that the House will have to discuss the whole issue of the preferment of women in the Church, it is important to see how the Measure relates to that wider issue.

The debate is topical because of the express concern of members of the Church about what will happen if the Synod votes for the ordination of women—the majority of dioceses have already said that they wish to do that. I understand the point of conscience, but there is a greater cause to which those ordained into the Church must subscribe. They must ensure that the maximum number who feel that they have a vocation are able to practise it in the cause of the gospel. Whatever the personal conviction, there are perfectly adequate ways within the same Church whereby people can continue their ministry without seeking to divide the Church, separate from it or cause difficulties to its ministry.

The Church has suffered from schism during two millennia and its message has been obscured by it. The Church of England will not do the country a service if large

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numbers, or even small but significant numbers, of its ordained priests decide that they must go somewhere else to carry out their ministry as a result of a decision by the Synod. The Church of England may have reason to arouse criticism because of its establishment nature, but its great merit is that it is the Church of the whole nation. I hope that everyone who is ordained to serve in it will see the merit in retaining that unity after any decision, taken after due and prayful consideration, by the Synod of the Church.

Those who are considering how they will react should the Church vote for the ordination of women should remember that many of us want them to stay in the Church and not to divide it. We believe that their concerns can be accommodated by a careful, conscientious, considered and deliberate process between now and any decision by the Church. Some have asked that any such decision should be delayed for 10 years, but if that is not possible, I hope that they will not believe that they have an overriding duty other than to stay in the Church to which they have given so much of their lives.

It is anomalous that we should be considering the supplemental issue before the main one. However, in relation of rural deans, I appreciate that that is necessary for the clarification of the law, rather than the promulgation of new law. It is clear from the evidence that, at the time of the act of uniformity, the job of rural deans did not exist. They were a later creation. However, the Measure on rural deans has been introduced to avoid doubt.

I understand the view expressed by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South, and I accept that it is logical to think that the job of rural dean is given to someone of seniority and experience in that local part of the Church. The evidence, however, suggests that the hon. Gentleman is wrong in one respect. Rural dean is not a post of seniority, but one of co-ordination. The selection of a rural dean works on a rota of people in the deanery. Some of those selected are relatively new priests in the deanery and are relatively young. The post does not necessarily go to the most senior priests. It is a functional, administrative job which entails passing on information to the area bishop. It is not a supervisory or hierarchical job. There is a difference.

It is also an anomaly in 1992 to describe the person appointed to the post in a deanery such as mine as a rural dean. I know that the parishes of Bermondsey were in the country once, in the county of Surrey, and were a long way from the City of London and the city of Westminster. That is not so any more. The Church should look like it is up with the times. We could correct the title in the next miscellaneous Measure to allow people to be called urban or area deans in those areas that are no longer rural.

Hon. Members will have noticed that there are female non-residential canons—they are enumerated in the Measure. Indeed, we have one in Southwark diocese. The Measure seeks to add the opportunity for women to be residential canons, too. Although that is a different argument, it has merit. As there are many women in different forms of the ministry in the Church, it seems entirely appropriate that women—irrespective of their priestly or diaconal status—should be able to participate in the internal grouping responsible for the running, management and ministry of the cathedral church. Therefore, allowing women—who cannot yet by law be priests but who can be deacons—to attain that office is an advantage both to the cathedral church and to the diocese as a whole. Women in the diocese would then have a role model representing them in an extremely important part of the diocese.

There are reasons that stand on their own and have merit to justify the two provisions. Those who proposed them thought so, and I believe their honesty and integrity. Bigger issues lie further down the track and we shall debate those with more heat and potentially more numbers in due course but, in the meantime, I expect that the House will wish to support the Measure. I hope that it does so and that it will allow the many small administrative changes and the two more noticeable ones to be made to the advantage of the whole of the Church of England.

10.42 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): A virtue of the speeches by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is that they seem to be new each time. Having something to say on every subject would like to be shared by many hon. Members who do not get a chance to speak quite so often——

Mr. Simon Hughes: I am a spokesman for my party.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman says that he is a spokesman for his party on that subject. I concede that.

The last tract that I read was given 18 years ago by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, on "The Christian Concept of Sacrifice". I do not address that to the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) because the persuasive case that he has made for this Measure has convinced everyone and gained the tacit acquiescence of those who have argued against or been doubtful about the provisions at previous stages. But Michael Ramsay said:

> "if we're engaged in a ministry of paraphrasing we do need to conserve at the heart of it the thing which is being paraphrased; and unless we do, we may not be paraphrasing, but we may be talking a lot of rather superficial stuff which means a great deal less than what the real thing meant and means. For that reason my hope is that however much modern paraphrase language we come to use in our liturgies, hymns, preaching, and elsewhere, we will always retain at the heart of it the words that Jesus himself used on the night in which he was betrayed, the words, 'This cup is the New Covenant in My blood' or 'This is My blood of the Covenant, shed for you and for many', because the reality contained in those words really transcends all the attempts at paraphrasing as long as this world may last."

Michael Ramsey started that address to the Anselm Society of Canterbury by saying that one of his great teachers, Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, said many years ago that the concept of sacrifice had become spiritualised and etherealised and that we had forgotten what a horrible thing it really meant. Hoskyns said it

> "it would be a good thing if once a year a bull could be sacrificed in the college court, preferably on a hot summer's afternoon, just to bring home to all our senses what a horrible thing was this sacrifice that lies behind so much of the imagery of Christianity."

Those words may go a little beyond the Measure, but they begin to illustrate that some of the cosy little talks among those who know how to spell ecclesiology—I confess that I am not among them—get away from the service to which most of us are called. One of the reasons why I have not been a very successful politician is because

I do not know how to get on bodies such as the Ecclesiastical Committee. If I am re-elected at the general election, could those who know how to get on that Committee tell me, because I should like to be on it, especially when Measure on the ordination of women comes up? [HON. MEMBERS: "Write—or pray—to the Speaker."] I am told that I should write to Mr. Speaker.

It seems that, although the Measure's innocuous title helps it to contain provisions to allow women and others —men, although they are not likely to remain deacons for six years or more—to do things that they are not forbidden to do. As my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) said, I think that we all recognise that we are on the way to the General Synod considering the major point.

I hope that we shall hear less in the popular media that reflects the voice of the organisation "The Church in Danger". As far as I can see, the organisation was thought up by those associated with *The Spectator* weekly magazine. A significant, although not always declared, proportion of its members are retired from active stipendiary ministry—they are ministers on pensions.

Mr. Frank Field: That is ageism.

Mr. Bottomley: It is not ageism—I am just trying to describe whose who are not involved in compensation.

I also hope that when we consider the Measure on the ordination of women, which I hope will come through Synod and the Ecclesiastical Committee to the Floor of the House, we shall not look on the issue of compensation in that way. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South would accurately describe such matters as resettlement issues. The resettlement of people who feel that they have to abandon their way of earning their living is a separate matter. But perhaps such arguments can be addressed following the bishops' advice to the Synod.

I used to believe that it was worth waiting a bit for the ordination of women. On one of my unsuccessful attempts to stand for election at the General Synod—there have been two so far—I said that I thought that the balance of sacrifice was now being carried by the women, not by those to whom the ordination of women would be a personal pain, difficult or unacceptable.

However, I now look at the people who still object to the ordination of women—I am not addressing a personal remark to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South—and see that some of them overlap with those who object to a modern liturgy. I see the modern liturgy as one that makes the Church of England liturgy virtually identical with Roman Catholic liturgy, and, on those grounds alone, something to be very much welcomed. I also see people objecting to the ordination of some people who could be ordained if they were in slightly different personal circumstances.

I hope that the Bishop of London will not take this as a personal attack on him, but when he uses language that I cannot even understand, let alone agree to, it seems that we should take a different approach. We should recognise that the General Synod was set up to try to help ease the burden of legislation on ecclesiastical matters in the House, but also realise that the House should not just rubber stamp what may come forward but should call for it.

We should say that the sacrifice which has been borne by women and the Church has gone on too long, and most of us are like the two thirds of the readers of the *Church of England Newspaper* who, about three years ago, were clearly strongly in favour of the ordination of women. Half of one third—about 16 per cent. of the readers—were strongly against it. The strength of feeling of the minority who are opposed should no longer be able to dominate the overwhelming majority, plus the others who would want or accept it when it comes.

Mr. Cormack: I counsel my hon. Friend to be a little careful in his attribution of motives to other people.

More importantly, he should not castigate an organisation like "The Church in Danger" as being a particular group of people. He should look at the Members in both Houses of Parliament who are on that group. He would see that they are people of all ages and both sexes, with genuine concerns which any member of the Church of England should take seriously.

Mr. Bottomley: I accept that. However, I saw the unpaid advertisements—the come-ons—in *The Spectator* magazine week after week. I was tempted to join to find out what was being circulated among the members of the "The Church in Danger" organisation.

When "The Church in Danger" writes to the Archbishop of Canterbury I should be grateful if it would deposit a copy of the letter in the House Library so that people like me can read it. I pay tribute to the archbishop for giving us the copy of his response, which struck me as fair and reasonable. It would also help if those reporting the words of "The Church in Danger" mentioned not just that one member of the Cabinent supports what it is doing but that none of the others has signed up. The reporting of this matter has not been terribly balanced——

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): As a younger member of "The Church in Danger," perhaps I could attack the accusation of ageism. My hon. Friend is well known in the House for his defence of minorities—in a secular sense. Is he saying that a minority in this case should be overruled or swept aside?

I should like to challenge my hon. Friend's reference to the *Church Times*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Both hon. Members are straying a long way from the Measure. I very much hope that they will relate their remarks more closely to it.

Mr. Howarth: If I may continue, my hon. Friend should not judge the views of the Church of England——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bottomley: I was referring to the *Church of England Newspaper*, not the *Church Times*. On the other matter, I stand corrected.

I have spent some time serving on the Archbishop of Canterbury's urban priority commission, a follow-up to "Faith in the City". No great objections to the ordination of women were raised in that body. I spent six years as a trustee of Christian Aid and found no difficulties with the idea on that organisation. When I served as chairman of the Church of England Children's Society I did not find that the issue came up much.

In short, in much of the practical work of the Church, the ordination of women is not an issue, because people

[Mr. Bottomley]

are getting on with their work. If St. Hilda of Whitby could do what she did, why could she not be ordained? My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South and I were in St. Faith's chapel earlier this evening; if St. Faith could be a saint and a woman, surely the ordination of women does not present difficulties.

I am grateful for your charity, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I support this Measure, and also the Measure that that is to come later; I hope that Anglicans and non-Anglicans alike will do all in their power to support and pass it when it comes.

10.51 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I entered the Chamber solely to listen to the speeches of right hon. and hon. Members who have served on the Ecclesiastical Committee for longer than I, but I felt it right to say a word or two because I disagreed mildly with my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and more strongly with certain Conservative Members.

While we should try to avoid schism—paganism is far too rife in this country—we should also recognise that, despite all pleadings for unity and cohesion in the Church, there may still be some honest men who cannot go along with the decision to ordain women. I agree that they should not leave the Church loaded with largesse, but it would be wicked to send them along a bitter road without scrip or sustenance. We do not want to over-encourage their departure, but it should not be accompanied by impoverishment——

Mr. Frank Field: We should try at all costs to prevent these people from departing—they should be promoted in the hierarchy, and parishes should have the right never to accept women if they do not want to; there are not enough to go around, anyway. But at the end of the day, if they do not want to stay, having been encouraged to do so, they should leave.

Mr. Tony Banks: Let them eat manna.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend demonstrates his usual generous spirit.

The fact remains that there must be some understanding of the challenges faced by the Church and those within it. My view of the matter is different from that of the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South. I attended the last meeting of the Ecclesiastical Committee at which the matter was discussed, and I certainly understand the hon. Gentleman's view.

Because of the developments of history and the change in the nature of society, the ordination of women is right. As a result, it would have been inappropriate for the House not to recognise, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead has recognised, that the debate is of relatively minor importance. However, signals will go out from the debate, and the House should send a signal that the future debate on the ordination of women should be preceded by the proper rectification of anomalies. The issue of canons and rural deans is an anomaly that may not have loomed large in the past, but in the context of the developing debate, it is important and it would not be wise to rule out women on the ground that they do not have the capacity to hold such positions.

I hope that grasp of the modernities of life displayed by the hon. Member for Southward and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) will not be such as to expunge the title of rural dean from his area of London or any other conurbation. One of the advantages of the developing debate, with all the anguish and anxiety that it will engender, is that the media may well return to the above-average presentation of dramas based on adaptations of Trollope. Such presentations are among the finest achievements of the past decade of British television, and I hope that they will be repeated or developed.

Such presentations hold out the prospect of rural deans having a greater meaning in Britain's conurbations. That could be one of the less significant spin-offs of a debate that will bring heated argument to the country and probably to the House. On this occasion, I hope that the House will approve a Measure that is both consistent and necessary.

10.57 pm

Mr. Alison: I note that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is looking forward to his Adjournment debate, so I shall not detain the House.

The hon. Member asked where he might be buried. That is a matter of some local importance, and the hon. Gentleman will be relieved to hear one or two facts that are relevant to his contingency when it arises. He need not be buried in consecrated ground. He could be buried at the bottom of his garden, if that is what he wants, but I suspect that that might be a hazardous enterprise, because it could give rise to a whispering campaign alleging that the local Conservative party or an activist had murdered and buried him. That could lead to the hon. Gentleman being disinterred and put in the local authority cemetery. If he were buried in unconsecrated ground and his family subsequently wished it to be consecrated, that could be done. The hon. Gentleman's future burial is entirely indeterminate, but I suspect properly safeguarded.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) made a helpful speech supporting the Measure, for which I am grateful. He criticised the General Synod in terms of the title that we are considering, the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure. The hon. Gentleman is being a little harsh, although he is not normally a harsh man. The measure started as the Service Chaplains and Miscellaneous Provisions Measure. The Synod then decided to take out the service chaplains bit of it, so it became simply the miscellaneous provisions Measure.

Much further down the line, when it had completed almost all its stages, the Synod decided to put in the three provisions on canons, and overlooked restoring the title that the Measure had originally had, the Service Chaplains and Miscellaneous Provisions Measure. The Synod might have done so if it had thought about it, and I am sure that it would accept the rebuke that the hon. Gentleman made, but this was not done in an attempt to mislead us or to get something through on the nod.

My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) made a considered and moderately expressed speech of dissent and warning. His eloquent and well-rounded speech will be noted and considered in General Synod circles. It is a foreshadowing of things to come, and we need to take considerable notice of speeches from that quarter and of that calibre.

I am not sure whether I can reassure my hon. Friend, but I can tell him that already, some rural deans appointed from the diaconate are men of considerable experience, so this is not entirely unprecedented. We are enfranchising women in this sector not because it will be the shape of things to come, but very much because it is the shape of things as they are as the result of the 1985 measure, which presented the Church of England with such a large number of women deacons.

It is worth noting, by way of counter-balance, that the Roman Catholic Church is moving strongly in the direction of introducing a diaconate expressly for married men, so as to encourage men to go into a limited ministry. It is possible that there will be a feedback into the Church of England, with a growing body of men who wish to limit themselves to the diaconate, thereby offering a limited service, in a way that matches what is happening in the Roman Catholic Church.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend not only for the tone in which he expressed his dissent, but for saying that he will not divide the House.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) for his helpful and analytical exposition of the merits of the measure. We note his point about the change of the designation of rural deans to Bermondsey, although, with greenness in his veins, he may one day secure that Bermondsey becomes rural—that will be the day!

I note carefully the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), and the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) has given us his usual helpful support. I am grateful for the positive note that he struck.

Against that background, I hope that the House will allow this Measure to go through.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for Her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

PETITIONS

Hare Coursing

11.3 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I should like to present a petition signed by over 114,000 citizens, protesting at the barbaric so-called sport of hare coursing. Live hare coursing takes place between September and March every year, and it is staged purely for entertainment. People who take pleasure from watching a harmless live animal ripped to pieces by dogs have to be sick in the head. The hare is not a pest. It does not threaten farmers or other creatures. Hare coursing comes in the same barbaric category as dog fighting, badger baiting, cock fighting, and so on. I am pleased to tell the 114,000 signatories to the petition, organised by the League Against Cruel Sport, and the followers of this organised torture against hares, that when Labour wins the general election, we shall introduce legislation that will banish hare coursing from our country.

To lie upon the Table.

Vivisection

11.4 pm

Mr. Tony Banks: Here we have two for the price of one. I present the second petition on behalf of over 15,000 citizens. It asks for the abolition of vivisection on scientific and moral grounds. Approximately 3·2 million animals were experimented on in British laboratories during 1990. This means 8,000 per day or 60,000 per week. The number of experiments that did not involve any anaesthetic at any stage rose from 63 per cent. in 1989 to 68 per cent. in 1990. In one statement, Ceiba Geigy estimated that 95 per cent. of drugs passed safe after animal tests were rejected after human clinical trials. Vivisection includes: suffocation, burning, scalding, drowning, mutilation, poisoning, surgery, irradiation, sleep-deprivation, sight deprivation, electro-shocking, freezing, injection of disease and genetic manipulation—and we think that we have it bad in this place. Cosmetic testing and many other procedures, such as the LG50 test, have been widely discredited. The world will be a better place when all vivisection is abolished, in terms of both human health and animal welfare.

I present the petition on behalf of the signatories.

To lie upon the table.

Law and Order

11.5 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of 8,535 signatories on the breakdown of law and order. The petition was collected by members of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Labour party and by others outside the party, notably Marie Price. My constituents rushed to sign it. Is that any wonder, when crime has doubled since 1979?

Violent crime has doubled, burglaries have doubled and robberies have trebled. People have signed the petition because they do not want to be frightened to open their doors, to go out at night or to use subways. They do not want to be worried that their houses or cars will be broken

[Mrs. Llin Golding]

into when they leave them. They want action to prevent crime. They want the Government to take the petition seriously.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Government to take urgent steps to halt the breakdown of law and order. Your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Stratford School

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

11.6 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The problems of Stratford school in my constituency have received excessive national publicity. It is publicity that we do not welcome in the area, and the sorry mess could have been avoided in the first place if this malevolent and dogmatic Government had listened to the elected representatives of Newham—Members of Parliament and councillors.

I shall be brief because I want my Newham colleagues and my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) to contribute to the debate, and I have agreed that with the Minister.

Originally Newham council proposed the closure of Stratford school to conform with the Government's requirement to reduce surplus places in line with circular 3/87 from the Department of Education and Science. To enable the building of a new sixth form college and two new schools in docklands, Stratford had to close. The reorganisation plans were well supported in the borough by local industrialists, the London Docklands development corporation and others.

In an understandable attempt to avoid closure, the parents submitted a petition with enough signatures to trigger an opt-out ballot. The result of the first ballot was a majority of 10 against opt-out. As fewer than 50 per cent. of parents voted, a second ballot was required. The result of that ballot was an 18 vote majority for opt-out. Fifty-one per cent. were in favour of opt-out, but that represented only 33 per cent. of those eligible to vote. It was hardly an overwhelming turnout. However, an overwhelming majority of existing governors and staff were opposed to opt-out.

In October 1989, Newham's Members, together with councillors and officers, went to see the then Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Mordern (Mrs. Rumbold). We said that it was nonsense to grant opt-out for a school facing closure as part of approved education reorganisation. We warned the Minister about the likely chaos and divisiveness that opt-out would cause in the area. We were given a most sympathetic hearing and we assumed that good sense would prevail. In that respect, we were proved utterly wrong.

In the summer of 1990, with the Tory party conference looming, we understand that the then Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), started expressing dissatisfaction with the slow rate of opt-out. Junior Ministers at the Department of Education and Science were changed. Despite advice from civil servants against opt-out, the overwhelming opposition of Stratford governors and the absence of any real support in the local community, opt-out for Stratford school was approved by the Secretary of State for Education and Science in October 1990.

It was a political decision that was based on the needs of the Tory party and the dogma of the then Prime Minister. The Minister who is sitting behind the Dispatch Box, the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), knows that the Tory party had nothing to lose in Newham, North-West. He did not care about the education of

Newham pupils or community relations in the area. He was interested only in delivering an opt-out in a solid Labour area to satisfy the half-mad bigot who was then leading the country.

One has to contrast the Stratford decision in Labour Newham with the decision over Walsingham school in Tory Wandsworth. Walsingham was also facing closure as part of a reorganisation. Both schools had similar pupil and electoral rolls. At Walsingham in Wandsworth, 96·1 per cent. of parents voted for an opt-out on a first ballot. In Newham, on the second ballot only 51 per cent. voted in favour of an opt-out. At Walsingham, no fewer than 64·8 per cent. of people on the electoral roll voted in favour. At Stratford, only 33·5 per cent. of those eligible to vote voted in favour. There was no question about support for an opt-out at Walsingham at any level at any stage among any of the people involved, but the Secretary of State turned down Walsingham's opt-out application. Could it have been on educational grounds or could it just be because Walsingham is in Tory Wandsworth and Stratford is in Labour Newham?

I should like the Minister to answer three specific questions. First, is it not a ff cd67act that his Department advised and warned him against the Stratford opt-out? Secondly, why was Stratford allowed to opt out and Walsingham refused permission to opt out? Thirdly, why has the Secretary of State refused to meet elected representatives in the House, the three Newham Members of Parliament, and councillors from the London borough of Newham? It is because the opt-out in our area has created enormous bitterness.

Pupils are returning home crying. Parents are telephoning my office to complain and then refusing to give their names or addresses because of fear of intimidation. The local police are genuinely worried about the possibilities of violence, and maintain a presence in the area. The school is regularly staked out by camera crews and journalists. To cap it all, various racist organisations are now sniffing around to see what trouble they can cause. It is an appalling mess, and the blame for creating the conditions rests entirely with the Government.

Schools in the public sector do not belong to a particular set of governors, parents or staff who happen to be there at any given moment. Those schools belong to the entire community that funds them. Stratford school must be handed back to the elected representatives of the local community, and that means Newham council. This opt-out has gone disastrously but predictably wrong. The real sufferers are the school pupils and their education, and that is intolerable.

At the very least, the Government should ask Her Majesty's inspectorate to go to Stratford to see what is going on behind those closed doors. The nation's press is crawling over the school. The last HMI inspection was a routine one on 4 December 1991. The Government are obviously embarrassed by events at Stratford. The shoddily drafted legislation which permits an opt-out has no built-in safety measures to deal with an opt-out which goes haywire, as it has done at Stratford.

I expect a Labour Secretary of State to place Stratford school back with Newham council. In my opinion—it is only my opinion—governors and senior teachers involved in the opt-out will have to be replaced at some point. Neither feuding governors nor teachers must be seen to win. The only victory that we want is a victory for good sense, the educational needs of the pupils and the wishes of the local community.

The Minister has deliberately sought to create trouble in my constituency, and for that I will never forgive him. The people of Newham will now have to look to the election of a Labour Government to sort out the sorry mess at Stratford school. I look to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) to give us the necessary assurances.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I believe that the hon. Members for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) will seek to catch my eye. I understand that the Minister agrees, provided that hon. Members leave him sufficient time to reply.

11.13 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): This matter is a tragedy for the pupils of Stratford school because they come from the local community which contributes, through its poll tax via the council, to the Department of Education and Science, the money for the school. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said, the school is the property not of the governors or the parents but of the public and the community which it serves now and will serve in future.

Stratford school is one of three secondary schools that were due for closure under the Newham plan for which Sir Keith Joseph, as he then was, asked. The southern part of the borough south of the A13 covers an area of land the equivalent distance from Earl's Court to Blackfriars and is an island that is accessible only by virtually three points across a main road which is the equivalent of a river—the Newham docklands. In that area we have two special schools, two nursery schools and no fewer than 12 primary schools, but no secondary school. The existence of surplus and larger numbers in the north of the borough prejudices the interests of parents and pupils in the area of Newham, South, the Newham docklands, which I have the honour to represent.

11.14 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): There was never any great demand for the opting out of Stratford school. On the first ballot, there was a majority of 10 against; on the second, a narrow majority of 18 in favour —a wafer-thin 2 per cent., or only 33 per cent. of the electoral roll.

Nearly all the governors and staff were against. All expert and professional local opinion opposed the opt-out. All head teachers in the borough were against it, as were the community college, the chairman of the local training and enterprise council, and the three local Members of Parliament. All those with local knowledge and experience warned against the opt-out, saying that it would lead to an unmanageable situation.

Then along came the new Minister of State, the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar). Following blind, ideological dogma, he went ahead with the opt-out, and Stratford quickly became a school for scandal, with one disgraceful episode following another.

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

Newham has many ethnic groups, languages, and currents. A professional local education authority is vitally necessary to hold the ring, keep a balance, and maintain the standards that the Government, for ideological reasons, destroyed in their blind opposition to democratic local government. They handed power to opportunists with hidden agendas and personal ambitions, and ever since there has been a catalogue of disaster and scandalous events.

After bitter disputes the school's chairman, Father Reilly, was ousted. One governor applied for the post of deputy head, which was advertised internally and without the knowledge of the head teacher. The governors then purported to sack the head, but she was reinstated by the Secretary of State—so much for local management. There have been public brawls in the school assembly, with words such as "liar", "fascist", and "racist" thrown about. The police were called to the school on a number of occasions, and there have been various legal actions alleging assault between those supposed to be running the school.

The Secretary of State was compelled to appoint two governors, who have now been boycotted by the others. Accusations have been made by both sides of intimidation and corruption. One principal added to the farce by declaring a 24-hour hunger strike. Can that be the way to run a school?

The Government must accept that they got it wrong. They must agree to sit down with Newham council to find a solution.

11.16 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Stratford is about the ill-considered, partisan policy of opting out exploding in the Government's face. It is not a race issue. *The Independent* commented that the events at Stratford,

> "unprecedented in the history of state governance",

were, in many features,

> "the direct consequence of government policy."

The Times, in a leader entitled "Opted into Anarchy", said that the Secretary of State

> "is hoist with his own petard."

As my hon. Friends pointed out, the Minister of State was warned directly of the consequences of allowing opting out. The governing body said:

> "Grant-maintained status would lead rapidly to an unmanageable situation in which the school would be unable to provide a proper education for its pupils."

Those warnings were ignored by the Minister and, sadly, the governing body was proved correct.

What must be done? Ministers must face up to the seriousness of the situation, for which they alone are responsible. Their indolence and complacency is inexcusable. For the Secretary of State to say in a week when the school was in chaos that it was "operating satisfactorily" was bizarre.

A team of Her Majesty's inspectorate must be sent to the school immediately, and its report published as quickly as possible. If just 10 per cent. of the incidents reported had occurred at a local authority school, the Secretary of State would already have sent in Her Majesty's inspectorate with a blaze of publicity. Look how swiftly he acted last year over Culloden school in Tower Hamlets —but the HMI has not visited Stratford school since 4 December, and then only as a matter of routine.

The Audit Commission—not private auditors—must institute a formal audit of the school. On the basis of Her Majesty's inspectorate and commission's reports, Ministers must be ready to issue directions to the governors under sections 68 and 99 of the Education Act 1944, and to use any other powers that they have to produce stability in the school. If Ministers need additional powers at this stage in the life of this Parliament, they should talk to the official Opposition. In government, we would act in the way that I have described.

Stratford proves beyond doubt how establishing a market in schools and opting them out of any local accountability can lead only to "anarchy"—the word used by *The Times*, direct rule from Whitehall, or the worst of both worlds, which is what we have today.

State schools must be accountable to the community that they serve, and which pays for them. Whitehall cannot run 25,000 schools. That is why opted-out schools must be returned to their parent local authorities—with, of course, clear safeguards to prevent discrimination against school or staff. Under Labour, there will be independent public inquiries into any local authority proposal to close a school. That would have provided Stratford parents with a just hearing of their case. Under Labour, there will also be an education standards commission, which could and would intervene at the behest of parents, teachers or governors to prevent circumstances such as those at Stratford from ever beginning to develop.

I give Stratford parents this pledge: Labour will not allow their children to be used as political pawns, as the Tory Government have so cynically done.

11.20 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Tim Eggar): That last remark really took the biscuit. Opposition Members have talked about Stratford as though they were talking about some kind of academic exercise. They have not really been concerned about the 600-odd pupils at the school.

Mr. Spearing: I mentioned them specifically.

Mr. Eggar: If the hon. Gentleman reads the record, what I have said will be obvious to him.

I will quote from a letter written by Mr. Scivetti, the chairman of the school PTA. He has two children at the school, and was responsible for calling a very successful parent-teacher meeting this evening. He wrote:

> "Jack Straw talks of a school in chaos yet neither he nor any other Labour MPs have visited the school. Were they to do so, they would see how well the school continues to function. They might remark at the high quality of the education; the quiet in the classrooms; the good behaviour and discipline of the pupils and the very high standard and progress being made."

Children have only one chance in their secondary education. Some of those pupils at Stratford were victims of Newham's outrageous behaviour, and its attempts to empty the school last year. Let us be clear about this: when the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) talks about returning the school to Newham, what he really means is closing the school, because he knows that that is the policy of Newham council. He is talking about trying to return those pupils to an education authority that has palpably failed. He is asking us to believe that the best way forward for Stratford school is, in fact, a leap backwards—a leap that would return the school to Newham LEA.

I say this to the hon. Members who seek to represent Newham: whatever differences may exist at Stratford school, everyone there is united on one thing—their absolute abhorrence of the idea of ever being returned to the control of Newham LEA.

What is Newham's panacea? The hon. Member for Newham, North-West should face up to the performance of its LEA. Newham is bottom of the league table in regard to the amount of money delegated to schools. It is almost bottom of the league table for exam results. It ranked 94th out of 96 LEAs in respect of average GCSE results over the last three years for which records are available, and it ranked next to last in the national tests for seven-year-olds: in the composite results and in English and maths separately, it came 104th out of 105. It did slightly better in science, coming 103rd. That is the record of Newham local education authority that Opposition Members seek to support.

Let us consider again what Mr. Scivetti, the chairman of the parent-teacher association, said in his letter:

> "I would suggest it is the education of children at these LEA schools which is more likely to suffer and it is to these schools they"—

Opposition Members—

> "should direct their attention."

Opposition Members have said on previous occasions and in previous questions to me, although not during this debate, that Stratford school is a waste of money. That was not repeated this evening. Opposition Members have made that very clear. They say that they believe that Newham is so efficient and streamlined that it could manage the school and provide high quality education.

Mr. Leighton: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It appears that the Minister is casting aspersions. He said that one of us three hon. Members who represent Newham said that a school was a waste of money. I have never said that and I do not think that my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) have said that. The Minister should substantiate that remark or withdraw it with the rest of his tirade.

Mr. Eggar: It was the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) who raised the question of the financing of Stratford school with me. I believe, from memory, that it was at Question Time.

Mr. Leighton: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have never used those words. Will the Minister quote from where in *Hansard* I said that?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman has, on previous occasions, made a statement about the cost of educating pupils at Stratford school. As he would surely want to know the facts, I can tell him that——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the Minister cannot show that he has done other than to misrepresent the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), he should withdraw his earlier remark.

Mr. Eggar: I am very willing to return to the interjection that the hon. Gentleman made about financing——

Mr. Straw: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is absolutely outrageous conduct from the Minister, who is trying to avoid responsibility for the school. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have just asked him to withdraw a totally unfounded remark about my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton). With respect, I invite you to ask him to withdraw it again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thought that the Minister was in the process of withdrawing it. I very much hope that he will do so.

Mr. Eggar: If I have misrepresented the hon. Member for Newham, North-East, of course I withdraw. However, the hon. Gentleman is aware that he has raised the question of the cost of financing pupils at Stratford with me.

The cost per pupil at Stratford is £2,600 per pupil on the roll today and that compares with Newham's standard spending assessment—the basis on which the Government's revenue support grant for the authority is determined—of £3,500 for 11 to 15-year-olds and £5,000 for over-16-year-olds.

Mr. Straw: What are the Government going to do about Stratford school?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) wants to consider the record of Stratford school. Progress to date at the school has been remarkable. It now has 570 pupils, compared with only about 180 when Newham had finished luring children and teachers away. The school had almost to start from scratch, not knowing until the last moment how many pupils and staff it would have on 1 April 1991. Instead of attacking the school, Opposition Members should join in praising the head, the head's staff, parents and pupils for their sheer hard work and determination. *[Interruption.]* Again, from a sedentary position, the hon. Member for Blackburn says that no one has attacked the school. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West said at the beginning of the debate that the governors, the head and the senior staff should leave the school. If that is not attacking the school, it is not clear to me what is.

Although the school continues to grow and to provide pupils with a good education, it is well known that there have been difficulties between the governing body and the head teacher. For Opposition Members, particularly those whose constituents are involved in the school, that should be a matter of concern and a reason to give the school support. It should not be an opportunity for political point scoring of the cheap sort that we heard tonight.

We have written to the governing body on several occasions to give advice and guidance on the sort of relationships that we would like to see. We shall soon send it the guidance that it asked for on the role of governors. This follows on from the advice that we have already given. For instance, the chairman of the governors was told in a letter from an official in January:

> "The Secretary of State considers that the success of a grant-maintained school depends in no small measure upon a good working relationship between the headteacher of the school and the governing body. The headteacher is the governing body's professional adviser and their link between the formulation of policy and its execution in the school."

In February, the chairman was informed of the Secretary of State's view on a disruption caused in the school earlier that day. He was told:

[Mr. Eggar]

> "The Secretary of State is of the very strong view that the welfare of the children transcends any disagreement which you may have with the headteacher or any other persons and that it is wholly wrong to seek to involve pupils directly in such matters."

Mr. Spearing: I think that the Minister will agree that I said that the welfare of the pupils was the first consideration. He did not acknowledge that. Will he now acknowledge that by agreeing to the request of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), that the Minister ask his inspectors to go into the school to see that the norms that he mentions are indeed maintained?

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's inspectorate is closely involved with the school and will continue to be involved. It will continue to advise Ministers on the position. The hon. Member for Blackburn raised a point about auditors. The hon. Gentleman may not be aware that the Department's auditors paid a visit to the school—I think in the middle of last week. As is well known, in addition to the representations that we have made to the governors, we have used our power under the Education Reform Act 1988 to appoint two first-rate additional governors to the school, Mrs. Daphne Gould and Professor Eric Bolton. They play a full and active part in the governing body.

The Government intend to assist the school to get over its difficulties and to ensure that, by whatever means necessary within our powers, the school knows what is expected of it and the right atmosphere is created to allow the head and her teaching team to get on with their job. We have not hesitated and we will not hestiate to use when necessary the powers given to us by Parliament. *[Interruption.]* We have made that clear to the governing body at every stage.

I heard the hon. Member for Newham, North-West say, again from a sedentary position, that we had been chucking money at the school. That is exactly the point that I made earlier. The school is getting some £2,600 per pupil. That compares with the education SSA allowed to Newham council per pupil of some £3,500 for 11 to 16-year-olds and £5,000 for post-16-year-olds. I might say that this great educational nirvana which is Newham chooses not to spend as much money per pupil on education as the Government allow it. The Government will continue to keep a close watch on the position at the school. We shall assist the governing body in the efficient and orderly carrying out of its work in every way possible. We will use our powers to intervene where necessary.

As was made clear tonight at the meeting of the parent-teacher association, the parents, pupils and teachers at Stratford want their school to succeed. They want and deserve a first-class education for their children. They must not be put off that objective by the negative approach of Labour Members. Given time, patience, assistance and support, Stratford school will go from strength to strength. It deserves the support of everyone, including the Members of Parliament who represent the area, in its continuing work for the pupils of its community. I trust that, after this debate, Opposition Members and especially the hon. Member for Newham, North-West will have worked out their bile and will seek to support the school and the teachers there.

I thank the hon. Member for Newham, North-West for giving me this opportunity to place on record the Government's support for Stratford school and for the work of the head teacher and her team. I hope that all involved will allow them to settle down and allow the school to mature into the first-class school that I know that it is capable of becoming.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-four minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 3 March 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Nuclear Weapons

1. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what new initiatives he plans to curtail nuclear weapons proliferation.

3. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on recent progress in multilateral disarmament.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Tom King): The greatest immediate risk of proliferation stems from the break-up of the Soviet Union. I announced last week assistance to Russia in the safe reduction of its surplus nuclear warheads, and we are considering with other interested countries how best to help Russia use the skills of its scientists for peaceful purposes. We are also considering with partners measures to improve the operation of the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguard regimes. As regards multilateral disarmament, the Government are fully committed to the greatest progress in the whole range of nuclear conventional, chemical and biological arms control negotiations.

Mr. Flynn: Does the right hon. Gentleman remember that five months before the Gulf war, the Government told me that they had full confidence that Saddam Hussein was not developing nuclear weapons? If they are being fooled now by many other countries, is it not right that we must seek a strong, new, international non-proliferation treaty containing vigorous verification provisions backed by United Nations sanctions? Would not the best way to ensure that such a treaty would be accepted worldwide be for us to allow international inspection and verification of the numbers of our warheads?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we are now engaged with the United Nations in the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The world has learnt the lessons from that, of the need for a more effective operation and for more intrusive inspections by the IAEA. I can certainly confirm on behalf of the Government that we shall take any sensible steps that are necessary, consistent with our security, to play our part in that effort.

Mr. Butler: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it was only by a consistent and credible policy of multilateral disarmament that the collapse of communism was eventually assured?

Mr. King: I agree with my hon. Friend that it is vital at this time, when there is the greatest risk of proliferation that the world has ever known and when the world's greatest nuclear power is in a state of disintegration, that we ensure that while we take every positive and constructive step to try to deal with that very grave situation, we recognise the need to maintain our essential safeguard, our own nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Dalyell: The Secretary of State referred to help being given to Russian scientists. In precisely what form is that help being given?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman will be familiar with the statements made by US Secretary Jim Baker and German Foreign Minister Genscher. We are in close touch with our allies on this matter to see the ways by which assistance can perhaps be given, and contracts can be placed, for valuable work to be done which would occupy such scientists, in addition to the part that they might also play more directly in some of the work involved in the dismantling and disabling programme of that massive nuclear arsenal.

Mr. John Browne: Will my right hon. Friend tell the House what he feels about the accuracy of the continued Russian accounting for nuclear warheads? Has he considered whether the western powers should purchase some of those warheads to prevent them from falling into the hands of non-nuclear powers that have no idea how to maintain or destroy them?

Mr. King: It would be fair to say that our impression so far is that the previous Soviet systems were, in many ways, impressive and that the Soviet Union had good controls over its nuclear weapons. Our concern now is how good those controls remain, given that the situation is moving from union control—the Soviet Union—to control by individual republics. Four republics now have strategic nuclear weapons, although tactical nuclear weapons have been withdrawn within Russia. Our worries about the continuing control, however, are real, which is why we are making as positive a contribution as we can to help tackle that problem urgently.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Secretary of State impress on the Prime Minister the need to raise with Mr. Yeltsin the substance of the conversation that my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and I had last Tuesday with Mr. Bikov of the Russian Academy of Science? Mr. Bikov said that on those secret sites, nuclear weapons were still being built. He said that, despite the fact that representatives of the Russian Parliament did not want them to be built and decisions had been taken for them not to be built, they were still being built because of the nature of the command economy that is being phased out. Was not that an important statement for Mr. Bikov to have made to us? Will the Secretary of State assure us that the matter will be raised with representatives of the Russian Government?

Mr. King: Allegations of many kinds have been made about that matter and certain aspects of the command economy. While stocks in the form of raw materials last —I am not talking about nuclear weapons but general armaments—the production will clearly continue. The successor republics of the Soviet Union regard general armaments such as tanks and artillery as a valuable source of hard currency for their hard-pressed economies. The information that the hon. Gentleman has, has not been confirmed to me, except in certain minor respects, but it is a serious issue with which we continue to deal.

Royal Auxiliary Air Force

2. **Mr. Wilkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress he is making towards restoring a flying role for squadrons of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): There are no plans to restore a flying role to squadrons of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

Mr. Wilkinson: May I point out to my right hon. Friend that the Royal Air Force is the only one of the three western air forces with significant operational experience since world war two—the other two are the Israeli and the United States air forces—not to have combat-ready reserve squadrons? A flying role for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force would be exceedingly cost effective, particularly as air crews are being made redundant under "Options for Change". It is a marked distinction of the sensible policy of the Territorial Army and the Royal Naval Reserve in that matter.

Mr. Hamilton: We are considering whether a small number of test air crews from industry in the Royal Air Force Voluntary Reserve should be used as front-line reinforcements for fast jet aircraft. We are talking about costs and, as my hon. Friend will know, the cost of maintaining any aircraft, whether in the Royal Air Force or the reserves, is great, and I do not know how cost effective it would be.

Mr. Rogers: In the early stages of "Options for Change" the Secretary of State said that he would put more resources and emphasis on the development and re-equipping of the reserve forces. How many extra resources have been put into the reserve forces since the beginning of "Options for Change"? Would he agree to support a review of the Reserve Forces Safeguard of Employment Act 1985 so that we shall not have in the future the rash of litigation that has been needed against employers who have declined to accept reservists back since the Gulf war?

Mr. Hamilton: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is anticipating what my right hon. Friend will say on the matter. My right hon. Friend will shortly make a statement on the regular-reserve mix.

Sir Hector Monro: While declaring an interest and reluctantly accepting what my right hon. Friend says about flying squadrons, may I ask him to confirm that there is a good future for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force in view of its exceptional record and its cost effectiveness as a reserve force?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, indeed. As my hon. Friend will know and as hon. Members will hardly need to be reminded, a large number of roles are currently carried out by the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. Those roles are valuable and we intend to build on them.

"Options for Change"

4. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on "Options for Change".

Mr. Tom King: The "Options for Change" exercise was completed in July 1990. Since then, we have been concerned with implementing proposals to create the structure for "Britain's Defence for the '90s". The House is aware of a number of recent announcements, particularly for new equipment, to ensure that our forces, though smaller, will be more flexible, more mobile and better equipped than ever before.

Mr. Loyden: Does the Secretary of State recognise that the Government's inaction on this matter has resulted in "Options for Change" being a shambles? There has been no positive action to give hope to those communities and workers involved with the defence industry. The Government have failed to take the opportunities before them. Will we have to wait for a Labour Government before positive action is taken? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. King: I apologise, Mr. Speaker, I do not usually have by breath taken away. But for the hon. Member to make such a statement, particularly today when, if I catch your eye, I shall make a statement about equipment procurement for our forces, leaves me breathless. I have made statements from the Dispatch Box announcing new tanks, new helicopters, new frigates, and new packages for the air force, our amphibious forces and our commandos. We have made our policies absolutely clear, not just by asserting that we have it in mind to take action, but by stating what we have planned and by making announcements for new equipment and new forces. I also hope to have something more to say on the reserves, which is an important development. For the hon. Gentleman to have the nerve to ask such a question when he was undoubtedly one of those who voted successively for large cuts in our defence expenditure, is mind-boggling.

Sir Jim Spicer: I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree that our infantry is second to none in the world. Does he also agree that a large part of the excellence stems from the fact that its members have the right training from day one, when they join the armed forces? Will he make certain that, in no circumstances, will there be an mismatch in terms of that basic training? Will he ensure that any suggestion of parachute recruits going to Lichfield to train with Royal Army Medical Corps recruits of both genders would be ruled out of court immediately?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend is ever vigilant of the interests of the parachute regiment. I do not think that anybody seriously believes that we can get much legislation passed in the House without his close observance and approval of it. We are looking at the training arrangements and are anxious to ensure that our future forces receive the best and most relevant forms of training in the most efficient and cost-effective way. There may be further announcements shortly.

Rev. Martin Smyth: While welcoming the briefing that is continually taking place, may I press the Secretary of State to bear in mind that the reserve forces are always an important aspect of our national forces? In an earlier reply he suggested that in Northern Ireland, those who wanted to volunteer for the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve could volunteer for some other service. Does he accept that some people prefer to prepare for international emergencies and not necessarily be involved in the local scene? Will he bear that in mind as he considers further recruitment for the TAVR in Northern Ireland?

Mr. King: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. He will recall that when I made the announcement about the TA I made the point that even with the proposed changes the people of Northern Ireland will enjoy some of the best opportunities in the United Kingdom to take part in TA service. There are changes—the numbers were exceptionally high, as the hon. Gentleman graphically indicated just now—but still no one could claim that Northern Ireland was badly placed in respect of our proposals.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the anxiety that still persists in Staffordshire about the fate of the Staffordshire regiment is not mere local and parochial concern but is based on a wider concern for the strength of the infantry? Can he say anything this afternoon that will enable me to reassure my very worried constituents?

Mr. King: I entirely sympathise with the feelings described by my hon. Friend. I was met by a very respectful group of Gordon Highlanders when I visted Aberdeen recently, when I said that I would have been on the line as well had I been in their position.

We have made our plans; they involve change; they involve striking a balance. The Army has reached its decisions. My hon. Friend is concerned about what the strength of the infantry will be in three years' time. We are steadily working towards the plans that we set out, which we believe are right. Were the world to change significantly, we would of course have to look at them again.

I do not want to be misunderstood. We have no plans to change: we believe that these proposals are right. We believe in smaller but better, which means a choice between the numbers of people and the quality of the equipment that they can enjoy. My hon. Friend will concede that we have more than lived up to our promise that our Army of the future, as the Select Committee report said, will be outstandingly well equipped. We intend that to apply to the Navy and to the Air Force as well.

Dr. Reid: The Secretary of State pointed out in his last answer that on 21 February he expressed sympathy with some of the supporters of the regiments, and he said that he would have been standing outside under the same banners. He did not mention, however, that his answer on the same occasion made it absolutely clear that the proposed regimental cuts would proceed irrespective of the findings of the Defence Select Committee report. How could the Secretary of State dismiss so lightly and in advance a report which had not even been written at that date? Is not that a discourtesy to the Select Committee, which is made up mainly of Conservative Back Benchers? Will it not be regarded by them and by the regiments as an admission that he is unable to justify on security grounds the cuts that he has made?

Mr. King: Is the hon. Gentleman quoting a newspaper report on this matter? If that is the report to which he is referring, when asked how I would react to a Select Committee report I said that it would depend on what it said. It is not mandatory on any Government or Minister automatically to accept every Select Committee report. We will respond constructively; if we believe that the report's criticisms are right and constructive, we will take them into account. If we disagree with them, we will say so in the most courteous and, I hope, respectful way we can.

Mr. Robert Hicks: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the high degree of dependence of the Plymouth travel-to-work area on defence-related activity? Does he agree that it is therefore essential that the area be involved meaningfully in future in our nuclear submarine programme and in the Devonport-based surface ships?

Mr. King: Not only am I aware of that dependence; I am aware of the debt that we owe the area and of the real contribution made by the people of Plymouth to the Royal Navy and the Royal Marine Commandos, among other units involved. They would be the first to show their appreciation.

We have made it absolutely clear that we are determined that Plymouth should have a good future. I do not want to go into detail now, but that is certain. How good that future is will depend in part on the performance of the dockyard, which is competing right now. I hope that the dockyard will be in a position to make a significant contribution to the work in future—our budget provides for that. Indeed, we are the only party to have made the financial provision to ensure that that happens.

Young People

5. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many young people under the age of 18 years are currently serving in the armed forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 1 January 1992, the latest date for which we have information, there were 7,647 personnel under 18 years of age serving in the armed forces.

Mr. Canavan: In view of the growing international concern about the use of children and young people in various conflicts, especially in third-world countries, how on earth can the Minister possibly justify a situation in this country whereby a young lad can join the Army at the age of 16, or in some cases at the age of 15, but if he changes his mind and wants to leave after serving more than six months he cannot do so and is forced to continue in the armed services until the age of 21? Is not it about time that the Government stopped this practice of recruiting and exploiting young people who are deemed not old enough to cast a vote but in some cases are being forced to continue in the Army and can be put into armed combat, as they were during the Gulf war?

Mr. Hamilton: The issue of people not being able to leave the forces until they are 21 was raised by the Select Committee that examined the Armed Forces Bill, now the Armed Forces Act 1991. We are looking at the matter and it is currently being considered by the Department. The hon. Gentleman asked about young people joining the armed forces. I do not know who the hon. Gentleman thinks he is speaking for, but I remind him that these people are volunteers and join with the approval of their parents. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that a person under the age of 18 should not have joined his unit in the

Gulf? I do not think that that would have been the attitude of the young men who were very keen to fight for their country and to serve with their compatriots.

Mr. Brazier: Does my right hon. Friend agree that his earlier answer emphasised once again how essential and right it was for the Government to stand up against allowing homosexuality in the armed forces? Many parents of potential boy soldiers, sailors and airmen would have been very reluctant to allow their sons to join the armed forces if homosexuality had been allowed among those who were to train them.

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is right. We carefully considered that issue, and I agree that many parents would have been reluctant to allow their children to serve with the armed forces at such a young age if homosexuality had been allowed.

Trident

6. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current position with regard to the Trident nuclear defence programme.

Mr. Tom King: The Trident programme remains on time and within budget. The first submarine, Vanguard, is set to roll out of the Devonshire dock hall in Barrow tomorrow and, following a series of sea trials, will enter service with the Royal Navy in the mid-1990s.

Mr. Shaw: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government have had a consistent and unwavering policy on nuclear deterrence through the strength and use of Trident? Will he also confirm that the Government will place the order for the fourth Trident submarine as soon as possible?

Mr. King: The answer to the second part of my hon. Friend's question is yes. It is our duty to protect our nation against the risk of nuclear attack and nuclear threat. That cannot be done on an on-off basis. We must provide the means, the equipment and the training, and that must be maintained year after year. We cannot take risks. My great concern about the totally ambivalent position of the Labour party is that it is prepared to take risks by not having enough submarines to provide an effective deterrent. That applies even to the minority in the Labour party who believe in the nuclear deterrent. We have heard the ultimate nonsense from the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), who has said that if a Labour Government order a fourth boat they will not put any warheads on it.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Did the Secretary of State derive some comfort from the authoritative letter in *The Times* of 18 February from the noble Lord Lewin underlining the need for four submarines for the Trident fleet? Did he also note in the same letter the noble lord expressed the view that it may be possible to adapt Tridents to fill a sub-strategic role? In view of that, did not the Secretary of State pause to conclude that whatever NATO may require, there is no requirement for the United Kingdom to have its own tactical air-to-surface missile?

Mr. King: I am grateful for the hon. and learned Gentleman's support in respect of the fourth Trident boat. I give him credit for that, although I cannot give much credit to his policy of favouring a 50 per cent. cut in defence expenditure, which means that there is not the slightest chance of his being able to pay for the extra boat. At least he is father to the wish, even if he cannot guarantee its achievement.

As for the hon. and learned Gentleman's other point, I have made the NATO position clear before.

Mr. Churchill: When my right hon. Friend goes to Barrow later in the week, will he congratulate Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. and its work force there on the excellent job that they have done in constructing the vessels to specification and to schedule?

Is not it clear that a party which, a few years ago, was offering to do a deal with the Soviet leadership that would have involved the sacrifice of 100 per cent. of Britain's deterrent in return for only 2 per cent. of the Soviet deterrent cannot be trusted with Britain's defences?

Mr. King: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I shall ensure that the message that he has asked me to convey is conveyed tomorrow, when I go to Barrow to mark the roll-out of the first Vanguard submarine. This is a great achievement on the part of all the company's work force, and of not only those who work in Barrow but those employed in the other elements that make up our Trident system. That system will now come into operation, and will be available for the defence of our country for many years.

Mr. O'Neill: On Thursday, some of the Secretary of State's officials will give evidence about Trident to the Select Committee on Defence. Can the right hon. Gentleman confirm that on 6 March 1991, in answer to question 40, Rear Admiral Pirnie said that Britain could maintain a continuous patrol with three Trident submarines, and that with one submarine in refit we could still maintain a continuous patrol with only two submarines? Is that still the opinion of the right hon. Gentleman's advisers?

Mr King: That is a complete misintepretation of the original evidence, which related to the period immediately prior to Vanguard's first refit. The hon. Gentleman need not think that there is any military support for the idea that in the past the Navy has argued for a three-boat solution, and he will be given a very rough time by the Navy if he makes such a suggestion. As far as I am aware, no senior officer in the Navy considers it possible to maintain the nuclear deterrent without four submarines —and certainly no senior naval officer would support the suggestion of the Labour candidate for Barrow and Furness that the fourth submarine should be turned into a 17,000 tonne sub-sea supply vessel delivering oil instead of missiles.

Orders

7. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the value of current orders placed by his Department with British Aerospace, Royal Ordnance, VSEL, Ferranti and Leyland Daf.

Mr. King: The current value of outstanding contracts placed by the Ministry of Defence with the companies listed is as follows: British Aerospace, £1,625 million; Royal Ordnance, £315 million; VSEL, £1,070 million; Ferranti, £360 million; and Leyland Daf, £105 million.

Mr. Hind: My right hon. Friend will be aware that the lion's share of the contracts that he has just announced has been placed with defence factories in the north-west of England, including Lancashire. Will he confirm that, if he were sufficiently unwise—like the Labour party—to cut a further £6 billion from the defence budget, over and above the "Options for Change" proposals, there would be massive job losses in those factories? Will he also confirm that he does not intend to do that?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend referred to the north-west of England, and I can give him the figure for Lancashire. The current orders outstanding are worth £540 million. As he has asked, I can tell him that, were there to be a cut of £6 billion in the defence budget, the vast majority of those jobs in Lancashire would go and factories would close.

Mr. Boyes: Nevertheless—[Hon. Members: "Oh."] If Conservative Members want to play infantile games, I am prepared to stand here.

Nevertheless, does the Minister agree that the number of defence jobs in the north-west has gone down from 23,000 in 1985-86 to only 12,000 in 1989-90, a cut of almost 50 per cent. in only four years? That does not take account of the many closures and redundancies announced since the end of 1989-90 which have halved again the number of jobs in the north-west. Unless the Government are prepared to provide a forum for funds and expertise to assist the defence industry to diversify into other products, the job losses and the decline in Britain's economic performance will continue—but, then, the Secretary of State does not care.

Mr. King: Not only do I care but the Government are meeting their obligations and providing procurement orders to ensure that our forces have the equipment that they need. The House will have heard the hon. Gentleman in his honest and decent way—the House respects his honesty—accepting with his opening word "nevertheless" that that is the implication of Labour's defence policy. I can tell the hon. Gentleman with the full authority of my office and my responsibility for the programme that if one cuts £6 billion from the defence budget no defence job in the country will be safe.

Islander Aircraft

8. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the performance of the Islander aircraft in service with the Army Air Corps.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): The Islander aircraft fully meet the Army's performance requirements.

Mr. Field: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Islander aircraft have established a reputation as the Rolls-Royce of the skies, being virtually indestructible and operating in one of the most hostile environments in the world? Is not that a tribute to the Islander designers and the engineers who built them? Will my hon. Friend assure the House that they will remain in service for many years to come, unlike the scenario if the Liberal Democrats were ever to implement their 50 per cent. cut in our defence forces?

Mr. Carlisle: Yes. I am glad to pay tribute to the aircraft and to PBN, the company which makes it. I welcome the support that my hon. Friend has always given to that company. We have 10 of those aircraft in service. It is a robust and very useful aircraft which is cheap to run and has great endurance. It is a valuable piece of equipment, and my hon. Friend may like to know that in the next two or three years we shall proceed with some large modifications to it which we estimate will bring about £4 million worth of work to PBN on the Isle of Wight. I agree that if the Liberal Democrats came to power, that work would not proceed.

Trident

9. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the ordering of the fourth Trident submarine.

Mr. Tom King: Contract negotiations with Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. for the fourth Trident submarine are under way. We intend to place the order as soon as those negotiations have been satisfactorily concluded. Meanwhile, construction of steelwork and major engineering items is making good progress under long lead funding arrangements.

Mr. Sayeed: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. The answer that he gave my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) and the answer that he has just given have comprehensively shot a number of foxes, but one is still up and running. Will he confirm that during its lifetime in service Trident will take about 3 per cent. of the defence budget and that no other known system could be so cost effective but still provide the same degree of security?

Mr. King: I think that the figure is nearer 2·5 per cent., but that is correct. Whatever the Labour party's views in the past, it is incredible that any responsible party could be prepared to take risks with our defence budget and could be prepared to take risks with our nuclear deterrent when the world faces the biggest risk of nuclear proliferation that it has ever faced. Our position is that we shall ensure that we have a nuclear deterrent that is available at all times for the protection of our country.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Secretary of State take a little time to reflect on a previous answer on non-proliferation? How can he, in logic or in practice, sustain a position whereby he is asking the Soviet Union, as was, to dismantle its nuclear deterrents while he is embarking on a system in which each missile provides the equivalent of 80 Hiroshima bombs? The Secretary of State talked about cost. How can he justify a cost per job in the strategic deterrent of £352,000 in a world in which the major powers are building down and renouncing weapons but he is building up?

Mr. King: If the hon. Gentleman seriously does not understand that point, he had better talk to President Yeltsin, who does. President Yeltsin, as he made clear outside No. 10 Downing street, understands that the position of a super-power which has 30,000 nuclear weapons is different from the position of the United Kingdom which will have as an absolute maximum only 128 warheads per submarine. There is no comparison, as President Yeltsin recognises. Indeed, his ambition is to move down now to a minimum deterrent. His idea of a minimum deterrent is to maintain 2,500 warheads.

Mr. Allason: Will my right hon. Friend once and for all nail the myth of the credible three-boat Trident deterrent? Will he confirm that all the professional advice that he has received from the Royal Navy is that only four boats absolutely guarantees an effective nuclear deterrent for this country?

Mr. King: That is absolutely right. The Opposition do not understand that we have to provide for the full life of the Trident system—for 30 years. Over such a period, as has already been apparent with Polaris, if we had only had three, we should not have been able to maintain that programme. I should have thought that that lesson was clear. The true description of Labour's position on that was given by Mr. Hutton, the Labour candidate for Barrow and Furness. When he heard the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) suggest that Labour could replace a Trident submarine with, for example, a Trafalgar class submarine on the order book, Mr. Hutton described his right hon. Friend as "ignorant and ill informed".

Avionic Repair Department

10. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies have been undertaken with regard to transfer of the avionic repair department from RAF Carlisle to RAF Sealand.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This matter is currently under consideration by the chief executive of the maintenance group defence support agency.

Mr. Martlew: During last Thursday's visit to Carlisle, my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) and I were very impressed by the quality of the work, and by the efficiency and dedication of the work force at the station. However, there was grave concern about the future of the avionic department there. It is well known that the appraisal has been carried out and that the information is with the Minister. The 100 employees and their families will be disappointed to hear today that the Government are putting off their decision until after the election. The Minister is hiding behind red tape. If he does not take the decision before the election and if the Conservatives are re-elected, I am afraid that we shall lose another 100 jobs in Carlisle.

Mr. Hamilton: As I have said, that is all up to the chief executive. We await any proposals to come from him, and we have had no proposals so far. I remind the hon. Gentleman that we are talking about fewer than 100 jobs out of the 1,000 people who are employed at Carlisle.

Mr. Viggers: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that any study of avionic repair facilities does not affect the Royal Naval aircraft yard at Fleetlands in my constituency? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he recognises the outstanding work done at Fleetlands?

Mr. Hamilton: I would, indeed, pay tribute to the work done at Fleetlands, and there is certainly no question of the avionic repairs at Carlisle having any effect on Fleetlands.

Army Sports Control Board

11. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Army Sports Control Board will next meet to discuss funding.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The board will meet next on 20 August 1992 to discuss the allocation of non-public fund grants to Army sports.

Ms. Hoey: The Minister is well aware that the armed services sports body does not give a single penny to rugby league. Will he please explain why, in the list of sports and games that are supported, we find that there are apparently more people who support and provide funding for model aircraft than support and provide funding for rugby league, and why a sport that is universally recognised as a great sport gets not a single penny from the Army Sports Control Board?

Mr. Hamilton: The Army supports the most popular sports. There are a number of sports that are not supported by public funding and they include angling and archery, which are more popular than rugby league. Very few people want to play rugby league. The only time that a rugby league game was started off anywhere was in the Royal Air Force under a corporal at Coningsby who was very keen. He could raise only one team of 13 players, which left him with no reserves and no team against which to play. I am afraid that the evidence at the moment is that the game is not sufficiently supported by members of the armed forces.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. John Townend:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Townend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the disposable income of 10 million mortgage payers is affected by two factors—income tax and interest rates? Is he aware that the Labour party will put up both—a double whammy?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is quite right. We have brought down interest rates and we are determined to keep them low. We believe that the Labour party would do precisely the reverse. An average of 10 independent City forecasts shows that interest rates would rise by 2½ per cent. immediately if there were to be such a disaster as a Labour Government. That is Labour's message to home owners—more taxes and higher interest rates.

Mr. Kinnock *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us have an end to all this shouting.

Mr. Kinnock: Has the Prime Minister seen the report from Mr. Graham Jackson, consultant cardiologist at Guy's trust hospital, who says:

> "You put"—

seriously ill heart—

> "patients on a list to come in but, by the time their turn comes, the contract has run out and the trust administrator says there are no funds till the next financial year"?

Does not the Prime Minister agree that such a system, which puts cash before care, betrays the fundamental principle of the national health service?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman knows that there is no system that puts cash before care. The right hon. Gentleman also knows that we have provided more additional resources in this Parliament than he was even prepared to promise in his last election manifesto.

Mr. Kinnock: But does not Dr. Jackson have a powerful point when he says that the new system—*[Interruption.]* This is a man working in the system. Does not he have a powerful point when he says:

> "The new system is run by accountants . . . who don't have to sit across the table from the patient and say 'I cannot treat you'"

until the new financial year? Will the Prime Minister recognise now that it is tragically wrong for treatment for seriously ill people to be determined by money rather than medical need?

The Prime Minister: The view that the right hon. Gentleman attributes to that surgeon is certainly not shared by, among others, Nye Bevan's nephew. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the Government's role in health is twofold: first, to provide the resources and, secondly, to make them work better for patients. The resources are at a record level, as the right hon. Gentleman must concede, and the new system is making sure that the resources work better for patients. There is no other way to improve health care and there is no doubt that the new system, across a range of treatment, is improving health care.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister is going to borrow to fund tax cuts. Does he understand yet that the priority of the British people is to use all available resources for health and other essential services? The Prime Minister wants to bribe, they want to build—why does not he listen to them?

The Prime Minister: In the light of what the right hon. Gentleman has just said, perhaps he will tell us two things: how much extra would he provide for health, and where does health come in Labour's order of priorities? Labour has a long list of priorities: a £3 billion pledge on pensions —presumably health comes after that; health presumably comes after Labour's £1 billion recovery programme and it presumably comes after Labour's £8 billion housing pledge. What else does it come after? The right hon. Gentleman's priorities do not add up and he knows it. The right hon. Gentleman cannot put a cost on his compassion, for it is bogus.

Q2. **Mr. Lee:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 March 1992.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lee: Since the Government came to power, my Pendle constituency has gained two new enterprise zones which are bursting at the seams, one new motorway and a brand new community hospital. Currently, 55 per cent. of employment is in manufacturing—the highest level in the country. Modesty prevents my asking my right hon. Friend what message he will send to the electorate of Pendle in the coming election. However, what message will he send to the electorate in the whole of the north-west?

The Prime Minister: I will certainly reiterate fully the message that I delivered when I visited the north-west a few days ago. The future and prosperity of the north-west are best served by a Government who are determined to keep inflation down, who want to keep taxes down—and will not let interest rates rise as the Opposition would—and who recognise that the level of strikes is at its lowest for more than a century. In the north-west, we will continue to encourage domestic and inward investment and we will not discriminate against it.

Mr. Ashdown: Now that we know what it means, will the Prime Minister reflect on the "double whammy" that he received from the other place on the Education (Schools) Bill last night? When will he accept that the best thing to do with that damaging and foolish Bill is to ditch it?

The Prime Minister: I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman is so opposed to providing more power for parents in relation to schools. I note that it is the Liberal Democrats' policy to take power away from parents and governors and to give it to centralised bureaucrats, and that is precisely like the Labour party policy as in so many things.

Q3. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 March 1992.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Walker: Does my right hon. Friend recognise the dangers inherent in introducing unworkable proposals for devolution for Scotland? Does he accept that if such proposals were implemented, they would lead to a separatist, socialist, nationalist Scotland, enormous loss of jobs and the closure of military bases? The jobs that currently go to the military in the United Kingdom would be lost from factories in Scotland.

The Prime Minister: I believe that my hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the risks of the devolution proposals which have previously been put before people. The Act of Union has served Scotland well and it has served England well. It has provided an essential cement for the whole of the United Kingdom. The devolution proposals that we have seen thus far would damage that union and separately damage Scotland, England and the whole of the United Kingdom. I understand the emotional pull that devolution has for people in Scotland, but I hope that every Scot will examine very carefully what it would mean in practice for Scotland and for the rest of the United Kingdom.

Q4. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Short: Has the Prime Minister seen the report on "World in Action" last night, which showed that one of his Ministers has been involved in smearing a private citizen? Does not this place give the Prime Minister the chance to show whether he is really against the smears that have been organised against the Labour party, or is he getting others to do his dirty work for him? Will he sack the Minister concerned?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Lady were sensible, she would look in the backyard of her own party.

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Q5. **Mr. Hill:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hill: Will my right hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to settle down.

Mr. Faulds *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Sit down.

Mr. Hill: Will my right hon. Friend continue vigorously and robustly to negotiate the British contribution to the European budget and, at the end, submit it at a level which the House of Commons and the country can accept?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. The Community's budget is already £40 billion a year. The existing own resources ceiling has plenty of room for further expenditure without increased resources being committed. It is the Government's view that the Commission should be thinking of ways of saving taxpayers' money, not justifying fresh reasons for expending it. It cannot justify increased expenditure on the scale that it proposes, and we are not prepared to renegotiate in any way the present rebate to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Is the Prime Minister aware that the parents of Carly Reavill and everyone else know that he was misinformed on the circumstances concerning that child's tragic death? Will he accept that there is indeed an acute shortage of intensive care beds for children? Will he tell us precisely what action he intends to take so that never again will desperately sick children be turned away from hospitals which do not have the money to provide emergency treatment?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will know, for he takes a close interest in this matter, that from next year, there is an extra £2·7 billion for the health service in its next budget, in a few day's time—up another 5 per cent., including efficiency gains. That is the most tangible way to demonstrate our concern for the health service and to continue to improve the service available to everyone in this country.

Q6. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has been successful in building on the work of our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in bringing the constitutional parties together. Will he accept that we are asking the Social Democratic and Labour party and the unionists to work more closely than parties normally do in Great Britain? Will he send a message to the Provisional IRA and the disloyalists that the mindless, aimless use of bullets and bombs will not be as successful as parliamentary debates and normal political election campaigns?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the whole House will share my hon. Friend's view on the latter matter. I warmly welcome the decision of the Northern Ireland political leaders to start their talks again. It gives a clear and very welcome signal to all the people in Northern Ireland of their determination to find a political solution. That is very much needed. It also gives a very clear signal to the terrorists that the people of Northern Ireland will not be bullied by guns, by bombs or by any other form of intimidation. That goes for everyone on the mainland as well.

Q7. **Sir Patrick Duffy:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Patrick Duffy: As the restructuring of the armed services proceeds, the displaced and redundant service men will continue to be treated with the utmost care and sensitivity, as the Prime Minister is well aware. But if that policy is not extended to the displaced workers in the defence industries, does the Prime Minister accept that our high-tech base will be damaged, perhaps irreparably? Certainly, we can ask questions about the future of certain design teams and skilled and professional workers.

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we still have substantial orders for defence equipment. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will make a further statement shortly.

Q8. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that if he or my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment had a meeting with business leaders to discuss the policy of the minimum wage, they would tell both the House and the country what business leaders had to say about the damaging effect on jobs, that such a minimum wage would have? Does my right hon. Friend think that the shadow spokesman on employment should do likewise?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. The minimum wage policy has been condemned by everyone from *The Guardian* to Goldman Sachs. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) is apparently the only person in the country who does not yet believe that the minimum wage would cost a substantial number of jobs if it were implemented. The only debate about the national minimum wage is not whether it would put people out of work but how many hundreds of thousands more people would be unemployed, wholly unnecessarily as a result of partisan dogma on the part of the Labour party.

Mr. Faulds: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take points of order after the statement.

Mr. Faulds *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman, who is an old parliamentary hand, knows that I do not take points of order until after the statement. I will hear him then.

Air-to-Air Missile

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Tom King): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the procurement of a system to meet the RAF's future requirement for a short-range air-to-air missile. The missile will be fitted to RAF Harriers and to the new European fighter aircraft which we expect to come into service with the RAF at the end of the decade. This important project was originally initiated under an international collaborative arrangement with Germany, Norway and Canada. Following the withdrawal of the other partners in 1989 and 1990, we decided to hold a competition for the RAF requirement.

Both before proceeding with this competition and during the past two years we have reviewed the justification for this requirement against the dramatic changes in the world and our strategy for "Britain's Defence for the 90s" and beyond. In this the air defence of the United Kingdom and the protection of United Kingdom and allied forces wherever they may be deployed remain important priorities.

One consequence of the rapid changes in the former Soviet Union is the increasing availability of very capable aircraft and weapons more widely in the world. Therefore, it remains essential to ensure that the RAF has suitable aircraft and weapons with which to face such potential threats. The Gulf war was the clearest reminder of the importance of air superiority in any conflict.

I can tell the House that the competition for this important order has been very keen and I am grateful to the three bidders, British Aerospace Defence Ltd., GEC Marconi and Bodenseewerk Gerätetechnik, for providing the basis for a real choice. The key factors in making our choice have been the total cost to public funds, technical merit, operational effectiveness, and compliance with our requirement for taut contractual terms. Our overall aim has been to maximise value for money in the proposals, while minimising the future risks of either excess cost or delay.

I can now tell the House that subject only to satisfactory agreement on final points of detail, we have selected the British Aerospace proposal for its advanced short-range air-to-air missile—ASRAAM. Our intention now is to place a contract for development and initial production of the missile. The order will be worth about £570 million, which is already provided for in our forward expenditure plans.

The decision will bring welcome work, not only to British Aerospace's dynamics division in Stevenage and Lostock, near Bolton, but also to its principal sub-contractors—Hughes at Glenrothes in Scotland, Royal Ordnance at Kidderminster, Thorn EMI at Feltham, and Lucas at Bradford. In addition, other sub-contract work will be placed with up to 70 further companies in the United Kingdom. More than 80 per cent. of the work in total will be carried out in the United Kingdom.

The Government believe that this new missile will provide a vital enhancement to our air defence capability in the future and is a further demonstration of our commitment to provide our forces with the modern equipment that they need.

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): In thanking the Secretary of State for his statement, may I express our appreciation that it was provided before Defence questions? However, we regret the absence from the Government Front Bench of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark), who would appear either to have gone AWOL, or to be in jankers for the insubordination that he displayed in the interview in the *Sunday Times* on Sunday.

The statement will come as a relief to the work force of those companies. We shall have to wait until election day to find out whether it will come as a relief to the Conservative candidates in the seats concerned. It is a tribute to the work force, the planners and the engineers that they have been able to crack an extremely difficult technical problem. However, it may not have come soon enough for the 450 people employed by British Aerospace, whose redundancies were announced on 6 February as a result of the delay in the announcement of this project.

When does the Secretary of State expect production to start? He has announced his intention to place the contract. When does he expect it to have an impact on employment? How confident is he that there will be an export market for the missile, given the withdrawal of the Norwegians and the Germans from the earlier stages of the programme?

Mr. King: To deal with the first point, I do not know what the workers in British Aerospace and other companies will think of the right hon. Gentleman's rather flippant introduction to an announcement which is of great importance to them. He then went on to express his concern about any workers who might lose their jobs. I should have thought that he would have welcomed this obvious relief.

Mr. O'Neill: What about those people who have already lost their jobs?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman said that 450 people may have received redundancy notices. He will be aware that the prime contractor of British Aerospace has claimed that the announcement will help to secure the jobs of 7,000 people. I like the right hon. Member personally, but it is hypocrisy for him to stand up—seeking to represent a party which has consistently voted for huge cuts in defence—and have the nerve to criticise the Government, who are not merely claiming and asserting that they will order equipment, but are proving it by our statements.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark) has been closely involved in the planning of the order and it is a particular disappointment that he is not here. The reason why he is not here is that he is representing the United Kingdom, in support of British industry, at an extremely important air show at my specific request. I am grateful to him for undertaking that. His visit will be appreciated by British industry, even if the hon. Member for Clackmannan makes light of it.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the services will welcome this procurement decision because there is a need for an advanced short-range air-to-air missile. My right hon. Friend said that 7,000 jobs would be safeguarded in British Aerospace. Can he say how many jobs in the downstream

[Mr. Jonathan Sayeed]

suppliers are likely to be safeguarded? Would any of them be safeguarded if a £6 billion reduction in defence spending was brought in by the Labour party?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend makes the point clearly. We have made it clear that there will be some changes in defence and some reductions in defence expenditure. I have set out before the House—the Government cannot be accused of not telling the country—that those changes will involve savings of about 6 per cent. in real terms. Our proposal is for smaller but better forces which are better equipped.

My statement is of enormous importance, as it will ensure that our future fighter aircraft have the capacity to defend themselves against the modern equipment that they may face. Soviet equipment, which is now much more widely available on the world market, has a sophistication and a capability which pose a real threat. Were we not to proceed in this way, our pilots could be at a severe disadvantage. Hon. Members know that that is true.

My announcement is important to our defence and it is a proper reward to many who work in the industry and for their skills. I mentioned the figure of 7,000 which the prime contractor has estimated will be the number of people involved in one way or another in the contracts. I also referred to the figure of £570 million—the House can draw its own conclusions about that—which will be spent over the next 10 years. The weapon will come into service first in 1998-99. It is a very important project indeed.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I welcome the Secretary of State's statement. I also offer my congratulations to British Aerospace because, as the Secretary of State would acknowledge, it has fought long and hard for the order. Is not the announcement significant because the combination of the European fighter aircraft and the missile will contribute to the air defence of the United Kingdom and, without that marriage, that would be difficult to achieve?

Mr. King: Yes. First, we will install it to all RAF Harriers and then expect it to be installed on to the EFA. Although the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) said that export sales will be difficult if the collaborative partners have fallen out, I think that there will be important export opportunities for this weapon as there is no equivalent weapon available, with the exception of a Russian variety. I have taken steps with the United States and have spoken with Defence Secretary Cheney to ensure that we have the best export opportunities. Although Hughes manufactures in Glenrothes in Scotland, it will be keen to do development work in the United States and, to pursue opportunities that may well exist within the United States, the United States forces and third countries to which the United States exports aircraft.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, which underpins the strategy of flexibility outlined in "Options for Change". Can he assure us that Hughes, whose parent company is based in the United States, will not run into problems of technology transfer when seeking to export?

Mr. King: There is an inter-company agreement between Hughes and British Aerospace on that. Hughes has a United States Government export licence for the early stages of the programme and, as I have said, I have been in touch with my friend and colleague in NATO, the United States Secretary of Defence Dick Cheney. I have a satisfactory letter of assurance from him on their best efforts in that respect.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Elections are better than Christmas for some industries. In view of the long delay that there has been in the programme for the replacement of Sidewinder, will the Secretary of State acknowledge that that breached the original memorandum of understanding between the United Kingdom and the United States? That means that we have lost the opportunity to export many of these systems to the United States.

Mr. King: Let us wait and see. The arrangements may have been lost under the old programme—we know that the collaborative arrangement did not work out—but let us wait and see if there is a better alternative. There are those who believe that this will prove an outstandingly effective weapon, and it is fair to say that the Select Committee on Defence supports the programme and sees the merits that could lie in it. I am encouraged by what I see in the technical assessment of it. We have taken the decision to go ahead, so we are under way. Let us see who else is around and whether this weapon will command some quite interesting export opportunities.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): Will my right hon. Friend accept the appreciation of Bristol Members and my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood), who is unable to speak this afternoon? We have worked long and hard on the ASRAAM project and we welcome the decision announced this afternoon, which involves literally hundreds of millions of pounds. Will my right hon. Friend press British Aerospace and Hughes to take immediate action in encouraging the United States Government to look seriously at the commitment that the British Government have made, with the prospect of further orders all over the world?

Mr. King: I appreciate my hon. Friend's remarks. While my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage is not able to speak, he is certainly not inarticulate in support of his constituents, as the whole House knows.

The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) will understand when I say that I am struck by the contrast. Here we have an opportunity. We are investing in British technology and development—also in a collaborative international project—for a new system which can be of great benefit. We get sniping from Opposition Members about not doing something, and when we do it, we get them carping about some problem, with technicalities or whatever.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Can the Secretary of State give more information about numbers? He gave the raw statistics and referred to 7,000 jobs, and we gather that they will be preserved or created by this order. In the last few weeks, we have had procurement orders worth over £1 billion—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] But all those were announced in connection with the defence White Paper, so the right hon. Gentleman is doing this merely for election purposes. I am not quarrelling with that, because all parties do it. I am seeking further information from the Scottish point of view. The only jobs that we can see being safeguarded as a result of this order relate to Hughes in Glenrothes. Can the right hon. Gentleman give further information about the number of jobs in Scotland which will come directly or indirectly from this order?

Mr. King: I was careful—the hon. Gentleman will recognise this straight away—not myself to attribute claims to the number of jobs involved. It depends on how the companies handle the business and the number of subcontractors they use. The figure of 7,000 to which I referred was used by British Aerospace in the material that the company sent to a number of hon. Members in support of its case, saying that that would be the number of people involved in this country in the programme.

I cannot give specific figures for Hughes in Glenrothes —*[Interruption.]* Is it suggested that there is something wrong with investing in our armed forces? I do not know whether Opposition Members disapprove of the fact that we have been able to come forward with orders for new frigates, for new tanks, for a new helicopter with an anti-submarine capability, the Merlin, for the Royal Navy, with a new package for the Harrier, with an order for ALARM, the air-launched anti-radiation missile, and that we are giving our forces the resources and equipment that they need. Yes, they will be smaller, but they will be better equipped than ever in our history, and surely that is appropriate in an uncertain and unstable world.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will my right hon. Friend accept the deep thanks of hon. Members who represent north-west constituencies for the order, and in particular the thanks of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) who, because he is in the Whips Office, is unable to express his thanks personally in the House? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the order is in addition—to the £3·5 billion worth of defence orders placed with firms in the north-west about which he spoke some 20 minutes ago?

Mr. King: I certainly confirm that. I referred to £540 million as being the contract in Lancashire for defence contractors. That did not include this announcement, which I was not able to make until 3.30 this afternoon. I can confirm that, as a member of the Government, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) cannot speak in support of the measure, but that does not disqualify him from representing his constituents in this matter. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood), he has done that most effectively. Lancashire will benefit significantly from the order.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In the third paragraph of his statement, the Secretary of State referred to

> "the increasing availability of very capable aircraft and weapons"

from the Soviet Union being available

> "more widely in the world."

Factually, is there any evidence to suggest that Russia, the Ukraine, Kazakhstan or any other republic is exporting sophisticated Russian weapons? If so, to whom? To Iraq, Iran, Muslim states, Libya——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am intrigued to know how the hon. Gentleman's question relates to the statement.

Mr. Dalyell: I quoted the actual words of the third paragraph of the statement. The rationale of the whole statement is that we must have those orders rather than peaceful developments because Russian arms are being scattered around the world. I was pressing the Secretary of State to tell me what the evidence is for Russian arms being exported and to whom they are being exported. Surely it should be conditional that aid to scientists and to the Soviet Union will not be given if arms are being exported. If the Ministry of Defence is right, the matter is extremely serious. What is the evidence?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman is usually better informed on these matters. There is nothing new about it. The Soviet Union has been exporting weapons to a number of those countries for some time. One missile—the Archer missile—represents a serious threat and is probably superior to Sidewinder. That is already in service in the former Soviet Union and with certain export customers——

Mr. Dalyell: Which export customers?

Mr. King: It can be fitted on the Fulcrum aircraft and the Mig 29, which are highly sophisticated aircraft. It is already in service——

Mr. Dalyell: Where?

Mr. King: In Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia. It was used by the East German air force and is believed to be used by Cuba, India, Iran, Iraq, North Korea and Syria. I wonder occasionally whether the hon. Gentleman knows what is going on. Perhaps he is so busy interrupting that he does not hear the answer.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I congratulate and thank my right hon. Friend for the order on behalf of my constituents who live around Stevenage. Does he agree that the crucial point about the order is that it will keep the technical teams together and enable us to keep ahead of the competition, not only with the air-to-air missile but with other related technologies that we need to boost our exports militarily and in civil industry?

Mr. King: That is right, and I pay tribute to the proposals that British Aerospace submitted. I said in my statement that the competition had been keenly fought and I pay tribute to GEC Marconi, which also submitted excellent proposals. We are fortunate to have two such excellent defence contractors in this country which can put forward proposals for such a sophisticated and complex project. I am grateful to them both.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that, since these pre-election statements have been made in the past fortnight, some £2 billion in public expenditure has been announced up to the end of last week? Why should Ministers believe that a country which has suffered such devastating unemployment and two major recessions will accept as genuine a dying Government giving goodies to certain marginal areas at this time?

Mr. King: I wonder what people working in British Aerospace, Hughes, Lucas Aerospace and Royal Ordnance will think of the hon. Gentleman's intervention, asking why we worry about unemployment. Those people are worried about unemployment. I have been criticised for announcing measures already foreshadowed in the defence White Paper. In this respect, a competition has been held and it was right to give the results of that

[Mr. King]

competition as soon as we could so that people know who the winners are. That is what we have done, and I make no apology for it.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Of course, the equipment is essential and vital for the future defence of the realm and we are proud that missile equipment of that sort is British. But is my right hon. Friend aware that I believe that he has picked the wrong contractor, which will be a bitter blow for GEC Marconi, the headquarters of which is in my constituency? Will he explain the details again to consider the applications and the possibility of an independent investigation? What promise does he hold out to GEC Marconi for further contracts to preserve employment, when jobs are already threatened both at Stanmore and elsewhere? What can he say about the superior technology of the GEC Marconi application, which was a genuinely all-British bid?

Mr. King: I understand my hon. Friend's disappointment. I have just paid tribute to GEC Marconi for the quality of the bid that it tendered. My hon. Friend has made a judgment—he is no doubt well qualified to do so—as to why the Marconi bid ought to have been chosen. It is a matter of huge importance to the Royal Air Force, and one on which the most thorough assessment has to be made. We are talking about an air defence weapon to equip our aircraft and fighter bombers for their fighter defence and self-protection role. The equipment will not come into service until the end of the decade, and it will have to serve and protect our country and pilots for the next 20 to 25 years. It is not a decision to be taken lightly, and it has been a matter of the most thorough assessment to determine which proposal should be chosen.

We have made it quite clear to GEC Marconi, as it would wish, that we wish to make a full presentation to it on the circumstances of its bid and the reasons why it was not successful on this occasion. I have a list of orders that have been placed. GEC Marconi is an important defence contractor. There has been an announcement in the past two weeks on air-launched anti-radar missiles, with which GEC Marconi is involved, and other defence contracts. There was an earlier announcement on the frigates for Yarrow, which is part of GEC Marconi, which remains and will continue to be an important defence contractor.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I have a short question requiring a short answer. Does the weapon have the same capability as the original staff requirement SR(A) 1234 called for?

Mr. King: It fully meets that requirement.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Having made representations about the project to my right hon. Friend and the Ministry of Defence 18 months ago, I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's decision, which I believe is the correct one. Does he believe that it will maintain the vanguard position for the United Kingdom in that sphere? Will he be as sensitive in respect of the British Aerospace project which will replace the Hercules as he has been about ASRAAM?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The cuckoo has turned into a parrot.

Mr. King: Certainly not a stool pigeon.

If it were Vanguard, it would roll out tomorrow. It is not Vanguard, but an alternative weapon system, which will certainly put us in the lead and give our air force a valuable capability which it might otherwise lack. The appetite of my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) in his new-found mode—to put it in defence terms—is insatiable. I cannot comment on the alternatives that he mentioned.

Mr. Skinner: Is not the truth that today's statement is not about defence, but about Tory marginal seats and another example of pork-barrel politics? There have been several references to exports and selling all around the world. We have already heard several times since the Gulf war about selling arms to Iraq and the penalties to be incurred as a result. Does the Secretary of State have a list of prohibited countries to which the weapon will not be sold?

Mr. King: That interesting introduction showed exactly how the hon. Gentleman regards defence. He sees defence as no more than pork-barrel politics. He has no interest in defence, no interest in whether our pilots in the RAF have the equipment that they need to defend our country——

Mr. Dalyell: Is there a list?

Mr. King: Of course there is a list of countries to which we do not sell, as every right hon. and hon. Member knows. But there are some countries to which we are prepared to sell weapons——

Mr. Skinner: What about Iran?

Mr. King: Despite the hon. Gentleman's new-found interest in these matters, he may not be aware that we are involved in large-scale arrangements with the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to try to support its defence. There are those who believe that, if the Gulf countries' defences had been better equipped and resourced, we might not have had to ask our forces to go to their assistance.

We certainly sell to some countries; there are other regimes to which we would certainly not sell or provide our equipment.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will allow questions to go on—exceptionally—for five more minutes, but there is another statement after this, so I ask for brief questions so that we may have brief answers too.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): Will my right hon. Friend accept the warm appreciation of Conservative Members for this order, which fully enables him to live up to his word, given when outlining "Options for Change", that the forces would be smaller but better equipped. There will be many who had doubts at the time when "Options for Change" was announced who will warmly welcome today's statement—as they have welcomed similar statements in recent months.

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I know of his interest and the industrial concerns close to his constituency. I have no doubt that some of the subcontractors not mentioned by name today will be involved in this work, too.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): A number of my constituents are employed at the Bolton plant, and I congratulate my right hon. Friend on this excellent news for the north-west of England.

Whenever there is bad news for the north-west, Labour Members queue up to condemn the Government. Today, in stark contrast, not one of them has come to the House to thank my right hon. Friend for this excellent news.

Mr. King: I do not always have time to stand back and analyse interesting details like that, but my hon. Friend is right—it is significant that not one Labour Member from the areas concerned has recognised news which will be a considerable relief to a significant number of their constituents.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): My right hon. Friend is right not to try to translate this order into exact numbers of jobs, but does he agree that the undoubted effect at British Aerospace in the north-west and at the design section of British Aerospace defence division at Filton in my constituency will be to ensure that a company which has suffered a steady succession of job losses in the past couple of years can look forward to a future in which jobs are secure and, if export orders come in, job numbers will increase?

Mr. King: Yes, that is true. I know of the close interest that my hon. Friend takes in this. As one who worked in Bristol for a long time, I well know the factory to which he refers. It is important for Bristol, and I am glad that this announcement has been possible.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I warmly express my appreciation to my right hon. Friend and remind him that, some 10 years ago, when the task force sailed south, Her Majesty's Government had, as an emergency measure, to buy at very short notice large stocks of AIM9L Sidewinders from the United States because we did not have enough effective short-range air-to-air missiles. As a result of that purchase, we had air superiority and the war was won, but this time the Government are taking the right decisions in advance.

Mr. King: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's knowledge of this matter; he puts it in clear perspective. The importance of this announcement to the RAF cannot be overstated.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, since the collapse of the Soviet empire, the strategic threat to our country is far less certain in origin, and that air power with its flexibility has become even more significant in meeting and delivering strategic force to any area of threat? Does he agree that this weapons system will protect 7,000 jobs in vital high-tech areas, that it is a defensive weapon, and that the fact that it has been accepted by the Royal Air Force, whose standards are respected throughout the world, will greatly enhance its marketability throughout the world?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his last point—that the system may well give us a lead in certain countries. Apart from the former Soviet Union, we are not aware of any country with a weapon that could match our system when it eventually comes into service. Its potential to bring jobs and earnings to our country could be quite significant.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he has been sending out clear messages to the rest of the world? Those messages are that whether it is the purchase for the Army of the Chieftain tank, the fourth Trident submarine for the Royal Navy, or today's announcement about a sophisticated British Aerospace weapon for the Royal Air Force, those are the deterrents that we must have. We are saying, "If you take on the United Kingdom, you do so at your peril."

Mr. King: It seems almost superfluous to add to the excellent and rousing words of my hon. Friend. He is precisely right. Although there are changes in the world and although it is possible to make some reductions, none the less instability and insecurity give rise to great fear among many of our friends and allies in the most unstable parts of the world. Our message of great comfort to them is that we are not retreating into isolation and adopting a little England policy of defending only our own shores but are ensuring that our forces have the requisite capability so that if our allies and friends are threatened we shall be ready and able to play our part in the United Nations, in NATO or in whatever international co-operation or coalition seems appropriate.

Mr. Dykes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No—later, please.

Local Government (Wales)

4.6 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): With permission, Mr.Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the future of local government in Wales.

When I first met the Welsh local authority associations just over a year ago in January 1991 to discuss my review, they impressed upon me the widespread consensus throughout Wales for the establishment of unitary authorities in the Principality. Last June I published a consultation paper, in which I said that unitary authorities represented the best way forward for local government in Wales to meet the challenges of the future. I called for an extensive and wide-ranging debate. The Welsh local government associations and thousands of members of the public joined that debate, together, of course, with Members from all parts of the House. This has been a productive and an instructive exercise in consultation.

I now put before the House the conclusions that I have reached. The local government system which should emerge from this review should permit local people to understand the role of local government, enable them to identify with it, and provide them in a responsive way with high quality services efficiently and economically. I therefore reaffirm that there should be a single tier of unitary authorities throughout Wales, to replace the present two-tier structure.

I propose to replace the present eight county councils and 37 district councils with 23 unitary authorities. I am placing in the Library and in the Vote Office copies of a map illustrating these proposals. In preparing this plan, I have observed the district building-block approach set out in my consultation paper, as likely to produce the least possible disruption to Welsh local government, but I am inviting further views on whether that approach should be modified in particular cases.

My approach in identifying these 23 authorities has been as follows. First, I want to restore to the largest centres of population—Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and also to Wrexham—full control over their own affairs.

Secondly, in the rural areas I want to see local government based on the traditional counties, such as Penbrokeshire, Montgomeryshire, Cardiganshire and Anglesey and, of course, we recognise the position of Meirionnyddshire and Carmarthenshire. I shall consult further on whether to extend that approach to separate authorities for Radnorshire and Brecknock.

Thirdly in the south Wales valleys I want as far as possible to take account of the intense local loyalties that are such a feature of the area. Taking account of demographic and other factors, however, I also consider it necessary for some of the present district councils in the valleys to come together to form new unitary authorities.

These are detailed proposals, to which the House will wish to give careful consideration. Let me make it clear that, once the new authorities that I have proposed are in place, I will wish the Local Government Boundary Commission to examine their boundaries to ensure that any minor anomalies can be dealt with as quickly as possible. That is a most important part of the process.

Let me now turn to the delivery of services under the structure that I have proposed. I have made clear my commitment to increased efficiency and cost-effectiveness and my determination that the real administrative cost of service delivery should not be greater than under the existing structure. My proposals reflect that approach.

I repeat that I am looking for the efficient, effective and economical delivery of high-quality services. I do not want a proliferation of joint-board arrangements to deliver the present county services. I should remind the House, however, that the delivery of the law and order and fire services requires special consideration in that respect. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and the Lord Chancellor—in relation to magistrates courts—will be undertaking their own consultations with respect to those services.

In general, though, I shall be looking to the new unitary authorities to provide the full range of local government services that are now provided by county and district councils, as I set out in the consultation paper. The rapid development of the enabling role of local government, and voluntary co-operation between authorities—including agency agreements—mean that services can be delivered efficiently and economically, without the need for excessive and centralised bureaucracy in large and remote units of local government. I have already had detailed discussions about that with the local authority associations, and I shall wish to consult further about putting in place appropriate arrangements for individual services.

Let me make it absolutely clear that the reorganisation that I propose must not lead to an increase in the cost of local government; that is quite unnecessary. I am satisfied that the structure that I have announced today should cost no more than the present system, and, indeed, should be capable of producing some savings. I shall be looking to ensure that that happens.

One matter on which there has been many responses in consultation is the future role of community councils. My consultation paper made clear the importance that I attach to them, especially in their role as the voice of their communities. It has, however, been put to me that the role and place of community councils in Welsh local government is of sufficient importance to merit a separate consultation exercise. I agree, and I intend to publish a further consultation paper on the subject in due course.

The House will, of course, wish to know about my plans to implement the proposals. Following the further round of consultation, I intend to publish, later this year, a White Paper setting out my final decisions. I shall then present a Bill as soon as possible. I propose to take powers to establish a residuary body to wind up existing authorities' affairs, and a staff commission to protect the interests of local government staff during the transition.

My proposals represent a fundamental change in Welsh local government. I believe that they are bold, challenging and realistic; and they build on a wide consensus in Wales that the time for unitary authorities is now. The local government structure that I have outlined today will, I believe, serve Wales well as we move into the 21st century, and I commend the proposals to the House.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Is not the Secretary of State aware that his consultation process has been completely inadequate and that the imminent general election should not be the reason for this botched statement made on the back of a Tory central office envelope? Are not the Government seeking to divide and rule, seeking to divide the Welsh district councils from the Welsh county councils on the eve of a general election?

Does the Secretary of State understand that we also accept that community councils are important units of local government?

Have not some of the proposed council boundaries been drawn more with an eye on the electoral process than on best forms of local government? In other words, it smacks of gerrymandering, and the statement is also an attempt to divert the attention of the people of Wales from the worrying state of the economy, the national health service, the education service and homelessness in Wales, as well as from the impact of the poll tax in Wales. The objective behind the timing of the statement is to throw dust into the eyes of the people of Wales to prevent them seeing the real issues at this time.

Has not the Labour party set the agenda for unitary authorities in Wales? Is it not the case that our detailed proposals have been on the table for two years? Was not the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor—the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker)—responsible for the previous mistakes in local government reorganisation? Has not the 1973-74 reform cost millions and millions of pounds which have been wasted? It was a ruinously expensive failure by the Conservatives.

On the numbers of local authorities to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, does he not recognise that his proposals for 23 unitary authorities will not necessarily create the efficient and effective structures of local government which the people of Wales require? Does the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that we have proposed unitary authorities in the upper twenties and that we shall now scrutinise everything most carefully? We are not convinced that the proposals will necessarily lead to the most efficient and effective delivery of local services.

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the Government have undermined local democracy by taking away powers through the poll tax, and that if that undermining of local government continues, the structure of local government is academic? Would not a fourth Tory term of office—no matter what the structures—mean centralisation, diktat from Whitehall and an end to local democracy?

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, if the new authorities are to survive the test of time, they must be linked to the communities that they represent? Artificial and made-up authorities for merely political purposes will not be good enough. I note the link of, for example, Wrexham and Deeside with incredulity. I have previously advised the right hon. Gentleman not to be so silly. Should he not acknowledge that the north is very complicated? Is it not the case that, as a Secretary of State with an English constituency, he frequently misjudges and overlooks the passionate commitment to community in the valleys, in our steel towns and also in the quarry towns in the north? If he ignores local traditions—wherever they may be—he does so at his peril.

Why has the right hon. Gentleman ignored the consensus on an assembly for Wales? Why is he dragging his feet? Why has he failed even to refer to his tame nominated economic forum? Is it because, as *The Daily Telegraph* said last week, the Cabinet has thrown it out on the Prime Minister's instructions? Has not the right hon. Gentleman been made to back-track on even the first hesitant step to decentralisation? Is it not a complete waste of money to reorganise local government and not to plan for an assembly?

The statement seeks to divide and rule. It is based on insufficient consultation. It is constructed and timed with the general election in mind. It fails to propose an assembly. There is the whiff of gerrymandering. Above all, it seeks to divert attention from the state of the economy, from unemployment in Wales, from homelessness, from crumbling schools and from the Government's attitude to the national health service. It is a missed opportunity, and at the general election it will be rejected.

Mr. Hunt: There were 10 points there, and the hon. Gentleman helpfully summarised them in his conclusion. The first point was inadequate consultation. I have already made the House aware that I first announced the review to local authority associations in January 1991. I then published a consultation paper in June 1991. So much for the back-of-the-envelope consultations and design. On 24 September, I had a meeting of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government, a further meeting on 6 November, a further meeting on 2 December, a further meeting on 16 December and a further meeting on 27 January, with meetings of the structures group, the statistical sub-group and the finance sub-group. Inadequate consultation? There has been extensive consultation.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): You ignored it all.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) shouts out that I ignored it all. The point is either that there was inadequate consultation or that there was adequate consultation but I did not listen to the hon. Gentleman's points.

The second point made by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) was that the proposals were gerrymandering I have pointed out, and pointed out again to the House today, that I am using the existing building blocks of district councils. I am asking the local government boundary commission to look at boundaries, but I have not sought to change the boundaries. I have built on the existing blocks.

The third point was that the proposals were a diversion —an attempt to make people in Wales forget about the economic bad news. I have news for the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside. If he carefully scrutinises the newspapers in Wales, he will see that there is a consensus that Wales is coming out of recession. I quote the headline of one article yesterday: "Wales set to lead UK upturn". The hon. Gentleman is losing so far.

The hon. Gentleman then said that Labour's agenda for local government had been in place for two years. I have news for the hon. Gentleman. I have read carefully through Labour's proposals. As I understand it, the first proposal, some two and a half years ago, was that all the country and district councils

> "should be abolished and replaced with a single tier of between 17 and 25 most-purpose local authorities in Wales for all local government functions."

There was then some discontent in the Labour party about the proposals. There was then a rethink—not proposals that were two years in place, but a rethink.

The latest idea is that there is to be a Welsh assembly, although the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has thrown further doubt on that——

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): No, he has not.

Mr. Hunt: On the proposals for local authorities, although conference—I quote from the document—agreed in 1989 that

> "the number should be between 17 and 25, we have now decided that the view should be changed and that we should have between 25 and 30 most-purpose local authorities."

That is hardly an agenda that has been in place for two years.

The fifth point is that I am undermining local government. If the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside looks at his proposals, he will see that he proposes a Welsh assembly which would look after, for example, special education, housing, health and community care, and planning and development control. It is also proposed that most-purpose authorities would look after schools, housing, health and community care, and local planning and development control. That is a recipe for utter confusion. I have said that local government responsibilities will continue as before, as outlined in the consultation paper.

The hon. Member then said that I had made a mistake in failing to recognise the unitary authority of Alyn and Deeside. The hon. Gentleman wrote to me suggesting that, and I replied that I would find it helpful if I could see how he envisaged the future of Alyn and Deeside as a unitary authority set against all the other unitary authorities in Wales. I invited him to let me have this proposals—on a map—for local authorities in Wales. I have yet to receive a reply.

The hon. Gentleman's seventh point was that I ignored local traditions at my peril. In fact, I have sought to recognise and strengthen local communities.

The hon. Gentleman's eighth point was that I had ignored the consensus for a Welsh assembly. I do not believe that there is such a consensus. I would merely refer the hon. Gentleman to the referendum, which established by a 4:1 majority that the people of Wales were not in favour of a Welsh assembly. Moreover, that proposal does not sit easily with the hon. Gentleman's notion of local authority control. I believe that his proposals for an assembly would take power and money from local authorities and the communities they serve, and that the system

> "would be even more centralised than the present system."

Those are not my words but the words of the Leader of the Opposition, quoted on 27 February 1979 in the *South Wales Argus.*

The hon. Gentleman's ninth point was that I had dropped the idea of an economic forum. I must tell him that I am still considering a proposal to that effect from the Council of Welsh Districts.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman said that I had produced the proposals with the general election in mind. I hope that people in Wales recognise that these are ideas from a Government who intend to remain in office. I do not intend to stand idly by and allow Wales to return to the failed policies that the hon. Gentleman stood for when he was last in office. I want it to move forward with the progressive pragmatic policies of this Government.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that it is unusual to have two statements on a day on which the main business is subject to a timetable motion. I will allow questions on the statement to continue until 10 minutes to 5; then we will move on to the ten-minute Bill. We must be on the main business by 5 o'clock. May I ask for brief questions—and also, please, for brief answers?

Mr. Ian Grist (Cardiff, Central): Does my right hon. Friend understand that his statement will be warmly welcomed throughout Wales and particularly in the capital city of Cardiff, which never really appreciated or understood the two-tier system? Will he undertake to consider seriously the proposal that Cardiff should expand beyond its present boundaries and incorporate the bulk—if not necessarily the whole—of the present county of South Glamorgan? Will he also say something——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Two points are enough for today.

Mr. Hunt: I thank my hon. Friend for welcoming the proposals. I believe that the proposal for a single tier of unitary authorities represents a bold step forward. I welcome and share my hon. Friend's recognition of the importance of Cardiff of the capital city of Wales. Further consultations will be initiated with a view to defining the northern and western boundaries of the new authority.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): May I congratulate the Secretary of State? We have waited a long time for these sensible proposals, and the people of mid-Wales in particular are indebted to him for introducing them. We have all been pressing for unitary authorities in Wales for a decade or more. I should like to make one plea to the Secretary of State, however: will he consider once again leaving the people of Radnorshire and Brecknockshire, who are proud of their identities and counties, separate? I hope that he will do just that. Finally, will the Secretary of State reaffirm his intention to consult people on community councils?

Mr. Hunt: Yes. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the welcome that he has given for the proposals. He will know of the part played by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State—for example, in ensuring the restoration of the historic counties of Pembrokeshire and Cardiganshire. I am proposing working names, and I very much look forward to representations about what those names should be.

With regard to Brecon and Radnor, when the hon. Gentleman scrutinises the map, he will see that I have placed a dotted line between the old counties of Radnor and Brecknock, and I will be consulting further on that.

Of course I will consult widely on the community councils. For example, I will be consulting on whether we should maintain the existing law, which requires the abolition of community councils if there is a local vote in favour of that.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): The abolition of the artificial tier will be very warmly welcomed in Wales, as that it real devolution, taking decision making to the closest level, especially in my city, where it will mean that Cardiff will again be a real capital of Wales. Will my right hon. Friend assure me that that process will be implemented as speedily as possible and that any review of Cardiff's boundaries will be most minor and rapidly accomplished?

Mr. Hunt: I thank my hon. Friend for his warm welcome for the proposals, and I invite the Labour party to publish its proposals in full. I am told that they have existed for two years and I have shown that I do not think that they have. Will the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside now publish his proposals so that we can scrutinise them? I hope that they will endorse what my hon. Friend has said—that any proposals must recognise the important position of our capital city.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): Will the Secretary of State accept that there will be great disappointment in my constituency, as Port Talbot and Neath have a long tradition of serving both their communities well? Are not the proposed authorities too big for some purposes and too small for others? Will there be 23 directors of education in Wales?

Mr. Hunt: Yes. I have already pointed out to the hon. and learned Gentleman in my statement that certain authorities are better off seeing the future ahead in combination. My proposals set out that Neath and Port Talbot should work together as a unitary authority in future. The hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) has said that I should consider the northern boundary of Neath. If there are any detailed representations of that kind as we proceed, I shall be perfectly happy to consider them.

With regard to the 23 directors of education, it was clear that the counties wanted eight unitary authorities, and they made a presentation to me detailing that. The districts wanted 27. I believe that my proposals today represent the right way forward.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the 23 unitary authorities that he proposes make an all-Wales co-ordinating authority all the more necessary to discuss and decide upon major strategic planning, infrastructure and transport issues? Will he further agree that the savings that he envisages from a move to unitary authorities would more than cover the cost of running such an all-Wales authority?

Mr. Hunt: I recognise my hon. Friend's strong feelings on that issue. However, I have announced today a very positive step in the direction of returning greater local decision-making to local communities. I would not at the same time want to see any move to snatch back that local decision-making by imposing a bureaucratic assembly running Wales from Cardiff.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I know that we are limited in respect of time, but I am surprised that we are trying to ask the Secretary of State questions about a document which, if he wants consultation, he could have produced earlier so that Opposition Members could have seen the boundaries. The Secretary of State has referred to dotted lines and to a map which I have not seen and which, in all probability, no other Opposition Member has seen.

If we are talking about the reorganisation of local government, could some of those boundaries eventually form parliamentary seats in Wales? It is gerrymandering of the Secretary of State in the fag end of the Government t introduce such proposals knowing that, on 16 March, we will perhaps lose you, Mr. Speaker, as the Speaker of this place and that there will be a new Government on 9 April. The proposals will not be accepted by the Labour party, and a Labour Government will undertake further consultations after 9 April. Why waste the time of the House now?

Mr. Hunt: That was not a very helpful contribution. If the hon. Gentleman looks carefully at the consultation paper which I produced, he will see that I have set out very clearly the boundaries of the authorities under a number of solutions. I have come forward to the House with my proposals. They are set out very clearly. I have received strong representations in certain parts of Wales that the existing boundaries between district authorities should be looked at again. I had hoped that it would be warmly welcomed that I was prepared to undertake a furtherr consultation process in those areas where the dotted lines are shown.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the Secretary of State accept that the consensus to which he referred was based on there being an all-Wales elected body and that, in bringing forward that model, he has left a strategic vacuum in Wales, with units that may be too small for strategic purposes? Would not the sensible way forward now be for him to set up an all-Wales elected Parliament and give it as its first remit the review of local government in Wales, taking this along with other proposals as a starting point?

Mr. Hunt: I suppose that I could respond to the hon. Gentleman by saying that that is a premise that could be accepted only if it were intended to snatch back from the new unitary authorities some of the existing functions of counties and districts. I have made it absolutely clear that I believe that the way ahead in Wales is to return closer to local communities more power to the people. The ideas that the hon. Gentleman is putting forward would fly in the face of that.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Although I am an English Member——

Hon. Members: Disgraceful!

Mr. Speaker: It is not disgraceful at all. This is the United Kingdom Parliament.

Mr. Wilshire: I anticipated that, but I am sure that my right hon. Friend will confirm that I have taken a close interest in this matter from the very beginning, and I would think it unfortunate for the people of Wales if Opposition Members were not prepared to listen to the lessons from elsewhere. Will my right hon. Friend take on board two points from the English experience? First, when he seeks to consult further on his local communities——

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Nothing out of order has occurred.

Mr. Hughes: You have put a time limit——

Mr. Speaker: I have indeed, and the hon. Member is taking time from it.

Mr. Wilshire: First, when my right hon. Friend thinks further about local communities, will he give as much weight to the importance of the views of local people as he gives to the views of local councillors and local authority associations? Secondly, when thinking about whether 23 new authorities means 23 of this and that—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a long question from an English Member.

Mr. Wilshire: Will he realise that direct delivery is not the only way of achieving good services?

Mr. Hunt: I realise that my hon. Friend holds differing views from my own, and I am rather grateful to the Opposition for seeking to shield me from my hon. Friend's questions. My proposals represent the right way ahead —taking power, authority and decision-making closer to local people. I have very carefully considered—my hon. Friend has made representations to me—setting up a commission in England to determine the number of authorities, but within Wales we have never had a commission, and I believe that the proposal that I have put forward today for 23 unitary authorities represents the right way forward.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I welcome the Secretary of State's recognition of the need to restore unitary status to Swansea and to include the Lliw valley in that authority. Will the right hon. Gentleman address the question that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), because it may also predetermine the shape of the outcome of the parliamentary boundary commission that is due to report in about two years? Would it be the right hon. Gentleman's intention, if re-elected, for that boundary commission to be confined within the district boundaries that he has outlined today, or would it be able to cross those boundaries? It is crucial to know what the decision would be.

Mr. Hunt: Parliamentary boundaries are not an issue that I am addressing. I recognise, as the right hon. Gentleman points out, that there may be consequential changes as a result of the proposals that I am putting forward, but those were not and are not considerations. I greatly welcome his enthusiastic support for the recognition of the city of Swansea's importance within the boundaries that I have proposed.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): The Secretary of State said in his statement that he was putting the proposals before the Welsh people for their endorsement. What percentage of the vote at the next election would he consider to be a mandate for his proposals?

Mr. Hunt: The proposals have all-party support, so they are not as divisive as the hon. Gentleman suggests. The proposals have been made by councillors representing all parties. It is shameful that the hon. Gentleman injects party politics into a matter on which there is consensus.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): Why has the Secretary of State used the building blocks of the districts which were created in 1974? In the area of Clwyd, they enshrine all the problems that we have had since 1974. A Vale of Clwyd tier of authority will be created. It will have tremendous problems, because it is a disparate area and it will have no resources. As the Secretary of State has not proposed any regional government solutions, how will he possibly deal with all the services which are handled on a wider scale?

Mr. Hunt: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the map which I have published this afternoon, he will see that there are dotted lines around his constituency. The local authority of Glyndwr and people from various parts of Glyndwr have told me that some areas may seek to join other authorities. I want to consider that. That is why I have not reached a final conclusion on those aspects.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): Will the Secretary of State confirm that in his proposals he has wiped out Llanelli completely? On the map which is attached to the statement, Llanelli's name is completely erased. How does he reconcile that with his professed desire that the proposals should reflect intense local loyalties?

Mr. Hunt: In the last map that I produced, there was no boundary delineating Llanelli.

Mr. Davies: It does not appear on the map.

Mr. Hunt: If the right hon. Gentleman will allow me, I will explain.

Today I have introduced a new element into my proposals. First, my proposal restores the much-loved and historic county of Carmarthenshire. However, I recognise that, despite Llanelli's cultural and administrative links of long standing with the rest of Carmarthenshire, it is an industrialised area with a strong sense of community. Therefore, with a dotted line I have delineated the present area of Llanelli. I would welcome the opportunity to consult further about the future status of the existing borough. Hence the broken line on the map.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): Do I understand from the map that has been published with the plan that the proposal to split Dinefwr so that the northern half joins Carmarthen and the southern half joins Llanelli has been decisively rejected?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman can see the proposals as I have set them out. I should have thought that he would welcome my recognition of the historic entity of Carmarthenshire. The views expressed in the Llanelli area have convinced me that there may be a need for further consultation before final decisions are taken about its future. As for a proposal about joining Llanelli with the Lliw valley, I decided that I did not want to cross a boundary of enormous historical significance.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Does the Secretary of State recognise that the two-tier system set up by the Tories means that there are not abstract notions about local authorities in Wales and that some county authorities have good departments which provide good services? Similarly, some district authorities provide good services. However, both district and county authorities provide indifferent services in other parts of Wales. Who will decide which personnel and which teams should have responsibility for crucial matters in Wales such as the building of roads, planning and so on? Will it be the Secretary of State or the people of Wales?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman highlights one of the paradoxes. There are differing standards throughout Wales, but it is important that the proposals that I have made this afternoon are seen in the context of seeking the formula that produces the highest quality of services. Of course, it will be for the new authorities that I have delineated today to work together to establish the right staffing arrangements and future arrangements for delivery of services in their area. Of course, it will be for the Secretary of State, in the positive partnership that we have in Wales, to ensure that the highest-quality services are delivered.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): The Secretary of State will know that Newport will warmly welcome the return to the unitary authority that we had before 1973. But people will be puzzled that, although the reorganisation that took place as a result of a decision by a Conservative Government—I served on both authorities at that time—was ruinously disruptive and very expensive, the Secretary of State has come to the House without a peccavi or a mea culpa to say that he is returning to the previous system. Will he apologise for that?

Mr. Hunt: It is not the same system as that which existed before 1974. I forget the exact number, but there were more than 180 authorities in Wales then. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's recognition that the proposals underpin the historic status of the town and former county borough of Newport. I welcome what he said about that. But he should not belittle the achievements of the existing authorities, such as the county council of Gwent and the existing authorities. I do not regard my proposals today as a victory or a defeat for any one type of authority but rather as the way ahead for the new unitary authorities.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): The Secretary of State must know that there is no local enthusiasm for joining up Wrexham with Alyn and Deeside. Will he publish the representations that he has received in favour of that scheme, or at least tell us how many representations were made? If and when he establishes a staff commission, I hope that he will ensure that no grossly large salaries and no golden handshakes are paid as a result of any reorganisation. Senior staff in particular should be relocated and given good jobs at fair rates of pay, not rates of over £70,000 per annum, as are paid at present in Clwyd.

Mr. Hunt: I would have hoped that the hon. Gentleman would accept that my proposals recognise the special place of Wrexham in the context of not only north Wales but Wales as a whole. Historically, the cities of Cardiff and Swansea and the town of Newport were the three main areas of population in Wales. I am anxious to see Wrexham grow in strength and influence in the coming years. I had thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome my proposals on Wrexham.

The hon. Gentleman referred to a staff commission. When I published the consultation paper, there were nonsense stories in the press about thousands of redundancies. I hope that the establishment of the staff commission will reassure everyone who works in local government.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Secretary of State appreciate that Newport's county borough status should not have been taken away in the first place, because the authority has the resources to provide a full range of local government services? Does he recognise that the 1972 reorganisation of local government was carried out by a Conservative Government? It cost the earth, and in the end we had a worse formula for local government. Does the Secretary of State recognise, as I am sure the House does, that he is merely going through the motions, and that the real reorganisation of local government will be carried out by a Labour Government with my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) as Secretary of State?

Mr. Hunt: I was waiting to see whether there was any approval for that notion. The hon. Gentleman's criticisms of Gwent are ill-placed. The county council has done extremely well in maintaining the highest quality of services. Today is not a day on which any one type of authority is defeated. Nor is it, indeed, a victory for any other type of authority. I have sought to place clearly on record in the House the way ahead for unitary authorities which brings together the best of the existing counties and the best of the existing districts.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): May I thank the Secretary of State for one of his last acts as Secretary of State for Wales? Far from delineating authorities in Wales, the map, with all those dashes, will mean that he will no longer be known as "Dai Poll Tax" but as "Dai Dots". That is how he will go down in history in the valleys.

My last homily to the Secretary of State is that local government is all about providing services to people. Some of our valley communities are immensely poor. The Secretary of State can shuffle the structures as he will, as can any other Government, but unless resources are put there so that services can be provided, it is nothing other than a paper, and perhaps a dotty exercise.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman has a bit of dash about him, but I hope that he does not view this as merely a dotty exercise. I listened carefully to the points that he raised with me about the need for a unitary authority in Rhondda. If he recalls, the initial proposal for 20 unitary authorities included a large authority for the Glamorgan valleys. I recognised the validity of his arguments. I hope that he will welcome my recognition of his constituency as a community with a long and a special tradition.

I am confident that my decision to merge Rhondda with areas to the south will not diminish that tradition. I am sure that communities throughout the new authority will be strengthened through the association, and I look forward to publishing the White Paper underlining that point after the general election.

Mr. Michael: Does the Secretary of State accept that the inadequate answers which he has given in this exchange show that he has rushed out this dotty statement, without dealing with the real issues, simply to give himself and the Conservative party an inadequate fig leaf for the general election?

The boundaries of Cardiff and the vale of Glamorgan are more than a mere detail. So are many of the other issues that he has left vague and ill-defined. He has dragged Conservative party politics into arrangements that should be neutral. Has he not followed the usual central office diktat to misquote shadow Ministers and to misrepresent Labour documents? He has rushed consultation, and he did not listen to what he was told. In contrast, the Labour party has consulted and listened to the people who know their areas and communities.

The Secretary of State says that he will restore one-tier decision-making to Cardiff, Newport and Swansea. Was it not the Conservative party which destroyed the previous unitary authorities? So will he apologise? Was it not the Conservative party that did away with the traditional counties? Will he apologise?

In his statement, the Secretary of State claims to have a commitment to increased efficiency and cost-effectiveness. He pretends to be interested in efficiency. Is not the reality that he intends to continue to expect local authorities to do the impossible with inadequate cash from central Government?

[Mr. Michael]

Will the right hon. Gentleman not admit that, when he talks of the rapid development of the enabling role of local government, he is signalling the Conservative party's intention—if, God forbid, they form the next Government —to kill local government in Wales and to reduce our councils to emasculated, contract-placing bodies? He still has not answered basic questions about the functions that he would give to local authorities.

The people of Wales should suspend judgment on this document. The general election will sweep away this Government and then my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), as a Labour Secretary of State, will do a proper job, in partnership with councillors and communities, which he and Labour Members understand.

Mr. Hunt: I would have more confidence in the hon. Gentleman's response if it had not been so carefully written in advance. I hope that he studies the pre-1974 position, when there were indeed 13 counties, four county boroughs, 32 non-county boroughs, 73 urban districts, and 58 rural districts, which makes 180 councils altogether.

In the reorganisation, eight county councils were created and 37 district authorities. The county councils suggested to me that they wanted eight unitary authorities. The districts told me that they wanted 27 unitary authorities. I believe that I have found the right way forward by endorsing 23 unitary authorities.

On the hon. Gentleman's other point about my misunderstanding the Labour party's approach, I was not criticising it for consultation. I was criticising his hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and [illegible] for having said that the plans were clear and laid before the people for two years. I am merely pointing out that the Labour party has changed its mind. It may well change it again. I challenge the Labour party to publish its proposals in a clear form, so that the people of Wales can judge.

To find Labour's plan for the future of the Welsh assembly, one has to look at a document called "A Statement on the Future of Local and Regional Government in Wales". Labour's proposals would create the most tremendous confusion with such a regional assembly, and between its new unitary authorities. It proposes that similar functions should be exercised by both. I hope that Labour will rethink its proposals, and will come round to the view that what I have presented to the House is a valid way forward and will receive endorsement from the people of Wales.

Points of Order

4.56 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Before I take a point of order, in the presence of the Welsh Members of Parliament, may I repeat how much I enjoyed my visit to Wales last weekend as Speaker of the United Kingdom Parliament.

Mr. Powell: I am glad that you enjoyed your visit to Wales, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that you will come in your retirement and when you are in the other place. You are welcome to Ogmore at any time.

My point of order concerns page 2217 of the Order Paper. Could you make inquiries on behalf of the House to find out whether the computer is out of order? In past discussions, you have ruled that this is a United Kingdom Parliament and that all Members are entitled to put questions to the Secretary of State for Wales. You will notice that six questions on the Order Paper were put down by Conservative Members, who were not elected to Welsh parliamentary seats. I am not making great play of that, because we have had discussions and correspondence and we accept your ruling on all issues, especially on this one.

However, I am concerned that, if the computer has not gone wrong, it is passing strange that three Conservative Members who are not elected in Wales could come first, second and third in the ballot, while I came fourth and another Conservative came fifth. I wonder whether inquiries could be made to find out if the computer is working properly.

Mr. Speaker: The best advice that I can give the hon. Member is to watch the computer at work. I assure him that no human hand comes into it at all. I am afraid that it is purely a matter of luck.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday afternoon, a parliamentary colleague passed to me some sheets of paper—six different stereotyped sheets. They have the heading of "The Hornchurch Labour Party" and were found beside a House of Commons photocopier. The letters appeal for assistance—I can see why that might be necessary in Hornchurch. None the less, would you confirm that that is an improper use of House of Commons equipment, which was possibly added to by use of the free mail service, for all we know, and that it is a scandalous waste of taxpayers' money for items that can and should be borne only by the parties themselves?

Could you please consider bringing to the attention of all Members and their staff their responsibilities in this matter? It is grotesquely unfair that taxpayers should pay for party political publicity.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member has made his point.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There can be nothing further to it. That matter is raised frequently, as the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) well knows. He should draw it to the attention of the Serjeant at Arms. Then an investigation will take place.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I thought that I had pointed out the other day, for the benefit of Conservative Members, that there are usual channels to take up such complaints. I am prepared to do exactly that.

I have boxed under the Marquess of Queensbury rules, and I have been in a few street fights in my time—that is why I have a face like this. Any type of combat suits me. If the Tories want to bring that type of case to the Floor of the House on points of order I am prepared to do so. When I look around the House, I see one Conservative Member who has been the subject of complaint. I have already given a complaint about the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) to the Serjeant at Arms. The Financial Secretary had to pay for 4,552 pre-paid envelopes because he abused the system. If Conservatives want to do this, I am prepared to do it every day on points of order.

Mr. Rogers: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask, through you, whether the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), who raised that shabby and sanctimonious point of order, had the graciousness and courtesy to inform the hon. Member involved that he intended to raise the matter of the Floor of the House?

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): What Member?

Mr. Speaker: I think that the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) is the Member concerned.

Mr. Squire: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I clarify the matter, because it is clear that the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) did not understand? The offence was not committed by an hon. Member from the Labour party, but by a Labour parliamentary candidate. I am drawing attention to the fact that the abuse, which may or may not have taken place, was committed not by an hon. Member, but by someone who does not work in the Chamber and, as far as I know, does not work in the House.

Mr. Speaker: I said earlier, take it to the Serjeant at Arms, but I agree with the Opposition deputy Chief Whip that such matters are best dealt with through the usual channels.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the four Questions on the motions relating to the Statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE (NORTHERN IRELAND)

That the draft Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

NORTHERN IRELAND

That the draft Local Elections (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

STATUTORY SICK PAY

That the draft Statutory Sick Pay (Small Employers' Relief) Amendment Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Question agreed to.

Hydatidosis Control

5.1 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prohibit dogs being fed on raw meat and offal derived from fallen or casualty livestock; and for connected purposes.

I welcome the opportunity to introduce the Bill, to highlight the fact that dogs fed on raw meat and offal from fallen livestock are a major source of a disease that not only costs the farm and meat industries millions of pounds, but annually kills people and puts hundreds in hospital for surgery.

Under present arrangements, a provision by the Government enables fox and other hunting packs to bypass health regulations on the disposal of dead farm animals. Hunting hounds are virtually all fed on uncooked meat and offal from fallen stock from farms, despite the fact that European directive 90/667/EEC requires that animal waste be disposed of by rendering, burning or burial to prevent the spread of diseases.

At present, at least 25,000 hounds are kept in Britain to hunt foxes, deer, hares and mink. Virtually all of them are fed on uncooked meat and offal from farm casualties. The hounds ingest taenia hydatigena tapeworms from the uncooked casualty animals and then defecate the tapeworm eggs back on to pasture while the hounds are out hunting. Sheep and lambs, in particular, ingest the eggs while grazing and become reinfected with the tapeworm, which damages the animals' livers and causes cysts.

Investigations by veterinarians published in *The Veterinary Record* have revealed that, in a single abattoir, lambs' livers were so badly damaged by tapeworms that the majority were rejected for human consumption, representing in that abattoir an annual loss of £25,000 at 1984 prices. Another investigation published in *The Veterinary Record* concluded:

> "Taenia Hydatigena causes very high rates of liver condemnation and it is probable that, nationally, it is now the major cause of the lesions and losses in lambs' livers."

In all reports, researchers state that untreated raw meat and offal from fallen livestock should never be fed to dogs.

The Meat and Livestock Commission claims that such tapeworms cause

> "considerable harm to the production of sheep."

It adds:

> "About a fifth of lambs slaughtered in Great Britain are infected with cysts. This loss is caused solely by tapeworms in dogs and is avoidable . . . Never feed raw meat, offals or sheep heads; feed only cooked meat . . . Working dogs and hounds are the main reservoir of dog tapeworms affecting sheep; foxes and pet dogs much less so."

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Agricultural Development and Advisory Service also acknowledges the dangers of hydatidosis to human and animal health. It points out:

> "Eggs laid by the tapeworm are passed in the faeces of the dog and this may contaminate herbage consumed by cattle and sheep or vegetables intended for human consumption."

If an egg is swallowed by livestock or humans, it hatches in the intestine and eventually ends up in the liver, where it develops into a cyst. Cysts can also form in the lungs, bones or even in the brain. Records from ADAS state:

> "on average 12 persons die each year from hydatidosis. In addition several hundred persons have to undergo surgical operations for the removal of the cysts."

In recent answers given to me by the Ministry, I have been able to establish that at least five people died in the past 12 months because of that illness. ADAS advises:

> "Dogs must not be fed raw meat or offal. It is safer to boil or sterilise all meat and offal before feeding."

I have a letter from the Ministry of Agriculture, which states:

> "Undoubtedly, hounds, or hunting dogs, are also sources of tapeworm infection . . . studies by the Ministry's veterinary officers have demonstrated that hounds are frequently infected with a variety of tapeworms, including Taenia Hydatigena and they may contaminate pastures over which they roam."

A further report published in *The Veterinary Record* stated that an examination of 11 packs of hounds in the west country—seven packs of fox hounds, two of stag hounds and two of beagles—found that all but one were fed on uncooked raw meat and offal. Tapeworm segments were even found in the faeces of hounds wormed every two months.

MAFF has written to the League Against Cruel Sports saying that its officials have regularly met the Masters of Fox Hounds Association. That correspondence stated that it had

> "brought to their attention the risks which hounds may pose to the industry . . . and the need to feed cooked offal"

However, virtually all hunts still continue to ignore that risk to human and animal health. The Government refuse to order hunts to feed cooked meat and offal only to their hounds, despite the acknowledged damage that the disease causes to livestock and human life and health.

The Dogs Act 1906 makes it an offence to leave sheep carcases unburied because of the risk of dogs finding and feeding upon them and thereby spreading parasites and disease. However, it is not an offence to feed deliberately such carcases raw to dogs. It is an offence under the Protein Processing Order 1989 and the Diseases of Animals (Waste Food) Order 1973 to include unprocessed animal material in feeding stuffs for livestock or poultry. It would be a simple matter for the Government to amend the orders to apply the same regulations to the feeding of dogs. However, because the Government choose not to do so, I find it necessary to present the Bill.

The House might also wish to know that *The Veterinary Record* of 4 January 1992 contained a letter from two experts in the disease who complained that a control scheme in south Powys had been "eased". Mr. T. M. H. Walters, the co-ordinator of the disease control campaign and Dr. S. Lloyd of Cambridge university's department of clinical veterinary medicine warned that that easing of controls might lead to a breakdown, and added:

> "such a breakdown might first be confirmed as new cases in children."

Hydatidosis is a disease which, if tackled in the way that the Bill suggests, could be eliminated from Britain as it has been from Iceland, which had a much greater incidence of it. New Zealand is also engaged in a similar eradication campaign, with considerable success. Those countries have taken steps to prevent dogs from having access to condemned offal.

It is clear that Britain will continue to suffer human death and illnesses, as well as the loss of millions of pounds to the farming and meat industries, if the Government refuse to ban the feeding of uncooked meat and offal from casualty stock to the 25,000 hounds that run in packs, two or three days a week, for nine months of the year on agricultural land.

I have access to video film and photographs taken last summer at the kennels of the Tegryn fox hounds in Pembrokeshire. Those hounds were kept in a ramshackle hut and pen, which they shared with the rotting carcases of sheep, cattle and ponies "donated" by local farmers. That exposure has led to those kennels being closed, but it is safe to assume that similar conditions exist elsewhere, particularly among the 40 unregistered "fox destruction clubs" in Wales.

On boxing day every year, about 400 hunts assemble in their various local centres. The hunters encourage children to fondle the hounds, which, unused to such affection, are often seen licking the children's faces. Allowing hounds fed on raw meat and offal from casualty stock in various stages of decay to lick and be fondled by children is totally irresponsible. A child need swallow only one egg from the thousands produced by a single tapeworm to be infected by a disease which could result in hospitalisation, surgery and even death.

All the evidence shows that the hidden costs to farming, the meat industry and the national health service caused by hounds defecating disease on grazing pasture and crops must be considerable. My Bill seeks to save the country those costs. Hunt kennels should cook or freeze the meat and offal that they obtain from farmers before it is fed to their dogs.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Alan Meale, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Frank Haynes, Mr. Allen McKay, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie, Mr. Bob Cryer, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Ray Powell, Mr. Richard Caborn and Mr. Terry Lewis.

HYDATIDOSIS CONTROL

Mr. Alan Meale accordingly presented a Bill to prohibit dogs being fed on raw meat and offal derived from fallen or casualty livestock; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 6 March and to be printed. [Bill 101.]

Orders of the Day

Further and Higher Education Bill *[Lords]*

ALLOTTED DAY

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New clause 1

REPORT ON PROVISION FOR ADULT EDUCATION

'.—(1) The Secretary of State shall, for each calendar year, lay before both Houses of Parliament a report on provision for the education of adults, following consultation with the higher and further education funding councils, local education authorities, designated institutions, appropriate voluntary organisations, training and enterprise councils, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector and such other persons as the Secretary of State may determine.

(2) Any report under subsection (1) above shall set out—

(a) the allocation of resourses for adult learning;

(b) what adult education opportunities are available in each local education authority area and in the area served by each further education corporation;

(c) the numbers of people progressing between sectors, and other agreed outcomes of adult learning programmes, by local education authority and further education corporation catchment area;

(d) the numbers of participants, and the extent to which the participants in educational programmes for adults reflect the whole population served by each local education authority, further education corporation and designated institution;

(e) the Secretary of State's judgement on the extent to which the educational needs of the population are served by higher and further education institutions, by designated institutions and by local education authorities;

(f) the Secretary of State's judgement on the quality of provision and the effectiveness of resource allocation;

(g) the capital programmes committed to the education of adults; and

(h) plans for the development of adult education in subsequent years.'.—*[Mr. Fatchett.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

5.12 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central) I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The one positive outcome of our debates on the Bill has been to raise the profile of adult education as an issue and a service. That has been important, as millions of our fellow citizens benefit from the adult education classes organised by local education authorities and voluntary organisations, and often on a self-help basis.

In Committee, many of my hon. Friends referred to their immediate and direct experience of adult education and the way in which it had provided them with a ladder, leading to new employment, education and help in their self-interest. They also spoke as people who had taught in the service and realised the benefits that they, as adult educators, had provided for others in society. Adult education is an important service.

The new clause would impose a responsibility on the Secretary of State to prepare a report each year, and to provide Parliament with that report, so that we could understand the extent to which the adult education service was secured and guaranteed under the legislation.

[Mr. Derek Fatchett]

None of my hon. Friends would go along with the Further Education Funding Council mechanism as the best way of providing for adult education. In that context, we are looking for a way to lessen what we see as damaging provisions affecting the service. The amendments that we attempted to secure in Standing Committee were all designed with the one purpose of securing the funding of adult education. We listened to the thousands of voices throughout the country, and read the many letters that we received during the Committee stage, expressing unhappiness with the provisions of the Bill. The main fear is that there are no guarantees for the future of the adult education service.

All our amendments were rejected. They were turned down not because our arguments lacked strength but because we have in power a Government concerned only with the general election timetable. They are not concerned to take note of the debate on education issues or about the future of adult education. When we debate the next education measure, with Labour in power, there will then be a Government who will listen to people concerned about the adult education service.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth) *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: I will give way later. We are operating under a tight guillotine. The hon. Gentleman voted in favour of it. Having done that, it is remiss of him then to try to disrupt our proceedings, albeit in the best natured way.

Within a few weeks, we shall have in power a Government who will listen to the voices of students, teachers and administrators. I promise them that that Government will be sensitive to the needs of adult education.

All members of the Standing Committee, including Conservative members, appreciate the importance of the adult education service. The difference between us is that my hon. Friends recognise, and want to secure, the value of the service, while the Conservatives recognise its value but do not appreciate the consequences of this legislation.

In that context, I will take the House through the complex system of funding that the Bill provides. The Secretary of State has created a division in adult education provision, some of which will be deemed to be schedule 2 work. In Committee, the Minister of State referred to schedule 2 work as "national priority work". It was clear from his words that while the Government had dropped the rhetoric suggesting a split between vocational and leisure courses—because they realised that it was insulting to hundreds of thousands of people—they had continued with their assumption that some courses in adult education should have greater priority than others.

That is what schedule 2 is about. It contains the notion, as the Minister of State put it in Committee, that there can be some guarantee of resources for schedule 2 courses. But courses which fall outside schedule 2 will no longer be regarded as national priority courses.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Tim Eggar) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Fatchett: The Minister may not have used those words, but that is the logical implication of what he said. Clearly, if he believes that some courses are a national priority, others cannot have that priority. So some provision will find itself in extreme difficulty.

The Secretary of State goes on to say in this extremely complicated system—presumably it would be equally complicated in practice, although it will never become practice—that non-schedule work should be the responsibility of the LEA. That is where the Government's argument runs into trouble. LEAs are under no statutory responsibility to provide for adult education.

Conservative authorities throughout the country have been making cuts in their adult education services. For example, last year there were substantial cuts in Hampshire's budget, so we already know that at local authority level the Tories give a low priority to adult education. Deep cuts in the service are being made in Warwickshire this year. The Secretary of State is not keen to defend such cuts.

That all goes to show that the system relies on non-schedule work being provided out of LEA resources. The first weakness in that argument is that LEAs in many parts of the country, sometimes for ideological reasons, are not prepared to make the resources available. The second weakness is that, because of the poll tax and standard spending assessments, many LEAs are faced with particularly tight budgets. Anyone who has been reading local papers in the past few weeks will have seen that Labour and Conservative authorities have been battling to set a budget and work out their poll tax. That shows the downward pressure on local authority expenditure.

The Secretary of State asks us to believe that, once individual authorities have lost control over further education colleges and schedule 2 work has been transferred to the further education funding council, local authorities faced with scarce resources will then make money available to support adult education. That is a fanciful notion. We already know what has happened in Tory authorities and about the squeeze on budgets in all parts of the country.

The Government's notion then runs into real difficulty. Who will fund schedule 2 and non-schedule 2 work? Will it be funded by local authorities, which are tight for resources?

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The Secretary of State is searching for schedule 2.

Mr. Fatchett: If the Secretary of State is now looking for schedule 2, that is an improvement on Second Reading, when he did not even know that it existed.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I covered schedule 2 on Second Reading. I am looking up clause 11, because I shall shortly remind the hon. Gentleman of the statutory duty on local education authorities to provide adult education. It is one of the several errors that he has made in his speech so far. He should not make such basic errors, having spent so long debating the measure.

Mr. Fatchett: The Secretary of State falls into a trap in his own legislation. He knows that the duty under clause 11 does not mean that individual local authorities have to provide an adequate or satisfactory service. The provisions of the clause can be met in minimalist terms. If the Secretary of State says that clause 11 provides that local authorities such as Hampshire must expand their adult education services after last year's cuts, that will be real progress.

Mr. Clarke: Clause 11 sets out the statutory duties on local government as they are now and as they have been during the period of expansion of adult education in the past few years. When we were drafting the Bill, I took care to ensure that, although the existing statutory duties will be divided between the funding councils and the local education authorities, no statutory duty was removed. The hon. Gentleman's claim that there is no statutory duty on local authorities is therefore nonsense. The same statutory duty lies on them now as in the past, and it has enabled a general expansion across the country.

Naturally, the different local authorities can make different judgments. Hence Labour-controlled Lancashire is currently cutting back on adult education, and Labour-controlled Nottinghamshire cut back savagely on its grant for the Workers Educational Association in the current year, although its resources for education as a whole have risen by 16 per cent.

Mr. Fatchett: Despite all the words, the Secretary of State's answer to my question seems to be no.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): What question?

Mr. Fatchett: If the hon. Lady will listen, I will tell her what the question was. The Secretary of State will not have the power, under that provision, to make a judgment about Hampshire or Warwickshire. His final comment reinforces my argument. He recognises that individual local education authorities will be totally free to make cuts in their adult education services.

One of the arguments that the Minister of State often used was that local education authorities should be essentially written out of post-16 provision because they could not be trusted with the strategic and detailed role of providing it. In Committee, the whole of the Government's rhetoric and argument amounted to an attack on local education authorities. The growth in adult education occurred under the control of local education authorities under a system which the Bill will abolish.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman talks about local authorities' success in expanding adult education under existing statutory provisions. We are restating the statutory provisions in their entirety. We are merely dividing them between the funding councils and the local authorities. Yet the hon. Gentleman says that the same statutory provisions are inadequate to allow expansion in future.

Mr. Fatchett: The point that the Secretary of State has just made reinforces my argument: there is no consistent system. The Bill changes the system by bifurcating the responsibilities. Local education authorities will be responsible for non-schedule 2 work and the funding councils will be responsible for schedule 2 work. It is extremely difficult to see how the Secretary of State can maintain the pretence that that is the same system which existed before the introduction of the Bill. The Bill proposes a change.

We have been promised that the Government will give some reassurance on local authorities' spending on adult education and on standard spending assessments. The Minister of State promised us that by Third Reading a DES survey of local education authorities would be available—

Mr. Eggar *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Fatchett: Yes, he did. He said that the survey would be available by the end of February, showing that adult education would be secure. Because of the rush with the Bill, the House has been denied the prospect of seeing that survey. We do not know how much money will be available or the current expenditure. All we know is that the Government are offering sweet words but no guarantees to secure an adult education service.

We have a complicated, bureaucratic system which divides responsibility and considers some courses as being of national priority while others have a lower status. The system depends on local education authority funding at a time when local education authorities are squeezed for resources and under the Bill will lose the ability to manage their total post-16 provision. The Secretary of State asks for an act of faith when he says that the system is secure under the Bill.

I suspect that all hon. Members will have received letters from adult education centres in places such as Devon. Such adult education centres will be larger in terms of adult education provision than the neighbourhood further education colleges. What will happen to those institutions? If they have schedule 2 work, they can ask the neighbourhood further education college to make a bid to the further education funding council, but they cannot make that bid in their own right. Thus they are dependent, despite being successful institutions, on the further education college's willingness to submit a bid to the further education funding council. The institution cannot do that on its own.

Dr. William Waterworth, who chairs the management committee of the St. Clare's centre in Devon, says:

> "the system is difficult to understand and will be complicated.

He draws attention to the quality of provision at St. Clare's, an institution which may be familiar to hon. Members. He says:

> "Despite operating in a scattered rural area, St. Clare's has built up a comprehensive adult education programme over the last 21 years. We enrol 1,500 students a year and 25 per cent. of these join courses leading to academic or vocational qualifications. Our overall pass rate for GCSE A-levels, RSA and City and Guilds is over 90 per cent. and about a third of our candidates are awarded grade As or distinctions. All of this is now threatened by the legislation as it now stands."

That letter shows the dangers that exist in the Bill. I will take the House through it stage by stage.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I have made a careful note of what the hon. Gentleman said. He said that adult education colleges will be dependent on the further education colleges being willing to submit a claim to the funding council. Those were his precise words. That point was raised with me by my adult education college, so I took the trouble of discussing the matter with the chief executive designate of the funding council. He said that he would not permit any further education college simply to try to sweep under the carpet a bid from an adult education college. He said that, if the college did not forward the bid to him, he would want to know why. If there were a dispute between the college of further education and the adult education college, it would be reasonable in the circumstances for him or one of his team to go to the college and discuss the matter in extenso. He

[Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman]

said that there would be no question of further education authorities being allowed simply to bin the applications of adult education colleges.

5.30 pm

Mr. Fatchett: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for making that point, and I do not deny the words of the chief executive designate of the funding council. He makes almost the same point as Dr. William Waterworth, and shows up the cumbersome nature of the procedure.

I will explain what would happen. The individual adult education centre would have to ask the further education college to submit a bid to the funding council. Time scales are important. The college may well refuse to do so. Let us set that up as a hypothesis and presume that the college is not co-operative. In those circumstances, presumably the adult education centre will take the problem to the Further Education Funding Council, and Mr. Stubbs can then intervene.

Previously, the system would have been that the matter would have been resolved locally by the local education authority. Now there are at least three distinct parties: the funding council, the further education college, and the adult education centre. That is no way to increase the efficiency of the system.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I will take the argument further. We have been talking about an adult education college. In my county there is an adult education service—a countywide service—with a range of individual colleges and services. My county is divided between north and south Humberside, with different further education colleges. There are problems about which college will make a bid and how the bid is to be made for a complete service, not just one college. If the system is bureaucratic in relation to one college, it will be almost impossible in terms of a complete service.

Mr. Fatchett: My hon. Friend makes much the same point as has been raised in many letters to us. The system is likely to be inefficient and to lead to a reduction in the overall provision.

The letter from St. Clare's is important. That successful adult education centre is providing a range of schedule 2 and non-schedule 2 provision. How will that centre be funded in future? It could ask a further education college to make a bid to the funding council for schedule 2 provision—the first mechanism. Let us assume that there are no difficulties there. Some of the work—I calculate about one third—will be through the funding council. The other two thirds will need to go to the local education authority to seek permission and resources. That is a messy system.

As the committee chairman says, at present Devon local education authority, which has a substantial commitment to adult education, for which I praise it, is able to devise a programme and a set of resources to help St. Clare's run an expanding programme. What sense does it make not to listen to those powerful arguments and not to produce an efficient system based on them?

In Committee, we tabled an amendment that would have dealt with some of the problems and circumvented some of the administration. We moved an amendment to allow the individual adult education centre to make a bid to the Further Education Funding Council. The amendment was voted down by Conservative Members. It would have helped to alleviate some of the problems raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) and would have helped many of those who have written to us about what has happened to their service.

As a result of the guillotine, I do not have time to mention all the letters, but I refer the House to some of them. They do not come from just one part of the country and are not merely a lobby organised by the Labour party or a trade union, which is how the Secretary of State often dismisses such opposition. They come from people in all walks of life, from all parts of the country and represent important views on adult education. We have letters from Reading, Leicester, Chelmsford, Essex, Derby, Devon, Yorkshire and Humberside, all reflecting deep anxiety about the provisions.

If, in Committee, the Secretary of State or the Minister of State had listened to the arguments and voices, the adult education centres, of which there are many up and down the country, could have had automatic designation so that they could have tendered the bids to the funding council. That would have helped the position. That system would not have been ideal as it would have created a divided responsibility, but at least we could have made some progress, rather than being faced with the existing position.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Do not a vast number of individuals, companies, education and arts bodies, and institutions of all sorts obtain funding from more than one source? Is that not perfectly normal in this country? That is not normally seen to threaten the future of those organisations or individuals, provided that the sources of finance are sound?

Mr. Fatchett: We have a system that works.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: No.

Mr. Fatchett: The Government claim that there has been an expansion—an expansion funded under the existing arrangements.

The hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) should have listened to what some of his colleagues said on Second Reading about adult education and, more broadly, in terms of further education. They made the simple point that, if something is working, we should not mend it or change it. The system is working at present. If the hon. Gentleman were the principal of an adult education centre and were told that he might now have to make bids in two or three different directions to raise money for a programme previously financed from one source, he would have some difficulty being persuaded that that was the most efficient way of making progress. That is what we said throughout the Standing Committee. That was what was said in our amendments and by many thousands of people up and down the country who are worried about long-term provision.

That is said in the constituency of the hon. Member for Twickenham. The flourishing adult education centre in his constituency is much better served by the existing arrangements than it would be under the change that is likely to come about under the legislation.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The flaw in the hon. Gentleman's argument is that he predicates that all except

Conservative-controlled local authorities are well intentioned towards adult education. However, the snag is that local authorities' standard spending assessment money is never earmarked, but always at large. The money going to the funding council is categorically to be used for one purpose, and cannot be taken away—it is much more certain. In my county, I would far rather trust my adult education students and the funding council, directly or indirectly, than leave the matter to Lancashire county council which has just completely cut off discretionary allowances to those aged 19 and over for a whole year.

Mr. Fatchett: In a sense, the hon. Lady has taken the argument half way. I will take it a stage further. I agree with her that the money for the further education funding council is ring-fenced, so it may be guaranteed. We do not know how much money there is, but we cannot criticise that, as Government programmes are coming forward. However, the other part of the funding for non-schedule 2 work—the bulk of the work of an adult education service in a county such as Lancashire—has to come from the local education authority. The hon. Lady is absolutely right in terms of her argument when she says that there can be no guarantee that individual local education authorities will spend the full amount.

But that is the weakness, not in my argument, but in the Secretary of State's, because to make his proposed system work he has to rely on individual local education authorities picking up the bill. *[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State may find that amusing, but millions of adult education students do not. LEAs have to pick up the bill in circumstances of a tight SSA and a tight budget and in which the local authority, Labour, Conservative or Liberal, will have just lost control of its further education college.

The weakness in the Secretary of State's argument lies in the fact that, with the best will in the world, it is difficult to see how local education authorities can pick up the bill and meet the demands for an adult education service.

Mr. Terry Rooney (Bradford, North): Following the comments of the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), does my hon. Friend agree that the funding council will probably enjoy the same guarantee of funding under this Government as training and enterprise councils did?

Mr. Fatchett: That is a good point; anyone from Bradford or Leeds will know of the large cuts in TEC budgets.

Once it is clear that the schedule 2 work is crucial work that will be funded through the Further Education Funding Council the signal sent to local authorities will surely be that their other work is of secondary importance.

We debate the new clause against a backcloth of anxiety about the future of the adult education service. That anxiety has not been whipped up for political purposes—

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): It was whipped up by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Fatchett: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's attribution to me of power to influence millions of people throughout the country. The fact remains that people who do not vote Labour or Liberal but vote Conservative are worried about this Bill—although they are less likely to vote Conservative in the future as a result of its provisions.

The new clause is all about putting the Secretary of State's word to the test. Let us set up a highly unlikely hypothesis: that the Government win the election and the Bill is passed, whereupon the proposals are implemented. I do not know whether the Secretary of State wants to remain in his office if there is a Conservative victory, but he has said that the proposals will work. New clause 1 merely builds into the Bill the necessity to find out whether they will. That is a reasonably modest responsibility to impose on the Secretary of State.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I know that the hon. Gentleman is seeking to improve the Bill, although he has taken a long time to get to new clause 1. He has just mentioned it for the first time in a quarter of an hour. Can he give us any idea how much the new clause would cost? As I read it, it will provide for an army of additional civil servants. It would be—untypically—dishonest of the hon. Gentleman if he did not provide the House with that information.

Mr. Fatchett: The costs will be minimal. The information, however, is crucial and it would allow us to make judgments on issues about which I know that the hon. Gentleman is concerned. This is a modest measure—certainly not so draconian as the hon. Gentleman's amendment No. 7 which would have written out clauses 1 to 61. Our ambitions are much more modest—we are merely trying to get from the Government some information about the future of the adult education service. We need this information. We believe that the Government's proposals for a new system of funding will not work. They will lead to a reduction in the service, which is why the new clause is designed to elicit the truth in the unlikely event that these proposals are implemented, although I doubt that they ever will be.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am pleased that the new clause gives us the opportunity to debate education for adults. The Government have an excellent record of presiding over a great expansion of provision. The Bill gives us an opportunity to improve on that record, and I welcome the chance to respond to the fears continually being raised—that somehow the Bill threatens to check progress of the service or to restrict local education authorities' ability to provide the sort of adult courses about which the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) expressed anxiety.

At one point, the hon. Gentleman rather disingenuously denied that the national campaign on this subject was politically motivated. I do not accept that; it has been sustained for quite some time, although I would not pay the hon. Gentleman the compliment of saying that he had organised it all. I do not think that the women's institutes have been involved for purely political reasons, but I do see the hand of the Labour-controlled Association of Metropolitan Authorities behind the campaign.

5.45 pm

A great number of ridiculous fears have been whipped up. Many who take these courses have been alarmed by what they have been told will happen: it is all total nonsense. It has been one of the sillier campaigns with which the Labour party has been associated in recent months—a highly competitive field that has been, too. The Bill in no way reduces the legal responsibilities of various public bodies to provide adult education of all kinds; nor does it reduce the availability of public funds from the Government for such education.

The Bill is expressly designed to extend opportunities further. I shall make one final effort to persuade Opposition Members of the basic principle underlying the Bill. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central claims that the purpose of the new clause is to offer some basis, in the form of reports, on which a future Parliament might be able to determine how well adult education has fared under Conservative rule. I certainly agree that in these debates we should be judged by those outside on our respective records, so let us look at the Conservative Government's commitment to adult and further education over the past decade.

During the past 10 years, the number of enrolments in adult and further education of all kinds has risen by about 27 per cent. and the numbers now taking part have increased by more than a quarter. The numbers in further education colleges alone have increased by more than 50 per cent. and approach 1·5 million enrolments a year in England.

Access courses, preparing adults for entry to higher education and virtually unknown 10 years ago, are now available. There are more than 700 in England alone. Partly as a result of those courses, the number of mature students in higher education rose by 55 per cent., or to 216,000 by 1990.

Mr. Fatchett: The Secretary of State talks about an expansion, but all of it has taken place under the existing system administered by local education authorities. Will he take this chance of congratulating those authorities on their success; and will he answer the question asked by a number of his hon. Friends on Second Reading: if the system is working, why bother to change it?

Mr. Clarke: I accept that the expansion has been achieved by LEAs and colleges and by all engaged in adult education—and all with the active and practical support of the Government, who have provided increased expenditure leading to the expansion.

Let me underline the practical support that we have given and show what has happened to spending on adult and further education services. First, expenditure on adult education centres increased between 1979-80 and 1989-90 by 31 per cent. in real terms. Spending on further education colleges—here I cannot give figures which disaggregate adults—increased in real terms by 16 per cent. in the same 10 years. That is a substantial increase in public spending on adult education centres and further education colleges and is in stark contrast with the record of the last Labour Government. When Labour last had an opportunity to act, it neglected that whole area.

I shall not dwell for long on the period many years ago when Labour was last in power. I trust that many years will pass before we see a Labour Government again, because we do not want a repeat of the shocking record of the last Labour Government. Between 1975 and 1979, spending on adult education centres went down by 12 per cent. in real terms, and spending on further education colleges rose by only 1 per cent. above inflation.

Under the last Labour Government, adult education was declining and further education colleges were stagnating. In the past 10 years under this Government, further education and adult education of all kinds have been expanded. The Bill's purpose is to improve on that.

Mr. Pawsey: Given the appalling record of the last Labour Government, does my right hon. and learned Friend find it extraordinary that Opposition Members rise as the defenders of further education colleges?

Mr. Clarke: They do it without shame. When that sector of education was declining, it was apparently the fault of Conservative local authorities, but when it expands it is apparently because of Labour local authorities. Labour's partisan bias on this supposedly non-political campaign is becoming utterly childish and simplistic. When Labour was in office providing the resources and setting priorities, this part of education was neglected and declining. It required a Conservative Government to give priority and resources, and we have presided over a period of dramatic expansion. That is accelerating, because enrolment rates at further education colleges are high this year. The Bill seeks to expand education, and the vast majority of principals agree with us that it is likely to enable them to expand opportunities even faster than before under the Government.

Labour's dramatic contribution to the debate is, "If it works, don't fix it." For the past 10 years, England has had the only left-of-centre party in western Europe which is against changing anything. On most social issues, Labour has no policy worth the name. It occasionally invents a quango, but it resists any reform at the behest of some vested interest. That is about Labour's only contribution. Labour's years in power are a history of neglect of the subject, but our years in power have been marked by expansion, and all that Labour can say is, "Don't change anything. We prefer to keep the present arrangements."

The broader discussions on the Bill have shown that its purpose is to speed progress and expand opportunities. We want to build on our record and improve further the education opportunities that are available to adults. Schedule 2 sets out, for the first time, a list of the courses which we want to see available all over the country and for which we propose national funding. Access to those courses should not depend on where a person lives, as often happens at present. Therefore, we are making the Further Education Funding Councils responsible for securing adequate provision of those courses.

The courses are not, as some people claim, solely vocational. They go a long way beyond that and include academic, access and basic skills courses, courses for those who need to improve their English and courses for the disabled. As my hon. Friend the Minister of State has said, schedule 2 describes our national priorities. They are national, because we shall provide national funding for them and we wish to guarantee access to such courses to everyone who can benefit from them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) rightly said that such funding is a positive advance for that part of further education because at the moment it is possible for funds that are intended in part for further education to be used by local authorities for something else. The principals of sixth form and further education colleges are anxious to have the provision whereby money will be made available to a funding council for a specific purpose and cannot be filched by councils such as Labour Nottinghamshire and

Labour Lancashire for other purposes. That money will have to go into further education. Principals know that we are following for funding councils the pattern that we established for polytechnics, which have had expanding resources and growing provision, and there has been a tremendous growth in education.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): I accept what my right hon. and learned Friend says and congratulate him on his admirable desire to provide wider education opportunities. However, I should like my right hon. and learned Friend to deal with the more specific point of Devon's local community colleges where the existing machinery works well. Does he agree that such colleges would respond better to local needs in rural areas if they operated on a manageable timetable? I fear the problems of an appeal taking overmuch time while courses are being structured. Our community colleges reinforce the Government's successful implementation of the local management of schools. Because they are locally based, community colleges can suss out exactly what is needed locally for adult education. I agree that funding should come from the centre outward to rural areas, but it need not come via the local sixth form college, which might have a tendency to abstract.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend takes me to my second point—courses which will still normally be funded locally. Under clause 11, community colleges will get funds from the local authority for some courses, and schedule 2 will provide funding council funds. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central tried to describe that procedure as complicated, slow and threatening. I know that there are concerns about that in Devon, Leicestershire, Richmond and elsewhere. I sought to address those concerns on Second Reading and I shall repeat the process.

It is a simple debating device for the hon. Member for Leeds, Central to read out the provisions in as complicated a way as possible and to say that this is a wholly complicated way to get funds. My hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) spoke about concerns in Devon and the fear that the timetable would be elaborate and slow. The Further Education Funding Council has made it quite clear that it will have to establish a timetable for dealing with clause 6(5) applications to ensure that there is no chance of worthwhile applications being lost because of delay.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central could benefit from the initiative demonstrated by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster. He could visit the chief executive-designate, who is well respected on all sides, to go over the mechanics. As my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) said, countless education facilities are used to getting funds from more than one source. Almost every further education college principal does that already when obtaining funds for various courses. Dual funding is not necessarily complicated. The Labour party continues to speak about such funding as if it is some arcane new discovery, in an unnecessary attempt to sound alarm bells in rural areas. It says that the funding council will not be able to cope with dual funding, but there are perfectly adequate facilities to ensure funding.

Mr. Fatchett: The Secretary of State can continue to insult the Labour party because that is par for the course. Why is it that, after Second Reading, Committee and proceedings in the other place, he has still failed to persuade the principals of colleges and their governing bodies in places such as Devon and Leicester? Is that a policy failure or a failure of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's eloquence?

Mr. Clarke: I think that it is as a result of continual campaigning by those who wilfully fail to follow the explanations, and set out to fan the fears again.

I am being somewhat aggressive towards the Labour party because I do not think that Opposition Front Benchers genuinely believe in the case that they are advancing. They have known all along that there is no threat to the less formal adult education classes, but they have invented legalistic and other arguments that have aroused understandable fears among those who take the courses and those who provide them.

Although debate on this important Bill is timetabled, Opposition Members are devoting a large part of it to an attempt to fan those fears yet further. They have not adopted the simple expedient of doing Ministers the courtesy of listening to their arguments—presented on the Floor of the House and, repeatedly, in Committee—rather than constantly misrepresenting those arguments. Moreover, had they taken the elementary step of consulting the chief executive of the funding council and asking for reassurance about the practicalities, they would have dispelled most of their fears.

Opposition Members do not want to listen to the arguments. It is easy to lark about on the Floor of the House, misreading the Bill and getting the issues slightly wrong in the hope of securing cheap votes. Labour does that because it is devoid of any sensible policies on further or adult education: on this and every other subject, the party is entirely wedded to bureaucratic control by local authorities.

6 pm

Sir John Farr: I am anxious to do all I can to support my right hon. and learned Friend. Given the rate at which we are progressing and the strict timetable by which we are governed, it is possible that we shall not reach new clause 7, which deals with a specific worry affecting my constituency in Leicestershire. Under the new clause, colleges of further education, and the basic adult education system, would remain untouched, and further education colleges would have the right to apply directly to the funding councils.

I will not go into detail, but my right hon. and learned Friend knows what we want in Leicestershire. We have a splendid system there: Her Majesty's inspectorate has visited the area and praised it. Will my right hon. and learned Friend at least tell me that he recognises that that system works, and that it will therefore be allowed to continue to work as effectively as it does now?

Mr. Clarke: I have given my hon. Friend such an assurance before, and I now give it to him again. I realise that the point is addressed more directly by new clause 7—tabled by my hon. Friend, among others—but the hon. Member for Leeds, Central has drawn us back to it, and it is partially relevant to the report that is being discussed.

I have just been covering the procedure whereby the moneys will be pursued. In my opinion, closer examination not only of the Bill but of the declared intentions of the funding council and its chief executive make it clear that

[Mr. Clarke]

there is no threat to the system in Leicestershire, the system in Devon or the position of Richmond college, or to the service provided in Humberside.

I shall make one further attempt to explain matters—first, the local authority powers, because they have been challenged, and then the procedures applying to an adult education college wishing to pursue funding council money for the part of its work that falls within schedule 2 to the Bill.

Mr. Morley: I am not convinced by what the Secretary of State said. The anxiety that I have encountered has been expressed by professionals in the adult education system—who provide a first-class service—rather than by members of the Labour party, or any other party.

The Secretary of State has not addressed this point. We are not talking about just one adult education college; we are talking about—in some cases—a full service, with many centres all around the country. How can those colleges bid for the element of funding that they will lose: funding for basic education, access courses and award-bearing courses? How can they plan to maintain the full structure of their services, when they have no idea whether they will receive the money? If they do not receive it, the infrastructure—small centres in rural areas—will collapse, and the service will deteriorate.

Mr. Clarke: Those colleges will obtain a large part of their funding in the ordinary way, from the local authority. It will fall within the part of further education provision—adult provision—that continues to be determined locally. That does not mean that it will be given a lower priority, as was suggested by the hon. Member for Leeds, Central. Given the variety of less formal courses that exist, it is much better to judge the position at local level.

To deal with that part of the funding—50 per cent. in the case of the Humberside service, according to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central—the local authorities will retain the powers that they have now. Those powers will be re-stated: they will not be lessened at all. As we have always made clear, the funding will be based on what the colleges spend now. Not only will we maintain the local education authority's duty to provide the courses for adults that are not the responsibility of the funding council; as we have said repeatedly, we will ensure that local education authorities have—through the revenue support grant system—at least as much money in real terms, allowing for inflation, to fulfil their duties in 1993-94 as they had in 1992-93.

Let me repeat that the 50 per cent. that will continue to be provided locally will not be affected by the Bill. That aspect of adult education will not change. Campaigns about what have been described as leisure courses have been organised. The Bill, and the Government's policy, will not affect the present position; nor will it affect funding for such courses in any way. The case made in regard to the so-called leisure courses was entirely misconceived—and remains misconceived, where it continues to be made.

Because local provision and local authorities are involved, authorities will have discretion either to increase or to reduce provision—to raise fees, or to lower them. Some LEAs are raising fees now, and seeking somehow to attribute that to the Government's reforms. The fact is that those reforms make no difference to so-called leisure courses, or to the many other vital adult courses that lie beyond the funding council's remit.

If a service is being cut or the fees are being raised, that is because local councillors are making their own determined judgments, for their own reasons. There is no point in bringing in party politics—some Labour-controlled local authorities have a poor record of either sustaining or expanding expenditure in that regard.

Another point that gives rise to concern is the fact that adult colleges providing services that fall within the provisions of schedule 2 will look to guaranteed funding council money. As was made clear at length on Second Reading, clause 6(5) explains how a college or service will have access to funds if it is not designated under other provisions in the Bill. Under clause 6(5), institutions maintained by local education authorities that make provision for adults should be able to apply, through the further education colleges, for funds to support that part of their work that falls within the funding councils' remit. The further education colleges must forward their applications to the councils where the provision in question would not otherwise be adequate in the area.

The whole purpose of clause 6(5) is to enable community providers to have their schedule 2 work considered by a funding council. We have not merely stated that as an intention; a number of safeguards have been provided to ensure that it happens. If the procedures are to work effectively, a clear framework will of course be needed. We do not want complications, inefficiency or delay, for—as my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North rightly says—that would threaten essential provision in some places.

The Government will assist by giving guidance on the procedures for schedule 2 applications. A circular letter issued recently by my Further Education Funding Council unit includes the initial guidance for institutions on clause 6(5), and we shall follow it up with further guidance on procedures as soon as possible.

As we said on Second Reading, the Further Education Funding Council will lay down a timetable which will allow plenty of time for the clause 6(5) procedures to work. Local education authorities—and through them, their institutions or services—will be given good notice of when applications should be made. The colleges will be asked to prepare for the applications by making sure that they are well acquainted with all the existing schedule 2 provision in their areas.

The colleges will be given time to consider the applications and, certainly if the descriptions given to me by my hon. Friends the Members for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), for Twickenham and for Devon, North are correct, I am sure that in most cases where relationships are perfectly satisfactory, the colleges will put them to the council. However, if they do not and if all the suspicions that have been fanned are correct, my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster is right and they will have to notify the council. The council will not tolerate further education colleges ignoring the provisions of clause 6(5) and failing to put forward well-judged applications for services that are accessible either because they are in rural areas or because they merely happen to be convenient in urban areas and people wish to pursue them.

Where a bid is not put forward, the provider—the college or the service—will approach the council. In England it will approach its regional office which, as Mr.

Stubbs apparently said in the meeting with my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster, will seek to resolve the conflict. It is not necessary to write that into the Bill. There is one overriding protection in the Bill to which the council will have regard when deciding what to do. The council has a statutory duty to ensure that adequate provision is made in different parts of the country.

I am sure that Mr. Gunn, the chairman-designate, Mr. Stubbs, the chief executive-designate, and the people appointed to the Further Education Funding Council will not stand by if people in Devon or Leicestershire start saying that the colleges are not forwarding well-judged applications for schedule 2 funding. The funding council will be under a statutory duty to secure adequate provision in different parts of the country. I do not believe that the procedures that I have described are overly complicated or will cause delay. If for some reason they do not work and if the community provider is still unsatisfied, it is open to the college to appeal to the Secretary of State on the ground that the further education college or the council has acted unreasonably or has failed in its statutory duty.

We can return to these issues, if we wish, when we debate new clause 7. There are perfectly clear mechanisms which people will follow but they can be made to sound complicated. When we discuss on Report a Bill which has necessarily been drafted in legal language, it is easy to debate it in terms which sound unfamiliar to the layman. With the greatest respect, I have been in the House for a long time—unlike most Conservative Members, I can remember being in opposition—and I confess that I have probably played that trick of making something sound frightfully obscure and complicated. But there is no point in alarming people in Devon or Leicester and making them fear that there is no perfectly straightforward procedure to get the funding council and the Secretary of State to sort things out if a local further education college starts messing about and not forwarding applications. We can deal with that when we debate new clause 7.

Mr. Morley: If there is a countywide service, could that service make an application through one particular college, bearing in mind that some of the other colleges in the county would have annexes which would include part of the adult education service?

Mr. Clarke: Again, I am sure that we can correct this later if I am wrong, but a service would not have to go to the nearest further education college. If there were a countywide service, it would go to one within the county but a college would not have to go to the nearest FE college if it feared that the FE college might regard the adult college as a rival. It must go through a further education college in the locality to get the college to hand on the application to the funding council if the college is satisfied that there is a legitimate claim.

I hope that we have covered that issue adequately at this stage. I accept that it is important. My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough, who is very experienced in these matters, is very concerned about the state of affairs in Leicestershire, but I believe that repeated debates will at least satisfy people that a procedure exists which will maintain the worthwhile provision needed to maintain an adequate service in all parts of the country.

6.15 pm

Mr. Jessel: Where there is split funding for an adult college and a request for capital provision, can my right hon. and learned Friend throw any light on who would be responsible for the funding where incorporation had taken place?

Mr. Clarke: It depends on what the funding is for—that is my first reaction. Again, I shall write to my hon. Friend. For most purposes, if the capital bid is to provide schedule 2 funding, it is plain that one will look to the capital provision that we have made for the Further Education Funding Council. If it is for local services, one will look to the local authority. However, just as money from two sources will not defeat the flow of revenue, split provision will not defeat the flow of capital.

Mr. Fatchett: The Secretary of State is opening up an interesting new part of the Bill. If a bid from an adult education centre is for capital, largely in relation to schedule 2 work, is the Secretary of State saying that the centre would have to make that bid through a further education college, or can it make its bid separately? If it can make its bid separately for capital, why cannot it do so for revenue?

Mr. Clarke: If a further education college is incorporated with the funding council, it will make its capital bid to the funding council. If the adult college remains a local authority college, it will look to the local authority for its capital provision. It is the sector that will largely determine the source of capital. Of course, there are provisions under which colleges that do not automatically become incorporated as further education colleges within the funding council's ambit can apply to be incorporated if they so wish, but it is the sector that will largely determine their capital bids.

Mr. Fatchett: I think that the Secretary of State is finding out more about the Bill as we go along. Is the answer to the question asked by the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) that if the work is predominantly schedule 2 work and that, if there is a need for capital expenditure on the adult college in, for example, Richmond, that bid must be made through the local education authority—yes or no?

Mr. Clarke: It would, if the college had decided not to seek incorporation; but if it had chosen to concentrate on schedule 2 work, it would perhaps be a straight decision by the college not to seek incorporation. The sector would determine the application.

We have covered the same ground again. This debate is becoming well-trodden ground. It is a popular Bill with a non-contentious purpose—the expansion of further education, of sixth form opportunities and of adult education. Most of our debates have eventually come to rest in the narrow area of complication with the procedures for schedule 2 funding for adult colleges. That is because there is so little real dispute about the Bill among people genuinely concerned about the subject. The Opposition are ideologically committed to local authority management of this matter as they are in almost every other part of education. They know that most people involved in further and adult education disagree with them fundamentally.

[Mr. Clarke]

The new clause is a red herring. It covers issues of genuine concern in some parts of the country, but I hope that the fact that we have debated it at great length yet again at the behest of the Opposition at the start of the timetable motion will enable us to put fears to rest. The Bill will expand opportunities for young people and for adults in all parts of education and training. I ask the House to accept that, to reject the unnecessary new clause and to enable us to move a step nearer to putting these new opportunities in place.

Mr. Michael Carr (Ribble Valley): The Secretary of State referred to the success story of adult education under this Government, although he acknowledged when pressed that that may have had something to do with the local education authorities. That is typical of the Government, who like to claim success as a Government success, but who see failure in terms of local authority failure. We do not see that only in education.

It was rightly said that every amendment tabled in Committee was defeated. That was not because Ministers did not accept some of the arguments, but simply because the Government want to get the Bill through before the general election. They can then claim that they did well to get it on the statute book.

Hon. Members have received many representations regretting the haste with which the measure is proceeding. The representations have come not only from councillors, but from the providers and users of adult education and further education. They regret very much that the timing of the measure means that debate will be curtailed and that there may not be the right atmosphere for a considered discussion of the issues.

There may be support from further education college principals for the aim of getting the measure on to the statute book quickly, but they represent only a small fraction of those who have an interest and an active involvement in using and providing the services. I counsel that the wider view, not simply the view of a narrow group, is heeded.

As we know, schedule 2 work is to be transferred to the funding councils, and adult education colleges may apply through the further education colleges to the funding councils for their schedule 2 work. Would it not have been sensible to allow direct application from adult education colleges as many are larger than the FE colleges through which they may have to apply? It would also have been sensible to allow consortia of adult education centres to combine in applying directly for schedule 2 funding.

The same applies to whole county adult education services, which should not have to go through FE colleges. Although the Secretary of State has spoken at great length today to try to reassure people that there is not a valid worry, there is a genuine worry that some further education colleges may be a little less likely to apply promptly if they see the threat of competition from another source.

Since the White Paper was published last summer, hon. Members of all parties have received shoals of letters from people who are concerned about the proposal—from users and providers of adult education. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) referred in his inimitable way in Committee to the pile of environmental refuse around him, much of which was no doubt letters that he had received on the subject. We all received such letters. The fact that Ministers have made many attempts——

Mr. Pawsey: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not implying that letters from constituents or from any one else were lying on the floor in Committee. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that correspondence from constituents is far too important and far too valued to be treated in such a cavalier fashion.

Mr. Carr: I agree entirely. I did not seek to imply that the hon. Gentleman treats his constituents' letters with contempt. I know that that is not the case. I merely referred to the mountain of material, whether on the floor or on the Benches, as evidence of considerable correspondence on the matter. I trust that the hon. Gentleman accepts my explanation.

Many letters have been received. Before I came into the Chamber, I talked briefly with my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). He told me that he had received more letters on this matter than on any other since he became a Member of Parliament. Only this morning, he met pensioners in his constituency. The two matters uppermost in their minds were the future of libraries and the future of adult education classes. Ministers have not yet convinced the public, many of whom have written since the completion of the Committee stage, that all is well.

If the new clause were accepted, it would show the people who have written to hon. Members and those who are concerned that the Government's words of reassurance mean something. I strongly support the new clause, and urge the Government to accept it.

Mr. Pawsey: From listening to Opposition Members, their new philosophy seems to be, "If it works, don't fix it". That seems to be a powerful argument for no change and no innovation. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), in whose speech I sought to intervene, referred to what he described as the first Bill on education that an incoming Labour Government would introduce. If he had given way—I was a little surprised that he did not—I would have asked him whether he would confirm that the first Bill on education introduced by a Labour Government would be an abolitionist Bill—a Bill to abolish the grammar schools, the grant-maintained schools, the assisted places scheme and the city technology colleges.

I would have asked him how he would reconcile his "If it works, don't fix it" philosophy with those abolitionist policies. Everyone agrees that the grammar schools certainly work, that the grant-maintained schools certainly work, that the city technology colleges certainly work and that the assisted places scheme certainly works. The problem with Opposition Members is that they cannot see excellence when it stands up and hits them in the face.

There were many comments about the success of local education authority policies. I remind Opposition Members that the polytechnics were part of the local authority empire. They have been freed up, and no one seriously argues that the polytechnics should return to the LEAs.

I was interested in the speech of the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Carr). Has he had an opportunity to read an article in *The House Magazine* by his hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor)? I accept the commitment of the hon. Member for Ribble Valley to higher education and especially to further education. I listened to him with interest in Committee and I felt that he developed some interesting points. Can he tell me why —I will give way—in the whole of the article by his hon. Friend the Member for Truro, I cannot find a reference to FE colleges or to further education?

Mr. Burns: What? It must be there.

Mr. Pawsey: My hon. Friend expresses surprise. I was equally surprised. If the hon. Member for Ribble Valley wants to answer the point and to tell me why his hon. Friend the Member for Truro failed to mention further education, I will give way.

Mr. Farr: I do not presume to answer for my hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on that. He was invited to write an article for *The House Magazine*, which he duly did. I suggest that the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) writes to my hon. Friend, who will answer him directly.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): Will the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) acknowledge that his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science in a equivalent article did not mention adult education—an ignorance amply revealed in the debate?

Mr. Pawsey: When I read the contribution by the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) in the same magazine, the only reference I could find was this:

> "Adult education has already been hit very hard by government-imposed cuts in local authority expenditure and poll-tax capping. The House should block this new assault."

I find that remarkable, given the figures that my right hon. and learned Friend cited earlier. What did that "assault", as it was described by the hon. Member for Oxford, East consist of? It was an assault with money. There was an annual real decrease in expenditure on adult centres of 4 per cent. between 1975-76 and 1978-79, compared with an annual real increase of 3·1 per cent. between 1979-80 and 1989-90.

Mr. Burns: Who was in power?

6.30 pm

Mr. Pawsey: I hear my hon. Friend asking, from a sedentary position, "Who was in power?" I suspect that that is something of a rhetorical question. My hon. Friend knows that it was the Labour Government—the same Government who had to bring in the International Monetary Fund to sort out the problems that they had caused. That was the only time in the nation's history when it was necessary to bring in the outside bankers.

Let me continue on the same theme. There was an annual real increase in spend on further education colleges of less than 0·5 per cent. between 1975-76 and 1978-79, compared with an annual real increase of 1·6 per cent. between 1979-80 and 1989-90. If that is Opposition Members' idea of an assault, I wish that people would assault me in the same fashion and pour money over my head as the Government have poured money into adult education.

Mr. Morley The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the quality of adult education very much depends on the local education authority and on whether it is Conservative or Labour-controlled. Would he like to explain why, in my county of Humberside, there was recently a scandal involving people from Lincolnshire giving forged Humberside addresses because they wanted to make use of the superior adult education facilities—facilities that are virtually non-existent in Lincolnshire?

Mr. Pawsey: I suspect that I should leave questions of forgery to Opposition Members.

The present Bill is another important education Bill which continues the main thrust of the Government's policy—a policy designed to reduce bureaucracy and give additional powers and responsibility to those involved in the running of the nation's institutions. It is a policy that is in marked contrast to that of the Opposition, to whom only the grey uniformity of LEA control is acceptable. I have never been able to understand the socialist reasoning that the only good state education is LEA education.

Just as the Education Reform Act 1988 gave additional powers to parents and schools, and the Education (Student Loans) Act 1989 freed up the polytechnics and cut the apron strings that secured them to the LEAs, so this Bill frees the 450 colleges of further education. I am convinced that power and responsibility should reside more closely with those who are involved in the day-to-day administration. Such a system will enable them to respond that much more quickly to the demands and challenges of students, employers and local communities.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pawsey: I am delighted that I have the support of my hon. Friend on that point.

It should also be remembered that the LEAs are not always the colleges' best friends. Let me call in aid *The Independent*—not always regarded as the friend of the Conservative party. On 5 November last year, it said:

> "There is a tendency for LEAs to reduce funds to further education sector and put them into schools. But the provision of funds directly to a further education funding council will mean the funds being ring-fenced."

The Independent may not normally be sympathetic to Government policy but on this occasion the newspaper certainly has it right. Under the Bill, funding for further education will be protected and—not before time—the unwelcome interference by LEAs in the running of colleges of further education will become a thing of the past.

The Government now provide some £2 billion a year for further education in England and Wales. That funding will henceforth be protected. Money intended for further education will reach further education, to the benefit of all those studying in that sector.

The Bill certainly cuts bureaucracy. At present, principals of colleges of further education must fight their corners every year with the officials at shire hall. They must take their place—often a lowly place—in the priority queue for funds with schools and administration. In future, all that will change.

From the visits that I have made to the East Warwickshire college of further education in my constituency, I am aware that there is a wealth of talent in staffrooms and classrooms. The Bill will free up that talent and broaden the vision. It will do for colleges of further education what the 1988 Act did for the polytechnics.

Let me give the House a couple of examples taken from the East Warwickshire college of further education. The principal tells me that he has plans to extend the college's

[Mr. Pawsey]

courses—and not just for local people locally participating. He is going national and will seek to attract students to a much wider range of courses. Already he has pioneered a unique money-back guarantee to any part-time student who is not satisfied with his course. The principal is prepared for his college to be placed on a commercial rather than an institutional footing, and he welcomes the challenge the Bill will present. The freeing up of the colleges will result in a substantial increase in the variety and number of college courses so that they become more attractive to a much wider range of students.

I many ways, the liberation of polytechnics from local authority control will serve as a blueprint for this latest transfer of control from LEA to individual institution. Given the success of that operation, no one now argues that the polytechnics should be returned to LEA control.

In Committee, it was argued with some justification that adult and further education had been something of a Cinderella. Funds had either been sucked into the schools or directed to advanced education, sometimes at the expense of colleges of further education which had become poor relations. The Bill changes that. If, in the past, we have not done enough for young people leaving school at 16, or for adults who, for whatever reason, require additional education and training, the Bill helps to remedy that defect.

At present, the further education colleges take about 360,000 full-time students and 700,000 part-time day students, with another 700,000 part-time evening students. Those students are spread among 450 institutions. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central has sought to dismiss those figures on the grounds that a substantial percentage do not receive a qualification at the end of the course. Although certificates are undoubtedly desirable, the fact that not everyone receives one on completion of a course does not mean that either the student or the course was unsatisfactory. In many cases—particularly in the case of short courses for adults that are designed to improve the quality of life through general education or leisure pursuits —certificates would be inappropriate. The absence of a certificate does not mean that a student has not benefited from the course that he has attended or that he has been wasting his time.

In Committee, much emphasis was placed on the need to continue and extend adult education provision, whether for leisure or for learning. The Committee appreciated that good and useful courses do not always depend on certificates to justify their existence. Do I see the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) looking at me quizzically? I shall willingly give way to him if he wishes me to.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): No. Just get on with it.

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Gentleman does not wish to intervene. I am sure that the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) will agree with me that, when control of the colleges is transferred, as it surely will be when the Bill is enacted, from the office of the director of education to the college principals, we will see a change of attitude and a substantial growth in opportunity.

I said earlier that Opposition Members seem to believe that the only good education is that provided by the local education authority. Grant-maintained schools show that that is not true. That trend, which was continued with the polytechnics, will now grow into a flood with FE colleges.

I was disappointed to learn that the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) said recently in a speech to principals of FE colleges that, were there to be a Labour Government—God forbid—Labour would repeal this legislation. No wonder the principals who bothered to listen to the hon. Gentleman looked shell-shocked. They were looking forward to developing a spirit of enterprise. Instead, they were promised stagnation—not so much liberation, more a case of renationalisation. No wonder the hon. Gentleman uncharacteristically remained silent in Comittee when I challenged him specifically on that point.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): Did the hon. Gentleman issue a press release of his remarks before he made his speech?

Mr. Pawsey: I never issue press releases of my speeches, because they are always so good that the press always pick them up anyway.

When the hon. Member for Leeds, Central opened the debate, he said that new clause 1 was a probing new clause. I believe that it is mischievous, and I hope that the House will reject it.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I am delighted but rather surprised to be called next to follow the eloquent and modest comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), because I would have expected more Opposition Members to be present to participate in this important debate.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): We are not participating in the debate because we are quite happy that our local authorities are doing the job. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) forgot to point out that the local authority which is so obnoxious in his area is Conservative-controlled.

Mr. Bowis *rose*——

Mr. Pawsey *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. One intervention at a time, please.

Mr. Bowis: I will come back to the local government point, but of course I will give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey).

Mr. Pawsey: I must tell the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) that I was a member of Warwickshire county council for about six years, from 1974 to 1979 or thereabouts. I do not believe that Warwickshire county council is in any way obnoxious. Had the hon. Member for Rhondda been present for our debate on 4 February, he would have learnt that I spoke strongly in defence of my county. It is all there in *Hansard.* I happen to think that in many ways——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is enough. I call Mr. Bowis.

6.45 pm

Mr. Bowis: I feel like a letter box, but I am honoured to pass the message from my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers).

Perhaps I can now declare two interests as I am an adviser to the Association of Colleges for Further and Higher Education and the Association of College Management. As a former governor of the polytechnic in Kingston, I entirely endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth said about the experience of polytechnics moving from the local authority nursery to independence.

I also want to pay tribute to the local authorities that nurtured the polytechnics in their early days and so allowed them to become independent. As a former governor of an FE college in the royal borough of Kingston, I pay tribute to the role of local government in Kingston and elsewhere in respect of the way in which local government has brought up our FE colleges so that they are not ready to become independent.

I must tell the hon. Member for Ribble Valley that it is not just the college principals who are in favour of the Bill. It has received endorsement throughout the further education sector. My colleagues have been urged over the past few years to introduce such a measure and they have responded to that urging. The college principals, governors, teaching staff and other staff members as well as people in local authorities working with the colleges have supported the measure. As my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth said, they are dismayed at the possibility that the Bill might be undone were the unthinkable to happen and a Labour Government elected who reneged on this forward-looking measure.

New clause 1 relates to adult education, and I am pleased to have an opportunity to refer to that subject. I am a great believer in continuing education, which I believe lasts from the cradle to the grave. No doubt some hon. Members will say that it goes way beyond the grave. Up there, in the wide blue yonder—I stress the blue—no doubt there are former educationists and Secretaries of State for Education and Science who are busy providing continuing education beyond this life—and that is as it should be.

Adult education is a crucial part of overall education, and it should be encouraged. I know of many people who, as a result of adult education services, have found new opportunities in life. Many people have discovered quite late in life that they have the ability to benefit from further education as a result of their introduction to education through the adult service.

New clause 1 paragraph (2)(c) refers to

"the numbers of people progressing between sectors".

We should be considering that important point. I have said before in this place that I have been impressed by people of all ages who have taken up adult education courses even in fairly innocuous pastimes such as cake decoration. I was impressed by the fact that some people who took cake decorating courses progressed to FE courses in how to set up their own businesses. Other people who had been kept out of education because English is not their first language have found a welcome mat at adult education and gone on to courses in English as a second language.

Mr. Pawsey: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is an adult education centre in my constituency called the Percival guild house? I recently visited the house and witnessed the courses available, which ranged from local history and the way in which the canals and railways emerged to practical courses in French, German and other languages. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that it is critically important that such centres are maintained. Under the Bill, matters will be easier, not harder.

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is right. New clause 1 is useful because our debate has sent a message to local education authorities that there is nothing to stop them providing the excellent provision that they provided in the past. Some people have been concerned about the apparent divide between leisure and vocational work, but there is no reason why that should be anything more than an imaginary barrier, because there are different ways of achieving funding. The message from the debate should be that we expect our local education authorities, good as we may deem them to be, to continue to provide that excellent range of and access to education.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Although everybody appreciates and welcomes the efforts by local authorities in adult vocational and further education in particular, does my hon. Friend recognise that there is widespread concern about the future funding of adult education and what appears to be the intrinsic contradiction in the current legislation in relation to the funding and composition of regional councils?

Mr. Bowis: I accept that funding is important. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central also referred to funding. In future, there will be various methods of funding adult education. The size of resources does not necessarily equate to the quality of provision. I recently handed out certificates at the annual prize-giving ceremony at the Wandsworth adult education college. In its first year, having been liberated, to use the term that was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, from the clutches of the ILEA, that college has not only enabled adult education to thrive but has taught record numbers of students a far wider range of subjects than would have been possible under the ILEA. It was not a matter of resources: it was a matter of the efficient use of available resources for local education authorities to spend on adult education.

When I think of the quality of those courses, I think of the range of students who undertook GCSE art, all of whom managed to attain an A grade. Their ages ranged from 18 to 85. I think also of the quality of the work being done for special needs students. I am glad that my right hon. and learned Friend has made provision for that. Some students never thought of being able to achieve a certificate, but their receiving certificates is another sign of quality adult education within existing resources. Of course we want resources to be expanded. They are available if they are efficiently used.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): My hon. Friend mentions adult education. He will know that there has been much concern in many local authorities about the distinction between vocational and non-vocational courses. All resources necessary for vocational courses are coming through from our right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. Local authorities are receiving funding for non-vocation courses through the Department of the Environment, but they are not making that clear to their local people. People are being told that a reduction in funding is the reason why their non-vocational courses are being cut. That simply is not true. Will my hon. Friend address that point?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is correct. As a former governor of an FE college and a former chairman of an educational committee of the ILEA, I know the pressures that one is under as chairman of education when it comes to resources which, in theory, are being passed down the line from the Government and which other departments of a council are all too quick to snatch up. That is one of the main reasons why we have had pressure from the colleges for this measure. They believe that, with a future separate funding council, that money will be put directly into the sector and not be hived off for the management expenses of an authority or for whatever dubious works a council may have in mind, often according to its political persuasions, or its preferences for spending money on a traffic management scheme rather than on education.

As a sector, FE will have its own financing system through the funding council. As a result, we will give adult education the opportunity to benefit. It is not a matter of not allowing all adult education into the funding sector. We are saying to adult education, "We will permit you to benefit from the funding system that is coming into further education." My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) rightly pointed out that, if funding does not come through as the result of an application through an FE college, a system of appeal can be used to ensure that the decision is vetted. At the very least, there is a possibility that the college would be overruled in its refusal to pass on the application.

Mr. Allason: Does my hon. Friend recognise that, in the case of community colleges, there is a problem about direct access to funding councils? There may be a contradiction between further education colleges and community colleges apparently bidding for exactly the same money from the regional council.

Mr. Bowis: I hear what my hon. Friend says. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State has also heard it and will respond. I do not have community college experience in my constituency or indeed in my LEA, but I take note of the problem in Devon, Leicester, Richmond and elsewhere.

I hope that the Government will look carefully in future at the way in which adult education colleges have or have not the right to apply directly for funding. Under the Bill, there is a way in which they can apply for direct funding if they succeed in obtaining incorporation, but that is not the most simple or straightforward way of achieving it. Some adult education colleges are concerned that the Government should keep that point under review and see whether there are ways in which colleges can get a direct connection. We must not allow education colleges which are doing FE work which is comparable to that done by FE colleges to be regarded as second-class citizens.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State also to consider concern in the FE and AE sectors about the transitional period. That may well be a matter for regulations rather than the Bill, but there is concern that, in the coming year, local education authorities will not spend as much as they might otherwise spend on the sector for the obvious reason they are making a commitment which will be paid direct next year by a funding council. I hope that that point will be taken into account and that those concerns can be put at rest.

The new clause is unnecessary and expensive, as my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) mentioned. It is ineffectual because, apart from anything else, its forward planning is based on figures that nobody has seen. It is Government interference in the running of local councils. For these reasons, I oppose it.

Mr. Jessel: I endorse the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis). [HON. MEMBERS: "Speak up."] I have been asked to speak up, and I am trying to do so, but several colleagues are making their own speeches. We have far too many reports. We have stacks and stacks of them. There is far too much reading matter. Most of it is unread and wasted. We need fewer reports. We should remember the philosophical principle of Occam's razor—do not multiply entities beyond necessity. I shall therefore vote against the proposal that we should have one more annual report.

The new clause gives us the opportunity to debate the merits of adult education and to raise our anxieties about adult education in our constituencies. The growth in adult education under the Conservative Government has been tremendously impressive. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said, if I heard him right, that there had been a 55 per cent. increase in the number of mature students in Britain in the past 10 years. The figure is now 215,000 or 216,000. That is a substantial number. It reflects well on the adult education departments of local authorities, of whatever political hue, which have sponsored and supported mature students.

7 pm

My constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) are well served by the Richmond-upon-Thames adult college, and we are both tremendously proud of it. It is a first-class college which offers an excellent range of courses. Last year, my hon. Friend and I were glad to sponsor an excellent art exhibition from the college in the Upper Waiting Hall of the Palace of Westminster. Conservative and Opposition Members alike will have been delighted to see that exhibition. It was to a high standard, as is much else that the college produces. It provides a great deal of enrichment and fulfilment of the lives of many of our constituents, both in the arts and on the vocational side —I share the view that it is often difficult to draw the line between the two.

If I thought that anything in the Bill threatened Richmond-upon-Thames adult college, I could not support the Bill, but I do not see any such threat, despite a great deal of scaremongering. Some of the scares have gained some credence among gullible people, but it seems to me that the college is in no jeopardy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes and I have received many letters reflecting the anxieties of some people in our constituencies. My hon. Friend the Minister of State met my hon. Friend and me in the Department on the morning of 11 February before the debate on Second Reading, and we expressed those anxieties. During the debate, in response to a question from me, my hon. Friend the Minister referred at some length to the particular case of Richmond-upon-Thames adult college. He said:

> "It is widely recognised that that is an excellent college which serves the local community well. I am well aware of the concerns felt in Richmond about the future of the college, and I wish to put them at rest."—[*Official Report*, 11 February 1992; Vol. 203, c. 903.]

He went on to outline two ways in which the college could be funded in the future. The second was under clause 6(5), whereby the college would apply for funds through another college. I for one, regard that second option as undesirable—indeed, unacceptable—and I believe that it should be ruled out. It is not right that that excellent college should obtain its funding by applying through another college.

My hon. Friend the Minister had outlined earlier the first option, which to my mind is the preferred one—that the college should be incorporated under clause 16, which my hon. Friend said was expressly designed to cover cases such as that of Richmond upon Thames adult college. Under that option, the college would apply for its basic funding to the Further Education Funding Council to be set up under the Bill. The college would be incorporated so that it received its basic funding from the FEFC.

There is no need to amend the Bill to enable the college to receive that basic funding because that is already provided for in the Bill. However, the other part of its funding would continue to come from Richmond upon Thames borough council. That council, under Conservative control until 1984 and since then under Liberal control, has done its best over the years to uphold and advance the highly valuable and useful work of the college. The council's record has been good under both administrations, and I have no doubt that that good record will continue.

There is no reason to believe that the council's intention to uphold the work of the college would diminish. First, we understand that the Bill places a statutory duty on the council to uphold the work of the college. Secondly, there is enormously strong and vociferous local public opinion in favour of adult education. It would be politically impossible for Richmond upon Thames borough council, under the control of whatever party, to desert the cause of adult education. Thirdly, the council has always upheld the college and there is no reason to think that it would stop.

There is therefore no threat to the second part of Richmond college's funding, let alone to the first part of its funding through incorporation under the relevant clause of the Bill. Those who, for whatever motive, try to foment false fears in others act dishonourably. The college has provided an extremely impressive range of courses and an excellent service. I am happy that its future is safe and I am sure that the college will step forward with confidence into the future. I know that that is also the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on the new clause because Opposition Members, and especially the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), made certain assertions which he said were the background to new clause 1. He said that the background to the new clause was that Conservative education authorities were cutting their further education budgets and that the whole system under which the Bill was introduced would therefore come apart.

I draw the attention of the hon. Member for Leeds, Central to Labour-controlled Lancashire local education authority, for example. Its budget was increased by 16 per cent., but it has nevertheless cut its further education budget. But I especially wish to draw the attention of Opposition Members and in particular the hon. Members for Leeds, Central and for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) to Labour-controlled Birmingham education authority. Last year, Birmingham city council was awarded £456 million by the Government for education. It spent only £392 million. It chose to spend the remainder on such things as marrying up statues, marble steps for the council building and Caribbean night clubs.

This year, Birmingham city council has been awarded £5 million by the Government and apparently plans to spend only £423 million. It then has the gall to seek to persuade the people of Birmingham that it has increased spending by £30 million. Of course, the richly deserved award to teachers will take up the majority of that increase in any case. The real increase is nearer £2 million. Once again, it will not spend the full amount that the Government have given it to spend on education.

Therefore, the hon. Member for Leeds, Central cannot assert that new clause 1 is necessary because Conservative-controlled councils have cut their budgets for further education and therefore the Bill will come apart. It is perfectly obvious that Labour-controlled local education authorities have treated further education in a scandalous fashion. Birmingham is a good example.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central also made much play of the number of representations that he had received from various people involved in further education and adult education. He might be interested in the example of my college of further education—Hall Green college in my constituency.

I rang the principal and the deputy principal to ask them their views on the Bill, and they said, "We pray you get it through as soon as possible." I have just given the House the reason—they do not trust the local education authority in Birmingham to give them the money which is theirs by right.

Mr. Pawsey: My hon. Friend can scarcely be surprised that his colleges do not trust the local education authority, when it is not prepared to spend the funding that the Government make available. The catalogue of wasteful expenditure that he describes is truly appalling. The sooner that the city of Birmingham rejects that Labour administration and brings in a sensible council the better.

Mr. Hargreaves: I must agree with my hon. Friend. I hope and pray that the people of Birmingham will take that decision in the forthcoming local elections.

In the meantime, principals in charge of further education colleges throughout Birmingham will be looking forward to the passage of the Bill and its implementation as soon as possible.

It might be interesting for my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) to know that the underfunding has continued for some years. Birmingham city council has underspent the money which the Government have awarded it for education in the past four years. In each of those years, the Government have given it a substantial increase over and above inflation.

When the hon. Member for Leeds, Central asks why we do not trust local education authorities, I tell him to look at Birmingham. Then he will see why we are trying to do something to set further education colleges free, and to give them the opportunity to thrive in the same way that polytechnics have been given that opportunity. New clause 1 is totally otiose in that process. It would merely add a huge army of civil servants. What would be their purpose

[Mr. Hargreaves]

—to act as some form of unpaid research assistants for the Labour party? I think not. The new clause would serve no purpose.

The funding council will ring-fence expenditure on further and adult education—as my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) said—to the further education colleges, where it should go. It gives them the surety that they will get the funds that they have been awarded by central Government. That is the purpose of the Bill, and that is why I commend it to the House.

Mr. Allason: New clause 1 is utterly against all the interests of my constituents. We have a long tradition of community colleges in Devon. While I am utterly opposed to any report being submitted annually by the Secretary of State to the House, as new clause 1 provides, I have concerns about the funding of further education in Devon.

Paignton community college broadly welcomes the Bill. It will do a great deal for adult education. However, there is continuing concern about the funding council. I hope that community colleges will be allowed direct access to funding councils.

I shall not stray off new clause 1 on to the subject of the composition of the funding councils, as I hope that there will be time to discuss that later, but it is important that vocational and non-vocational courses should continue to be offered in Devon colleges. Furthermore, I hope that there would be an element of ring fencing to funding from central Government.

The key issue is who will benefit from the Bill. If it were just the staff, I would certainly oppose it. The Bill will benefit everyone who has the option of further or adult education, whatever the subject of the course they take. It is important that those courses should be maintained, and that naturally boils down to money. I hope that the Minister will take another long hard look at access to the funding councils, which is the key.

7.15 pm

In Paignton and Torquay, adult courses are extremely popular. However, there is great anxiety, especially among staff, that, if there were to be some kind of competition for the limited funds, one college might be able to offer one set of courses and thereby poach students from another. Devon is such a widespread community that we do not have the same opportunities as the metropolitan areas to provide a variety of courses. It is essential that money be provided for those courses, and that the staff who teach them have confidence that what is happening to them does not mean an ultimate reduction in funding.

There is concern about the funding councils, but my hon. Friend the Minister could get around that problem by arranging for community colleges—which are not unique to Devon but are certainly helpful—to be able to apply directly for funds.

Nothing in new clause 1 will be helpful to students or staff of community colleges in Devon. I hope that the House will reject it and will thereby find time to discuss new clause 7, which stands in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Sir R. Maxwell-Hyslop) and is an extremely important contribution to the Bill. Paignton community college has done sterling service——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not on new clause 7. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would hold his comments until that time.

Mr. Allason: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker. We are discussing new clause 1, and I am especially concerned about subsection (2)(a)—

"the allocation of resources for adult learning".

That is my prime concern, and that of many of my constituents and the staff and students of Devon colleges which will be directly affected by the Bill.

Broadly speaking, the Bill is welcome. New clause 1 would not be welcomed, because implied within it is a level of bureaucracy which would make life more complicated, rather than easier, for students and staff.

Reports to the Secretary of State are not the key: the key is the confidence of staff that they have access to the money and that they will not have to compete with other colleges in the same area offering the same courses. Accordingly, I urge the House to reject new clause 1.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to make a short contribution, and I apologise to the House for being unable to attend the earlier part of the debate.

There has been a resurgence of interest in adult education during the past few years, as there has been in many other areas. The adult education school in Bury has a long and proud history. My mother and grandmother attended courses there. The importance of the college was emphasised to the local community last year, when it was under threat of closure by the local authority. A tremendous campaign was organised against the closure, and it was prevented.

Following that success, however, people in the town became concerned about elements in the original White Paper upon which the Bill is based and about threats to the future of the college. At the time, I made representations to the Minister and to his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, with my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg). Since then, I believe that developments in adult education have been more encouraging, and I have no doubt that adult education has put itself more firmly on the map as a result of the various representations made to my hon. Friend. I see from his wry smile that he acknowledges the impact which various campaigners have had upon him.

I pay tribute to Molly Smith, who has led students of the adult education school in Bury extremely well, and to Cliff Baxendale, the principal, who, supported by colleagues in other parts of adult education in Bury, has also mounted an extremely good campaign.

Pleased as I am with the responses, there are other problems affecting adult education. Hon. Members will note that my name appears on new clause 7, which will be debated later. However, new clause 1 will not deal with the problems adequately. It merely contains an element of gloss, as it simply requires a report to be made on adult education; it has no substance behind it.

As so often, new clause 1 reflects the Opposition's view that they need not make a solid commitment. It is all a ploy; they raise an issue and dress it up, but they avoid the commitment to further expenditure which is required by Beckett's law on the future of public expenditure under a supposed Labour Government. The Opposition hope to have the best of both worlds.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: My hon. Friend will recall that my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) raised precisely that point. By the time all the reports had been filled in, one would have written a small book.

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. I appreciate that that is the problem. If we wish to do something properly for adult education, new clause 1 is not the way to do it.

The cause of adult education has been raised and given extra importance during the passage of the Bill and because of the efforts that have been made around the country. We all recognise the importance of adult education, but that recognition is not adequately covered by the new clause. My right hon. and learned Friend and his colleagues have addressed some of the problems, but others remain.

Like most hon. Members, I wish the improvements made in adult education in recent years to be safeguarded. I also wish to safeguard the opportunities for adults to train through life, be they on vocational or non-vocational courses. That is for people to choose. It is important that such opportunities are safeguarded in the future. I am sure that there is nothing in the Bill that will actively harm them.

I am happy to see that local authorities will retain a degree of control and that colleges will need to relate closely to the adult education schools in their area in order to provide a proper service.

If it were possible to safeguard adult education by the issue of reports, the new clause would be an admirable way to achieve that. Unfortunately, that will not work, and I prefer the approach of my hon. Friends. If I have an opportunity to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, on a later new clause, I may suggest a way in which to improve things further.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 192, Noes 291.

Division No. 103] **[7.21 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Nicol
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.

Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir D. *(Calder Vly)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

New clause 6

UNIVERSITY PAY REVIEW BODY

The Secretary of State shall establish a pay review body for university academic and academic-related staffs.—*[Mr. Straw.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Straw: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Hon. Members will note that the clause stands in the name of my hon. Friends and me and, I am pleased to say, three Liberal Democrats, including the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Carr). It proposes that a pay review body shall be established by the Secretary of State for university academic and academic-related staffs.

The proposition that university staffs should have a pay review body was widely supported by hon. Members in all parts of the House. The official Opposition were asked about our attitude towards a pay review body in June 1991, and I was happy to reply to the secretary of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the general secretary of the Association of University Teachers that the Labour party in government would establish a pay review body. I shall read from the letter that I wrote to those bodies setting out the terms on which a pay review body for university academic staff would be established.

Since then—indeed, just over a month ago—the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) tabled early-day motion 597 proposing that there should be such a review body. I am astonished that, having gone to the trouble of tabling that motion, the hon. Gentleman is absent today.

Mr. Fatchett: He is in China.

Mr. Straw: I note what my hon. Friend says. The hon. Member for Leeds, North-West is an assiduous attender here. Whatever else he may be learning from the Chinese Government, I suspect that the People's Republic does not yet have a pay review body for university academic staff. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) murmurs that there is a review body for everybody in the last state on earth which still practices democratic centralism.

The early-day motion says:

> "That this House acknowledges the important contribution that universities have made to the country's economic and social well-being; recognises the productivity and efficiency gains that they have achieved as numbers have risen by 8·7 per cent. in 1991; is conscious that Britain's system of higher education is one of the finest in the world and is rightly held in great esteem; recognises that pay review bodies which cover such groups as doctors, dentists and school teachers do, in the view of Her Majesty's Government, enhance professionalism and the raising of morale; and therefore calls upon Her Majesty's Government to establish a pay review body for university academic and related staffs."

It was signed by 71 hon. Members, of whom 56 were Conservatives. I understand why the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West is absent—he is in China—but I doubt whether the other 55 are on that trip.

The fact that only two of the Conservative Members who signed the motion are present to debate that important motion shows their lack of seriousness of purpose. We shall look with even greater interest later this evening to see how many of those 56 hon. Members go into the Lobby to support the proposal. I suspect that they thought that they could sign an early-day motion and tell their local papers that they were supporting it, but when it comes to the simple straightforward proposition that the Secretary of State should establish a pay review body for university academic and related staff, on the recommendation of the Minister and through the Whips, all those Members will be dragooned into the Lobby to vote against the proposal. It is highly probable that few of those 56 Conservative Members will even know what they are voting about.

I wish to place on record the body of a letter that I wrote to the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals and the Association of University Teachers on 25 July 1991. I said:

> "After consultation with Labour's Treasury Team, I am pleased to confirm that a Labour government would, as soon as practicable, establish a Pay Review body for university academic and related staff. This would be in respect of pay. I should like to consider further the question of how issues of conditions should best be settled, and I should be glad to have your views on this, as well, of course, those of the CVCP"—

that particular copy of the letter was to the AUT. The letter continued:

> "This Review Body would operate in a manner similar to already established Review Bodies, such as the Doctors' and Dentists'. A Labour government would undertake, as in the case of other review bodies, to implement the Review Body's recommendations unless there were clear and compelling reasons to the contrary.
>
> The present government is proposing the amalgamation of the funding councils, and the end of the distinction between universities and polytechnics. We support both these proposals, and would implement them.
>
> This has clear implications for polytechnic staffs. I am therefore sending a copy of this letter to the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics, National Association Teachers in Further and Higher Education, and the Association of Polytechnic and College Teachers to seek their views on future pay settlement arrangements for polytechnic staff. It would seem to me that there would be considerable advantage in having unified pay settlement arrangements for all higher education academic staff, though there are plainly some transitional matters which would have carefully to be considered."

My announcement on 25 July last year that a Labour Government would establish a funding control for academic and related staff in universities has been widely welcomed. The present system for settling university teachers' pay is byzantine. With the revenue support grant, it reminds one of the Schleswig-Holstein issue. The Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), is a historian and will know exactly what I mean, if not the answer to the problem. The system of committees A and B and their 27 reports is obscure and has not worked to the advantage of the universities or university academic staff. There has been no parity as to exactly who is the employer, nor much clarity about the nature of the settlements.

7.45 pm

The Under-Secretary of State, when he replies to the debate, may say that, although university teachers are paid principally from public funds, their employer is not central or local government but the universities, which rightly have a high degree of autonomy from the Government at a national level. That should not be an overwhelming problem in the settlement of university teachers' pay by a pay review body. Doctors and dentists are not directly employed by Whitehall, by the Department of Health in their case.

Those who work in district health authority hospitals are paid by regional health authorities and those who work in opt-out trusts are paid by opt-out trusts. The fact that their employers are legally separate from the Department of Health has not prevented their pay from being settled by the Doctors and Dentists Remuneration Review Body. General practitioners and dentists are self-employed. Nevertheless, the DDRRB settles the parameters of their pay.

A similar if not exact parallel exists in respect of school-teachers. Their pay and conditions are settled by a review body. In the past they were settled by central negotiating machinery under the Burnham arrangements. The employers of teachers in county schools are local authorities and the employers of teachers in voluntary-aided schools are various boards and voluntary-aided trusts. I hope that the Minister will not make heavy weather of the fact that university teachers are not directly employed by the state, because other groups who are the subject of pay review arrangements are not employed by central Government and the arrangements appear to work well for them.

Another important issue that I raised in that letter was whether a review body for university academic staff should include consideration of conditions as well as pay. The school teachers pay review body is unique in that it is statutory and considers conditions as well as pay. The other review bodies consider only pay and conditions are left for separate, usually across-the-table negotiations.

The specific commitment that I have given on behalf of a future Labour Government is that a review body for university and related academic staff would consider pay alone. As I said in my letter to Diana Warwick and to the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, we would consider whether conditions should also be included in a review body's terms of reference. My initial view is that it would be better for conditions to be separately negotiated and that the parallel with the doctors and dentists review body should best apply.

At present, because polytechnics have been a separate system, their pay is negotiated separately. There has been much need for the settlement of polytechnic staff's pay at a polytechnic rather than a national level. Naturally, there will be transitional problems as the polytechnics become fully fledged universities, both in respect of their funding arrangements—there has been a different methodology for those—and in respect of the settlement of their pay.

If we are to make the polytechnics fully fledged universities with the same funding methodology as universities, it seems essential that once the transitional period is complete they should have the same systems for settling pay. Whatever the House decides is appropriate for one side of the old sector should apply to both. In our judgment, the review body should cover all staff within the new univeristy sector once the higher education funding council is established. A question mark will remain over those Higher Education Funding Council staff employed in non-university institutions. For the sake of tidiness, if nothing else, we believe that the pay review body should also cover those individuals.

We had some interesting debates on the merits of review bodies six, nine and 12 months ago. In November 1990, on the day of the first ballot result of the Conservative leadership contest, the present Secretary of State came to the House and recommended that the House approve the first School Teachers Pay and Conditions Bill, which proposed across-the-table negotiations. I am glad that the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) is present, as he was in the House on that occasion when we were told that the new version of across-the-table negotiations was an almost perfect way of settling school teachers' pay and conditions.

On that occasion, the Secretary of State made it clear that he was not entertaining any other alternatives, including that of a pay review body. That idea from the Secretary of State disappeared into a large black hole. Some months later, in the middle of April 1991—I think it was 18 April—the Secretary of State came to the House and said that he had abandoned that idea, which he had recommended to the House only five months before, and proposed a pay review body for school teachers. There was considerable debate about that in Committee and in the Chamber. We made it clear at the time that we had no objection to pay review bodies per se. How could we, when we had happily endorsed the doctors and dentists and top salaries pay review bodies?

Mr. Fatchett: And nurses.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend—to whom I am ever grateful—says, "And nurses." He might also have reminded me of the armed forces—I know that that was on the tip of my hon. Friend's tongue. We had also suggested that there should be a pay review body for ambulance personnel, which the current Secretary of State for Education and Science—then Secretary of State for Health—had resisted.

The argument about a school teachers pay review body was then about the extent of potential control that the Treasury was seeking to exercise over the school teachers pay and conditions review body. Section 1 of the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Act 1991 provides for the Treasury to impose conditions not imposed on any other pay review body and allows for the establishment of the pay review body without discussion with, let alone the consent of, employers or formal consultation with associations representing staff. Neither of those considerations apply in respect of our proposition.

The Association of University Teachers and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals both agree that there should be a review body. Obviously, that is a sensible way of proceeding. I think that the suggestion has the support of all Opposition Members and all Opposition parties, and of at least 56 Government Members. I hope that, in the light of that overwhelming support, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary will say that the Government accept the Opposition's proposal and are happy to endorse it.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howarth): Pay levels and conditions for lecturers in higher education institutions are currently matters for negotiation between employers and staff, and it is quite proper that they should be so. It would greatly detract from the autonomy of those institutions were that responsibility to be handed over to an independent body.

The Labour party professes to be jealous and zealous on behalf of academic freedom. I do not accept that it can be consistent for the Labour party to claim to be the upholder of the right of higher education institutions to be autonomous managers of their own affairs while at the same time arguing in favour of responsibility for something so central to the management of those great institutions as pay determination to be taken to a central agency. Higher education institutions need to be able to manage their own affairs and arrange matters in the light of their particular needs and circumstances.

Mr. Straw: I am grateful to the Minister for taking an intervention so early in his speech.

The Minister has every reason to know that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals is, to a degree, jealous about issues of academic freedom, as is the Association of University Teachers. However, both organisations, particularly the CVCP, have called for a pay review body for academic staff. They do not believe that there is any remote threat to academic freedom posed by that.

Mr. Howarth: In holding these two attitudes, those two organisations seem to be guilty of inconsistency. It would be presumptuous of me to speculate what is going on in the minds of their members—minds of great distinction. It appears that the importance of institutional independence recedes a little into the background of the consciousness of some vice-chancellors when they contemplate the device of a pay review body, which they suppose might be the means to secure more money from the tax payer to pay their staff. I understand the temptation they feel, but I think that there are inconsistencies in their position.

The Government have set up pay review bodies for a comparatively small number of professions in the public sector because of their specific role in particular services. Many professions within the public sector do not have pay review bodies. There is no such body for the vast majority of civil servants or local government employees. Central Government and local government employees embrace among their numbers a range of professions including administrators, lawyers, architects, engineers and surveyors, to name but a few. They do not have pay review bodies.

The analogy with schoolteachers put forward by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is not at all persuasive. Over the years, there have always been quite different arrangements for schoolteachers and university dons for settling pay. There are important differences between the employers. Local government employs the teachers, but is not involved in the employment of university academics. A locally managed or grant-maintained school is a different sort of employing body from a university.

Universities are large, diverse institutions with important managerial responsibilities for large budgets and various sources of income. There would seem to be no sense in managerial terms in imposing externally determined rigidities on their biggest single cost—salaries.

I emphasise that not having a review body is in no sense a slur on a particular group. The Government value immensely the efforts of staff in higher education institutions to sustain high-quality teaching and research, and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their institutions. We applaud the way in which they do so.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: My hon. Friend referred to the diverse funding of universities. Is he aware that, during the past five years, the university of Lancaster has increased its outside funding from £2 million to £8 million because of the excellence of its work? It has been rewarded in that it has received that 10·9 per cent. increase in research funding. That shows that good universities can do well out of the system.

Mr. Howarth: As so often, my hon. Friend makes a useful point. I endorse her praise of Lancaster university and of the way in which it has diversified its sources of funding. About 40 per cent. of the income of higher education institutions now derives from sources other than the taxpayer—a powerful reason why it would be quite wrong of central Government to establish a pay review body to determine pay in institutions that depend to only a limited extent on the resources provided by the taxpayer.

The Labour party appears to have taken up a rather curious variety of positions in review bodies.

Mr. Straw: No, just one.

8 pm

Mr. Howarth: Let me remind the hon. Gentleman of the range of the Labour party's inconsistencies. During the passage of the School Teachers Pay and Conditions (No. 2) Bill, the Labour party demonstrated its opposition to the School Teachers Pay Review Body which we proposed and have created. Now that that body has been set up, the Labour party seems to think that it is rather a good idea that the arrangement which it criticised for school teachers should be extended to university lecturers. It is puzzling that the Labour party should be quite so confused once again. I suspect that the hon. Members for Blackburn and for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) instruct their research assistants to ring round the trade unions to discover what they want. They exhibit an opportunistic set of inconsistent policies.

For instance, Labour tabled a new clause requiring the Further Education Funding Council to ensure that, in each FE institution in receipt of a grant from the council, appropriate machinery is established for the determination of staff pay. So Labour is against a review body for school-teachers and in favour of one for academics—and it wants a funding council to be responsible for pay and conditions in the furthur education sector. So the Labour party advanced three different solutions to try to appeal politically to three different groups. That is irrational and nonsensical.

Mr. Straw: I do not think it wise of the Under-Secretary to pursue the charge of inconsistency. He is a member of the ministerial team that has told us how wonderful pay review bodies are for teachers, yet despite the support of 56 of his hon. Friends for a pay review body for university teachers, he comes up with extraordinary excuses—I suspect that they were written for him by the Treasury—to explain why the idea should be resisted.

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Gentleman has not followed my earlier arguments. Judgments on whether particular groups of public sector employees or of those paid exclusively from the public purse should have their pay settled by a pay review body are made case by case in the light of prevailing circumstances.

I illustrate the Labour party's woolly thinking in this area by noting that during the recent Committee stage of this Bill the hon. Members for Oxford, East and for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) proposed a new clause that would have required my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to take such steps as may be necessary to ensure proper collective bargaining machinery in the further and higher education sectors. My right hon. and learned Friend would also have been required to ensure that new corporations established national negotiating machinery to determine salaries, wages, terms and conditions. So one day Labour Members want collective bargaining and national negotiating machinery; the next, they do a U-turn and want a review body. The Labour party does not know what it wants.

Government policy on lecturers' pay is that it should be sufficient to recruit, retain and motivate staff of the required quality. There is no evidence of general recruitment and retention difficulties. If problems occur in specific teaching disciplines, they can be targeted through the flexibility in the pay structure that we have been encouraging year by year.

[Mr. Howarth]

As is well known, we are prepared to examine other proposals that are put to us by the CVCP or by the unions, but we have a disposition to look favourably on a rather more decentralised system, consistent with our encouragement of differentiation between the higher education institutions—each charting its own academic mission, which in turn should relate sensibly to the plurality of the sources of its funding.

University lecturers' pay has increased by more than 14 per cent. in real terms since 1979. Last year's settlement was good for academics. They received 5 per cent. from 1 April, a further 1·4 per cent. from 1 September and an additional 1 per cent. from 1 January 1992, to be used at local management discretion. This must be seen in the context of inflation at just over 4 per cent.

I am glad that our academics have received a real-terms increase in pay this year. We owe them much for all that they achieve, but it would not be sensible to establish a pay review body for them, and I ask the House to reject the new clause.

Mr. Carr: I note the Minister's comments about the inconsistency of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. Perhaps one of the reasons why it supports a pay review body so strongly is that it does not want to become embroiled in the annual round of shilly-shallying that may result from having to determine a string of local pay agreements. That support is shared by the Association of University Teachers and other organisations.

The Liberal Democrats have been consistent. We favour a pay review body. We supported the introduction of one for the schoolteachers; we would like one in further education and another to fix the salaries of academics in universities and polytechnics.

A pay review body would be independent and fair. Among the groups whose pay is determined by this method are the so-called top people, the doctors and dentists, the armed services and now schoolteachers. There appears to be wide support for determining public sector pay for key groups by that method.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman has heard the Minister clearly say that 40 per cent. of universities' funding does not come from the state. The other three bodies that he has mentioned are entirely state funded—a wholly different kettle of fish.

Mr. Carr: I do not necessarily agree. There may be different sources of funding, but the people undertaking the work in the universities are employed by the universities. It makes sense to determine the pay of university teachers, especially those involved in research, in this way. They will have to compete against teachers and universities in other parts of the country. I do not accept that merely because some funding comes from elsewhere the pay cannot be determined by that method.

The Minister himself said that the universities, not contributors of their funds, will determine pay——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The point is that the lively universities such as mine attract more funds and will be in a better position to pay their staff well. I see no earthly reason why universities such as Lancaster should have to subsidise other universities that do not get their act together. We attract research, we attract overseas students, and we do exceptionally well. We are going up the ladder; I do not see why we should be dragged down by other universities.

Mr. Carr: I entirely agree that Lancaster university is going up the ladder. I pay tribute to it, as I represent a Lancashire constituency myself. Nevertheless, the pay of university teachers will be determined not by those contributing their funds but, under the Minister's system, by the universities. Through the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, universities have strongly supported the concept of a pay review body.

In 1987, the Government recognised that the present system was not as effective as it should be. However, they have not presented any proposals to improve it. The Minister spoke about the salaries of university teachers. The present salary at the top of the lecturers' scale has 91 per cent. of the purchasing power that it had in 1971. Since 1979, university salaries, measured against the non-manual average earnings index, have fallen by 25 per cent. In 1979, a grade 7 civil servant earned the same salary as a non-clinical lecturer. Now, that same civil servant earns £4,000 a year more.

Those three factors show the need to look again at the pay of university academics, and it should be looked at by means of a system that is increasingly recognised as being independent and fair—a pay review body. In Committee, and in today's debate, the Minister advanced arguments against such a body. I urge him to listen to the non-political voices of people in higher education who are calling for such a system.

Mr. Straw: At least 56 Conservative Members have signed an early-day motion that unequivocally calls for a pay review body for university teachers. However, only four or five of those hon. Members are present in the Chamber.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: There are only three Members on the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Lady is twittering, as she sometimes does, from a sedentary position. The Opposition are not divided on the matter. We all support the setting up of a pay review body, and my hon. Friends are happy to leave matters to those of us on the Front Bench. There is a raging argument among Conservatives, because 56 Conservative Members have broken ranks and refused to accept the arguments advanced by the Under-Secretary of State. They have added their names to a proposition that clearly calls for a pay review body.

An examination of the names of those 56 Members shows—surprise, surprise—that a whole string of them represent towns and cities with universities. I hope that I can remember the constituencies. The list contains the names of Conservative Members from Bristol. It contains the name of the hon. Member for Chorley (Mr. Dover) who no doubt has academic staff from the university of Lancaster and from the universities in Manchester and Liverpool in his constituency. The list contains the names of hon. Members from Leeds and West Yorkshire, and includes the name of the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) who has in his constituency many university staff from the universities of Bradford and Leeds. The list has a surprising connection with Conservative marginals which could be affected by the student vote. *[Interruption.]* We shall have to send *Hansard* round.

I am sure that many of those Conservative Members who have signed the early-day motion feel threatened by the election and fear a loss of support from among academic staff. They will have told their local papers how they are standing up for university academic staff. They have said that they will take no nonsense from Ministers, but will fight hard for a pay review body. It does not take much to sign one's name on early-day motions. Hon. Members often sign them without realising what they are signing.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Absolutely.

Mr. Bowis *rose*——

8.15 pm

Mr. Straw: Whatever else I might say about the hon. Lady, I would never accuse her of that.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Straw: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) and then I shall give way to the hon. Lady, who always knows what she supports and above all what she is against. It is one thing to sign an early-day motion and another to speak or vote in support of it.

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Gentleman will not find my name on that early-day motion. He said that it was my motion in Committee which led to the setting up of the review body for teachers. There is a difference between institutions to which money other than taxpayers' money is committed and those which are funded by the taxpayer. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will deal with that. He also said that he had shadow Treasury approval for his commitments. I have a reasonably open mind on the subject and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will tell us how much the review body and the research that will be needed to back it will cost. I think he also spoke about a commitment to bring polytechnic pay into line with university pay when they become part of the same sector. What will be the cost of that?

Mr. Straw: I shall deal with those questions and then give way to the hon. Member for Lancaster. I would not dare not to.

The hon. Gentleman is right to say that his proposition partly provoked the Government into reconsidering the Bill about teachers' pay and conditions. To explain away the Government's inconsistency on pay review bodies, the Under-Secretary of State said that their setting up had to be judged case by case in the light of circumstances. I think that those were his exact words. In one sense, that statement is entirely fair and may explain the position of the Government and the Opposition. We do not say that there should be review bodies for every area of public sector employment: nobody proposes that.

The hon. Member for Battersea asked whether there could be review bodies for institutions which did not derive a significant proportion of their income from public funds. An increasing proportion of a university's income now comes from non public sector sources, and most of that income is used for research. It is not used for routine academic teaching, and certainly not for the teaching of undergraduates. We are considering the core teaching and publicly funded research activities of universities that are overwhelmingly publicly funded. I do not suggest for a moment that the review body should comment on the remuneration that a specific group of researchers should receive for work that they are carrying out on contract for an individual company or, say, a medical charity.

The 40 per cent. figure is slightly deceptive, in terms of the core activities of institutions. Every university contains a core of academic staff whose job is to teach undergraduates and postgraduates who are themselves, in the main, publicly funded. If they are "home" students, their tuition is paid for by public funds, and some of their research will also be financed in that way. I do not think that there is any distinction of principle between university academic staffs and schoolteachers—or, as I said earlier, doctors and dentists.

Some schools now raise some of the costs of teachers' salaries through raffles, appeals and the like: I can prove that by means of letters that I have received. It is at the margin, but it takes place. I do not place the same weight on that point as the Minister appears to do.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: A new point has arisen since I first tried to intervene. The point is not simply that 40 per cent. of funds are provided by bodies other than the Government; staff in universities are much more interchangeable. They may go into industry or the civil service, for instance: they move in and out of the academic world, while schoolteachers tend to stay in the teaching profession.

My original point—which I tried to raise some time ago —was this. Of course it is our duty to consider carefully all representations made by our constituents, but our overwhelming duty is to consider the long-term welfare of the institutions that we represent. It would be all too easy to say to students, "I will vote for you to have much larger grants," but that would mean fewer students, and it would also mean bad luck for those who were already five years down the road. Such a move would be popular, and it might mean a few votes for the hon. Member concerned; but he would not deserve them.

The same applies to the university lecturers' review body. As the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has suggested, it is always easier to sign an early-day motion than to argue the case with, in this instance, a lot of very erudite lecturers, but I believe that this case should and can be argued. I believe that it would be entirely wrong to set up a university pay review body——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Briefly, please.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I will put it briefly. I do not believe in signing early-day motions: I believe in arguing the toss, and getting it right.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Beat that.

Mr. Straw: I cannot. Long service on the Opposition Front Bench has taught me never to try to beat interventions by the hon. Member for Lancaster, but simply to duck.

I do not think that there is more transfer of academic staff in universities than there is in school teaching. A small number of staff move in and out of academic work a good deal, but beneath that is a core that scarcely moves at all. We shall simply have to disagree about whether a pay review body would be appropriate. I do not subscribe to every representation that is made to me, and I hope that

[Mr. Straw]

few other hon. Members do; each of us must weigh up the merits of the case that is advanced, and then make a judgment.

The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) asked what we expected our commitment to a pay review body to cost. First, there is the cost of the additional research that would, I assume, be carried out by the Office of Manpower Economics: I would expect that to be in six figures rather than seven—possibly in five. Such a commitment is marginal, even according to the fantastic imagination of Conservative central office.

Then there is the potential cost of the review body. We have made no commitment in regard to additional resources for university academic staff, simply because of the existence of a pay review body. We are talking about the machinery for settling pay, not about pay levels themselves. I have read out a list of the conditions under which a future Government would consider the recommendations of a pay review body for university teachers, which would be the same as for the review bodies established for doctors, dentists and so forth. According to wording that has applied to successive Governments of different political colours, a Government would be ready to accept the recommendations of a pay review body unless there were "clear and compelling" reasons to the contrary.

Mr. Bowis: What about the polytechnics?

Mr. Straw: I dealt with the polytechnics in my opening remarks. We are still consulting, but, as the polytechnics are to become part of the university sector, I assume that, once the transition had been completed, the same arrangements would apply to them. as to other university staffs.

Mr. Bowis: What about the cost?

Mr. Straw: The same applies to that.

I listened carefully to what the Minister said. His arguments were flimsy in the extreme. The flimsiest was his suggestion that academic freedom would be threatened by the establishment of a pay review body. I fancy that that suggestion will produce guffaws, not to say hysteria, in the offices of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals in Tavistock square. For a Higher Education Minister in the current Administration to pray in aid academic freedom in defence of the line that he is taking is most unusual.

I am glad to see that even the Minister can see the joke. It was a good try on the part of his officials to make bricks without straw, to coin a phrase, but I am not sure that it succeeded. *[Interruption.]* I should not have said that. It was a grave error to make a pun on my own name.

The case for a university pay review body is overwhelming, and it enjoys the support of the 56 Conservative Members who signed that early-day motion. We shall, of course, consult each of the signatories to find out whether he is about to stand on his head and vote the proposal down. The new clause, however, would ensure that university teachers' pay was settled sensibly, without any recourse to industrial action, and I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 200, Noes 265.

Division No. 104] **[8.26 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*

Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Robinson, Geoffrey
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Nicol
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Thomas McAvoy and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir D. *(Calder Vly)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George (*Acton*)
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

Question accordingly negatived.

New clause 7

ADULT EDUCATION FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

'.—(1) A community college may, notwithstanding the provisions of section 6 of this Act, for the provision of specific courses offering further or higher education to adult persons, submit direct to the Funding Council covering the location in which it is located, an application for financial support, to be given on terms laid down by the Funding Council concerned requiring the applicant to apply such funding only for the specified purpose.

(2) Every community college applying under the provisions of subsection (1) above shall keep and maintain separate accounts to receive such Funding Council payments; and the money in such accounts shall be held in trust for expenditure only in accordance with the terms laid down by the Funding Council as a condition of making such funding available.

(3) For the purposes of this Act, the term "community college" shall be taken to mean a school (whether or not owned by a local education authority) which offers to adults courses of further or higher education in addition to its primary function of providing secondary education to children of school age.'.

Brought up, and read the First time.

Sir Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may consider the following amendments: No. 6, in clause 5, page 4, line 26, at end insert

'or

'(c) an existing service which provides a course or courses mentioned in Schedule 2 to this Act and which is the local deliverer of quality provision meeting local needs.'.

No. 14, in clause 6, page 6, line 21, at end insert;

'or

(c) where an external institution has an existing substantial and significant profile of courses falling within Schedule 2 to this Act, its governing body may seek permission from a regional committee to make application directly to a council subject to conditions specified in an order made by the Secretary of State.'.

Sir Robin Maxwell-Hyslop: The purpose of new clause 7 is to enable community colleges, for courses approved by the funding councils, to be funded directly by the funding councils after direct application has been made to them. By establishing that the payments received by community colleges for such courses shall be held in trust for the purpose for which the funding council provides them, that gets round the difficulty about which my hon. Friend the Minister of State wrote to me last November, when he pointed out that community colleges do not have a legal identity. Of course, a trust fund does. This not only provides the legal identity, which was, I think quite authentically, worrying my hon. Friend; it also ensures that the money cannot be siphoned off by a malign LEA for another purpose. That other principal worry of Department of Education and Science Ministers is dealt with in this carefully drafted new clause.

Is it desirable that there should be community colleges? We are not talking about something that does not exist. We are talking about secondary schools—that is their main purpose—which also use their facilities, when they are not using them for providing secondary education for children, for providing a whole range of courses for adults. But, of course, the funding council would not fund the whole range of a community college's adult education courses, only those which met its criteria. There is no question that money provided by central Government would in this way be used for a purpose outside that which central Government intend. That is why I drafted the new clause—I drafted it myself—with very considerable care.

I am aware that there are some community colleges —most notably Richmond—which do not fall within my definition of a community college, because they are not primarily secondary education colleges who provide adult education as an extra. What I am saying is that the community college structure within the pattern of our education makes the best possible use of the resources, not just the resources of buildings, but of the equipment, of the facilities and of the staff. Very often—although not universally—they are in rural areas: not universally.

Plymouth certainly is not a rural area, yet it has a thriving community college. Indeed, its principal was one of the five whom I took to see, together with my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller), the Secretary of State very early in September to persuade him to write into his Bill, while he still had time to do so, the provisions which I am now bringing forth. He could, in fact, had he wished to, have thought up means of getting round his own objections. However, as that is, we have to assume, beyond the skill of the parliamentary draftsmen, well, I have done it for them.

It is a particular pleasure to see that it has attracted support from both main parties and others as well. It is in no sense a doctrinare new clause, unless one calls it doctrinaire to try and get the fullest possible use out of educational facilities rather than leaving them to stand idle when they need not do so in evenings. It also gets round in rural areas the undeniable problems of the changing— rapidly changing—pattern of public transportation.

The task, without this new clause, placed by my hon. Friend and by my right hon. and learned Friend, who is not gracing us with his presence tonight, on FE colleges is a very formidable one indeed because the FE college to whom community colleges will otherwise have to make their applications has to know about their accessibility and the accessibility of the community colleges by public transport. Because public transport can alter its pattern or, indeed, disappear after a week, the gift of prophecy is required, not just hard work to acquire knowledge.

8.45 pm

It is also, as I pointed out on Second Reading, necessary for the FE college not just to know what it is intending to put on itself, but to know what other FE colleges are putting on. That is quite a task, because the other FE colleges will not know what they are putting on until the course has been advertised and they know whether they have got a high enough response to decide to put it on rather than not to put it on. This is the reality.

Yet before that is known, the FE college which has to handle the community college's applications has to exercise this quite astonishing degree of prophetic power, so that it can either forward it, saying in good faith to the funding council that it does not think—it cannot know —that there is adequate provision for the course concerned without the community college putting it on; or that there is not adequate public transport to get potential students from the area where the community college is to the location where the FE college concerned is—or, hypothetically, another FE college. This is the problem it is going to be faced with.

I do not need to speak at any further length, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I really deployed the case for this on Second Reading. That case is unchanged. What I have had since then is a large number of letters from community colleges outside Devon—of course, I have been dealing with community colleges inside Devon before, but I have now had letters from community colleges all over the place where, frankly, I did not know that they existed, and very helpful some of those letters have been too.

I will end again by saying that I have been at great pains to meet the specific objections which the Minister of State wrote in his letter as recently as last November to me. Those objections cannot apply to new clause 7. I therefore hope that my hon. Friend's response will be one of gratitude and acceptance. He will know that, if this is accepted and added to the Bill tonight, it does not reopen the whole Bill in another place. It only opens this particular new clause to acceptance, rejection or amendment. Since I do not doubt that there is a majority for it as it is in the other place, there will be every incentive for them to hasten it back here rather than to hold it up so that they lose what they have given plenty of evidence of what, in fact, they want—namely, a provision of this kind in the Bill.

Mr. Carr: I do not intend to speak for long——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman looks lonely.

Mr. Carr: I am deeply grateful to the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) for being concerned about my apparent loneliness; I am greatly touched.

I do not propose to make a lengthy speech because the hon. Member for Tiverton (Sir R. Maxwell-Hyslop) argued his case admirably. Ever since I was a practising teacher—long before I came to this place—I have been surprised that the model offered by community schools and colleges has not been followed elsewhere. Many authorities and areas—particularly rural areas—would benefit from having community colleges.

The community colleges offer a range of opportunities for adults to return to and continue with their education. They also provide a focal point for many other community activities. Although we are not here to discuss those activities now, it is worth mentioning that the community schools and colleges contribute more to the communities in which they are located than merely the provision of educational opportunities.

Let us consider the schedule 2 provision that community colleges seek to make. New clause 7 certainly sets the matter out simply. There will be no problem about maintaining separate accounts. We heard from Ministers earlier about the receipt of funding for higher education institutions from a number of different sources. The arrangements do not appear to present a problem in respect of higher education institutions and there is no reason why they should present a problem here. The new clause will give community colleges the right to apply direct to the funding councils in respect of schedule 2 courses.

Many adults progress from community colleges to follow award-bearing vocational courses and, in rural areas, the Bill as drafted sheds some doubt over those arrangements. I am not from Devon and I am not familiar with Devon's pattern of provision, but I am assured, in letters that I have received from Devon, that the community colleges there are widely supported and highly regarded by those whom they serve. Right across the community, and irrespective of political or other affiliation, there is a desire to ensure that the colleges continue to provide the excellent education facilities that they offer at present.

The Government have rightly given flexibility to schools through the local management arrangements. Despite Ministers' rhetoric about decentralisation and the devolved administration of educational establishments, the Bill is a centralising measure, in the sense that it gives powers to funding councils that are answerable to Ministers. The new clause recognises the role that the community colleges have played and the fact that they need to be separately funded from further education colleges.

Sir John Farr: I support the new clause so ably advocated by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Sir R. Maxwell-Hyslop). Fortunately, my amendment No. 6 has been grouped with it. That gives me an opportunity not only to explain my support for my hon. Friend's proposal but to touch upon the real concerns that we still have in Leicestershire.

I say "still" because my hon. Friend the Minister of State was kind enough to see me on two occasions with two delegations of Leicestershire Members. On the first occasion, we said, in a nutshell, that we wanted amendment No. 6—or, rather, an amendment identical to that amendment. He said, "Come back with your experts and convince us." A week later, my hon. Friend was kind enough to see several of my hon. Friends representing Leicestershire constituencies, together with our chairmen of governors and our community college and adult basic education principals.

I think that we won the argument, and at the time I was confident. I was utterly shocked to learn a couple of weeks after our last meeting with my hon. Friend that the Bill was to proceed in its present form. In view of the fears that are felt in Leicestershire and elsewhere in the country—colleagues from East Anglia and Essex are also a little concerned about the consequences of the Bill as drafted—the least we expected was that my hon. Friend would proceed with the higher education part of the Bill and leave the further education part for further reflection and consideration. He did not take that course, and I therefore have no option but to support the new clause.

As I explained, amendment No. 6 is a chrysalised version of the original amendment which I submitted to my hon. Friend the Minister of State before Christmas. It is the amendment we wanted and the one we talked about when we were lucky enough to see my hon. Friend in January and February.

Let me explain why we wanted the amendment. In Leicestershire we have a highly advanced system of adult basic education as of right. We are proud of our system of one-to-one education in the home and feel that it is something on which we should build. Her Majesty's inspectors have recently examined our adult basic

[Sir John Farr]

education system in the county and say in their report—of which I have a copy—that it is the sort of system that should be built upon.

I come now to further education, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton spoke so ably. In Market Harborough, we have a community education centre called Welland Park community college. The buildings are in full-time educational use. As soon as the kids from the local secondary school go home at tea time, the FE college takes over. Full use is made of those fine buildings, for the benefit of the community.

After I went to see my hon. Friend the Minister with my experts from the county, I had a meeting with them and they told me that they felt that they would lose unless changes were made in the Bill. They listened carefully to what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said on Second Reading. In relation to provisions in clause 5 which I have mentioned, he referred to parts of clause 6. We had a further meeting in Leicestershire and the education experts considered what was said. They felt that, unless specific mention was made somewhere in the Bill and colleges of further education had direct access to the Further Education Funding Council, we would lose out.

Mr. Fatchett: I endorse everything that the hon. Gentleman has said. I know the Leicestershire system very well, as I was the parliamentary candidate for Bosworth in the 1979 general election and I got to know Leicestershire very well. I lost on that occasion and I am not sure what that says about the people of Leicestershire. However, the adult education service and the community colleges in Leicestershire were supported by all the electorate and all political parties. It is interesting to note in Leicestershire the extent to which the development of the community colleges has occurred not on a partisan basis but across all three political parties, largely because of the nature of the local authority.

Sir John Farr: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that helpful intervention. Leicestershire has a hung or balanced local authority. For many years, no one party has had overall control. The adult basic education structure and further education structure in the county has blossomed so much because the three parties have got together around the committee table and done what is best for the people who created that balanced authority.

9 pm

The purpose of amendment No. 6 is to encourage funding councils to recognise and retain existing high-quality provision such as free-standing adult basic education and English as a second language schemes in Leicestershire which have a structure that meets the needs of local users.

My hon. Friends the Members for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) and for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) came with me to meet my hon. Friend the Minister. However, there are still real fears that, as a result of the Bill, the county will lose out in respect of its present highly regarded situation.

There has been much comment about the damage that may be caused to the county. As my hon. Friend the member for Tiverton said, we do not have a system in Leicestershire that is based specifically on FE. Some of the education takes place in community colleges and some in students' homes, in village halls, in very small groups or, quite frequently, on a one-to-one basis in the home. The purpose of our FE structure is to build up the confidence of people who found school difficult and to whom a classroom atmosphere has always been alien. That is why I will vote in favour of new clause 7.

I want to finish by leaving with the House a message contained in a letter that I have just received from Mr. Lee, the head of community education at Welland Park community college, after he and I had the benefit to meet my hon. Friend the Minister of State. He wrote:

> "The Government would create a lot of goodwill if they allowed selective other institutions—ie Welland Park college —to have direct access to the funding councils."

I endorse that request and nothing that my hon. Friend the Minister said has led me to change my view that we, in Leicestershire, have something that is too precious to lose. I will vote for the new clause.

Mr. Morley: I welcome amendment No. 14 and give it my full support. I cannot understand why the Minister of State continues to say that there is no problem in community colleges, adult education colleges or adult education consortia which can go to various further education colleges and make applications. If they could go through that system, it would surely make a lot more sense to accept the amendment.

It worries me that the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and his hon. Friends have gone along to the Minister of State with local experts, local people and principals of adult education colleges and community colleges to put that point. I am sure that they put their point fairly and professionally in a non-partisan manner, but they have been completely ignored. That is what worries me about the thrust of the Bill. If there are issues in it that the Government consider worthy, why do they not listen to the reasonable arguments about securing important parts of the adult education service, whether it be the community college side or the adult education service?

I fail to understand why the Government cannot allow those organisations to make their own bids in the same way as a sixth form college or a further education college would. Why should they be treated in that way? I do not accept the Minister of State's assurances. We have already seen the Secretary of State floundering when answering a question by the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) about capital allocation and how it will work.

I now refer to the adult education service on a countywide basis. Some very important difficulties have not yet been cleared up, or I certainly have not heard the answers. I appreciate that the Secretary of State tried to be helpful in dealing with some of the points that I raised with him, but he did not satisfactorily answer my question. For example, if there is a countywide service and more than one community college, if they have to make a bid to the existing FE college, which FE college will it be? In the case of community colleges, does it have to be the nearest FE college? The right hon. and learned Gentleman did not say that they could channel a bid through one college. I take that as a helpful clarification of what can be done.

The Humberside adult education service is bigger than most of the FE colleges in the county. It is a matter of how the bid is channelled through the colleges. In my constituency, the adult education service has several adult education centres. One of those centres is in a building known as Ancholme house. The building is owned by the FE college, but the adult education service operates within that building and provides a range of services, including basic education, which is actually being taken away from it by the Bill. There is a further complication. To get the service back, it would have to bid possibly through the very college which has the service within its own buildings. One can see the potential for complications and difficulties in such a situation.

There is no doubt about the value of adult education in community colleges or consortia. That point has been made time and again. It is not good enough for the Government to say that there will be no changes and that every level of service will be guaranteed. At present, they are not in a position to say that because of the way those colleges will have to bid. The amendment would safeguard community colleges at least and make the position much clearer and more coherent in respect of obtaining funding. For adult education consortia, there is still a worry about bidding and how they will obtain money.

The Minister of State fails to understand that, with a countywide service, a consortium and some community colleges which will be part of such a consortium, the service is provided on the basis of the total number of courses. The service is staffed to meet those courses and it is resourced to meet those courses. Under the proposals, in my county of Humberside 50 per cent. of those courses would be lost and would go technically under the control of the colleges of further education. They may or may not be given back to the adult education service as part of its bid. We do not know: no one knows. The Minister does not know, and I certainly do not know. The service does not know.

The adult education service has an infrastructure of adult education centres. I went round the one in Priory road in my constituency recently and I have visited the one in Ancholme house. I saw the nature and range of the work that the adult education service does. If the service loses half its staffing and half its funding, the county council LEA will not be able to maintain all those centres, whether in villages, towns or cities. The level of provision and potential level of service of the whole consortium will be undermined. That issue has not yet been dealt with satisfactorily by the Government.

The principle behind the new clause is perfectly sound and rational. If the Government believe that there will not be a problem, why do they not accept the new clause? All of us in the Chamber believe that the new clause is a much more rational approach to funding adult education than the bits and pieces approach under which no one is clear what will happen. I hope that the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) can persuade as many of his hon. Friends as possible to vote for the new clause and send it back to another place, where it can be given sympathetic consideration to speed this part of the Bill through.

Earlier we heard a diatribe from the Secretary of State against local authorities, and Labour authorities in particular, but he grudgingly conceded that adult education under LEA control has prospered and done well, despite all the obstacles that the Government have put in its way. Standard spending assessment calculations, which are bizarre, and the threat of poll tax capping have had an impact which has been felt by adult education services.

In my county, despite all the problems that Humberside LEA has, I am pleased to say that the LEA spends its full SSA allocation on adult education and provides one of the highest levels of service in Britain. It is one of the largest providers of adult education. It has every right to bid as a service direct to the funding council to ensure independence, continuity and the same high standard to which the service has been delivered by Humberside county council. The principle behind the new clause is sound and I hope that the House will support it.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Unless I have misunderstood the Bill, there is no great merit in the new clause. As I understand the Bill, the further education colleges, and perhaps sixth-form colleges, will have to bid to the regional further education funding council for their funds. Some vocational and academic courses are run in community centres or community schools. If those courses lead to a certified national award, I am sure that the FEFC will be willing to fund them.

The Bill is about the pursuit of excellence. We want to compete with the rest of the world and develop our brain power. The only way to do that is to ensure that our higher and further education is second to none.

Community education, on the other hand, is basically leisure and recreational, although much of it may lead towards a more vocational course. It is terribly important in terms of building people's self-esteem and giving them a social life outside their home. As I understand it, it is to be funded by the LEA.

Both in writing and verbally, we have all heard from the Secretary of State that the LEAs will not be underfunded, and that community leisure and recreational courses will continue as normal.

I represent two boroughs, Rochdale and Oldham. About 20,000 people enjoy community education in both boroughs. If some of those community centres or schools run vocational or academic courses, the proper place to get funding for the continuation of the courses is through the FE college, via the regional FE funding council.

I do not think that the people of Littleborough, Saddleworth or the village of Shore would wish to be dragged into the centre of Oldham or Rochdale to the FE college, as it would mean long journeys late at night. People, and especially the elderly, do not like travelling late at night because of transport costs, difficulties with transport and fear of travelling at night, which is a real fear and one that must not be set aside.

As I understand it, the Bill does not try to make difficulties for education but tries to improve it. I cannot believe that, if a well-supported course—which leads to, or is part of, a vocational or academic qualification—is run in a village a long way from anywhere, the bid by the FE college locally, through the FE funding council, will not be successful and allow the course to continue.

If I have understood the Bill correctly—I think I have—there will be no need for my hon. Friend's new clause or for the fears expressed by some of my hon. Friends and by the Opposition. I shall wait until I have heard what the Minister has to say, and I shall reserve my judgment.

I honestly believe that I have understood the Bill correctly and that we are talking about the pursuit of excellence—ensuring that the United Kingdom develops people to their full potential so that we can compete with the rest of the world in terms of brain power, which will

[Mr. Geoffrey Dickens]

make us successful. If we do not do that, we might as well stay at home, because we will not be competitive or win orders throughout the world. We must not forget that this nation produced the jet engine, which made the world smaller, and television, which came from radar, We have always had brain power. We had it long before we found mineral wealth.

I am sure that the Bill is designed to encourage the development of our brain power and to prevent a brain drain abroad, so that we can develop our nation and go forward in the pursuit of excellence.

9.15 pm

Mr. Haynes: I am not surprised at that contribution from the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens). I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Tavistock. Is it Tavistock? [HON. MEMBERS: "Tiverton."] I am sorry. I visited that beautiful town during the summer recess last year.

Mr. Burns: Which one?

Mr. Haynes: Tiverton. The hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) was a little cheeky upstairs. Now he is being cheeky down here.

Mr. Fatchett: He will not be here after the election.

Mr. Haynes: No, he will not.

I support the new clause. We shall be looking to see whether the Government take it on board, and I want to tell hon. Members why. Honestly, we never won a thing in Committee. The Minister rejected every amendment out of hand. That is what will happen tonight, unless the Minister tells us at the Dispatch Box that we have won and that he accepts the new clause.

The important thing is that I am back on the subject of Fred Riddell, who—for your information, Mr. Deputy Speaker—is the chairman of Nottinghamshire local education authority. If we are not careful, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) said, we will lose a fair amount of what we already have, and the situation will get worse.

Make no mistake about it: the Bill is full of obstacles, and that is why the hon. Member for Tiverton (Sir R. Maxwell-Hyslop) and his hon. Friends have tabled the new clause, especially in the interests of adult education.

It is all right the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth talking about facilities for leisure in the community. That is an important thing to our constituents.

Mr. Dickens: That is what I said.

Mr. Haynes: The hon. Gentleman flippantly went across it, and he blew it out of the water.

We want to be able to provide the proper facilities for adult, further and higher education. However, when the community colleges make an application to the funding councils, we must remember that the Minister and his cronies will have loaded the councils with their own kind. Nine times out of 10, the councils will say, "Get lost. You can't have anything." That is what is wrong with the system and that is what we are afraid of.

The Labour party will change all that after 9 April. My hon. Friends will be sitting on the Government Benches and some of the Conservative Members will be sitting on this side. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be in the Chair listening to a Labour Government. The Labour Government will make all the changes that are necessary to further, adult and higher education. There is no doubt about that. People outside the Chamber, who are clamouring for change, will get the satisfaction that they do not get under this lot. The Government are destroying further education.

I never forget Fred Riddell telling me what happened in Nottinghamshire as a result of the Government's provision of resources. We know that the Government want to put money into the pockets of the rich at the expense of the poor. Those people who have been put out of work and cannot get jobs want to better themselves in adult and further education and, if they can, in higher education. This lot and the Bill have put a block on that.

I will be in the Lobby to support those Conservative hon. Members who tabled the new clause, because it is a good one.

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) misrepresented my speech. I said that community education built self-esteem.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Speller: I have enjoyed not just the debate, but the work which led up to it. It has been one of those occasions when one is rightly obliged to consult principals of community colleges and those in further education colleges and to listen to what is said.

Three points have come over most strongly to me. The first is that many non-vocational courses that are taken almost for pleasure may lead to a vocational course. It would be criminal to make cuts and force a student to go to authority A for one course and authority B for another.

The excellent community colleges in Devon have been referred to at some length. The principals have community tutors and teachers who make full use of the premises for youngsters by day and for older students in the evening. They are fully aware of what the local community requires. With the best will in the world, the worst thing one can do is to seek to impose national uniformity across a country where, over recent years, we have sought to allow local folk to take control of local matters in the educational sector. It would be a retrograde step, when we have attempted to improve local choice and responsibility and appointed local governors, to seek to apply the whitewash of uniformity.

I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State that money has been well provided. I do not suggest that both sides of the House do not want the same thing, which is better education for both youngsters and older people. I have been interested in the arguments of hon. Members in all parts of the House, who all want the best. Some are schoolteachers and, years ago, I was a chairman of a local education authority at a time when our schools were turning comprehensive even though that was against my political wishes. We can be successful in education only by working together, with all-party co-operation. We must not mess about with education.

If education needs anything today, it is a period of peace. I fully understand the need for change where change is necessary, but we must now allow the education authorities to settle down. I plead with the Minister to remember that dual decision and dual funding are the classical bases for dispute. That is bound to happen, be it in the health service or in the social services. Where there is national and local funding, the question who is to lead and who is to pay the greater proportion is bound to arise. Where one authority is producing the cash and making the decisions that makes sense.

I agree almost entirely with the principles behind the Bill and should hate to have to vote against it in toto because i disagree with it in part. I urge the Minister to be cautious. I have spoken in North Devon to my intelligent and principled principals, their associates and local governors, all of whom have told me, "Our present sustem is good." I have been worried by the ministerial argument today which says, "Because it is only working all right, we must somehow improve it." I am happy with it as it stands, so I support my hon Friend the Member for Tiverton (Sir R. Maxwell-Hyslop).

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) said more than once, "If I understand the Bill correctly." He does not understand it. He does not understand the process of adult education correctly. He is equally lost in understanding the new clause.

Adult education is not, as the hon. Gentleman seemed to suggest at one stage, a substitute for a course of psychiatric treatment, although I do not deny that he might have regarded it as such at one time. Nor is adult education about providing certificates in every subject. It is about people wanting to participate in the education process without necessarily obtaining a qualification.

The hon. Member for Tiverton (Sir R. Maxwell-Hyslop) talks about community colleges providing liberal, non-vocational, adult education. In that sense, it will not at the end of the day have to deliver a certificate as a result of a course having been taken. That is not to say that the content of the course might not be far higher than many purely academic courses leading to a qualification. Had the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth attended extra-mural or local authority courses in the areas of which we are speaking, he would be aware of the wonderful provision that we make in Britain.

Adult education is in many respects non-political. My experience of it in Wales is that it did not matter what was the politics of the local authority. It was purely and simply a matter of whether people were committed to education. Whatever their political complexion, if they had a commitment to adult education, the facilities were provided, but if that commitment was missing, the resources were not made available.

The hon. Member for Tiverton is trying to ensure that the money and resources not for further or higher but for adult education in free-standing community and adult colleges are available. We may have funding councils and give money to local authorities, further education colleges, and so on, but experience shows that when demands are made on the purses of those bodies, adult education is shuffled off and is the last item for which provision is made. The reason for that is sound in some ways. Because no certificate is awarded at the end of a course, local authorities understandably feel that they must fund certain courses because people depend on them for a living, so there is an imperative on those who dispense the money. If we are to have a properly funded adult education service, which this country has never had, the Minister should take the new clause on board.

9.30 pm

Although I shall support the new clause, it could have been changed to take account of free-standing adult education colleges which operate like community colleges but entirely in their own premises. In answer to a letter, the Minister told me that those colleges would be properly funded, and there have been examples of that. Ministers keep giving that reassurance, which is fine, but how do we resolve the problem in Gwent, where a community college is attached to a school? It uses all the school's facilities but is separate from the school. How will such a college be funded?

Mr. Dickens: By apportionment.

Mr. Rogers: That may be so, but who decides? Ultimately, adult education is shuffled off the end.

People go into adult education for different reasons. While some take psychiatric courses or courses to repair certain objects, others undertake courses as a development programme, to attain a certificate or even as access to further education. We need adult education and I plead with the Minister to look carefully at the new clause and accept it as it stands, perhaps amending it in the future if he wishes to do so.

I understand why the Minister is against the suggestion that local authorities should run adult education. It is simply because the Government distrust all local government whether Tory or Labour. For some peculiar reason, the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), did not like local government and it has been bashed for the past 10 years. It is about time the Government stopped bashing local government and Ministers were mature enough to get rid of their hang-up about local government.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I am grateful, as we should always be, to the hon. Member for Tiverton (Sir R. Maxwell-Hyslop) because he often tables amendments that enable us to express long-standing questions and grievances about the Bill that have not otherwise been identified. His ability to identify those issues is an example to us all.

I hope that something good will come out of the Bill. The Minister must be well aware that in many community colleges throughout the country people are concerned, alarmed and distressed about what they think is happening. Although I have sent him only a few examples, he will also be well aware that many people who attend community colleges where leisure, recreational and education classes are provided together have been given to understand that, once the Bill becomes law, leisure and recreational classes will be closed down and fees for all classes will increase.

I received four letters this morning from people who attend the dressmaking class at Ambleside Drive college asking me to get an assurance from the Minister that those classes will not close down because of his horrible Bill. Those complaints are not from people who go around with sledgehammers and throw bottles and bombs; they are from those who are among the huge number of people who very much enjoy the activities that community colleges

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

offer. I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity provided by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton to get across some facts clearly.

I have sent all my constituents a splendid letter, as the Minister says, saying that no money will be cut, no class will be required to close and no fees will need to go up. Although I am constantly sending such letters, people unfortunately have the impression that that what I have just said is not the case. The college staff are acutely worried about what is happening, with the result that posters are being put on the walls urging people to stop the Tory plot to close down the dressmaking classes at Ampleside Drive college.

We know that the colleges are terribly popular. The attendance rate at Ampleside Drive college shows that it is undoubtedly a big success. We must try to find out what the Bill provides for and what the amendment provides for. I hope that the Minister will explain what good comes from the Bill.

Does the Minister accept that there are some dangers posed to community colleges? We all know that, although county councils are wonderful organisations, when there is a change of Government policy, those councils—whether Conservative, Labour or Liberal Democrat—sometimes do nasty things and blame them on the Government. That could happen in this instance. Some county councils might decide to close down classes such as the dressmaking class at Ampleside Drive college and let the Government carry the blame.

Some colleges provide education, recreational and leisure classes, with the entire college working extremely well and efficiently. If one section of the college is taken out—for example, the education part—and shoved somewhere else, there is a danger that the college will not be so economically sound. As a consequence, instead of three colleges in one town, there may be only two or two and a half, and instead of five colleges in a large town, their numbers might be reduced to three and a half. That prospect worries college staff.

What can be done now? I hope that the Minister will correct me if I am wrong, but my understanding is that, if the splendid Ampleside Drive college wants its education classes to continue, and wants to remain a leisure, recreational and educational college, it can seek to co-operate with the local further education college. It could ask the FE college to include it when the FE college makes its requests of the council. The FE college may say yes or no. In the short term it will probably say yes, as accommodation may not otherwise be available. Instead of education coming under the control of the college principal, there would be a system of subcontracting.

Instead of the college superior, principal or director being in charge of everything, he would be in charge of leisure and recreation, while the control and administration of education would come under the remit of one of the clever people in charge of the FE college. I think that the Minister would accept that that would create problems, tensions, distress and alarm among college staff.

Does the Minister appreciate that, if the amendment were accepted, it would mean that education would be commissioned directly from the funding council? Instead of being a sort of odd job done under a subcontract, the college could go straight to the council to ask if it could run the education service. The college director would still be in charge of everything.

It will make a big difference to a college if there is uncertainty—as there undoubtedly will be—first, as to whether some of the work might be taken away and, secondly, as to whether the local authority might do nasty things because of the change. In addition, college staff would feel humiliated at the education section being placed under the control of someone else. On that basis, I think that the Minister will see why there has been so much concern, distress and alarm.

Will the Minister assure me that I can tell my splendid local college that it can still continue with the education classes if that is agreed with the council and the local FE college? Some of the staff have the impression that those classes will be whipped away. My understanding is that they will not be, but will continue.

Mr. Eggar: I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I promise my hon. Friend that I will sit down before 9.40 pm. I am sure that he will accept that, if there is to be change, it will cause upset, particularly among academic staff.

I rarely praise Ministers—I like to attack them—but the Minister of State takes education seriously and is fair-minded. Does he accept that people in charge of colleges providing education, leisure and recreation may be humiliated when they suddenly find that the glowing part of their responsibilities suddenly come under the control of others? That will cause distress and allegations of unfairness, not to mention feelings of discontent. Outsiders who may be less highly regarded may take over control of important parts of these activities, and the luscious relationship based on direct funding from the funding council may come to an end. In those circumstances, will colleges be able to approach someone to have their problems discussed?

The new clause tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton represents an attempt to give the colleges some security in the knowledge that they are maintaining a high profile and a direct right to provide education. That is important for their status. By contrast, the new clause undermines the work of the council. If further education is provided by new local bodies, some of them subcontracted, it will be undermined.

I ask Ministers to accept that there is a problem of education humiliation for some people, and to accept that there is a real problem. I see no reason why these colleges cannot carry on providing education. I hope that the Minister of State will show understanding of this real problem and will assure us that some of our worst fears are not well founded.

Mr. Andrew Smith: It is a measure of the importance that attaches to adult education and of the extent of dissatisfaction with the Government's proposals that we have heard so many speeches by Conservative Members this evening. As the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) has said, there is a real problem, and his colleagues underlined its extent and the need for a solution by means of the new clause.

It is to the credit of Conservative Members who support the new clause—it fits in well with our amendment No. 14—that they have listened to what is being said in their constituencies and have heard, like the rest of us, the representations from colleges and centres. Conservative Members have listened, while the Government resolutely refuse to listen.

The hon. Member for Tiverton (Sir R. Maxwell-Hyslop) outlined a commendably strong case for the contribution of community colleges in the south-west. He pointed out that they offer evening use and the effective use of resources, and he mentioned the difficulties that they could be caused by the Bill.

These problems arise from the distinction or division that the Bill would entrench between schedule 2 and non-schedule 2 work. We had some exchanges in Committee over the Minister's attributing less priority to non-schedule 2 work. He said then:

> "Schedule 2 encapsulates the course which the Government consider to be a matter of national economic and educational priority."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee F*, 20 February 1992; c. 223.]

That cannot but give the signal that courses not in schedule 2 are not matters of national economic and educational priority.

9.45 pm

The second great fear of all concerned with adult education concerns the adequacy of the funding that would be left through the local education authority route, given the confines imposed on local authorities by poll tax capping and Government cuts. The Minister has said that the Government are undertaking a survey, but when I asked him about this on 14 February, he gave me a reply which was not much of a valentine for those in adult education. Dealing with the report analysing the distribution of present local authority expenditure between schedule 2 and non-schedule 2 work, he said:

> "The consultant's report is expected towards the end of this month and I will deposit a copy in the Library."—[*Official Report*, 14 February 1992; Vol. 203, c. *646*.]

That report had not appeared by the end of February, and it has not been deposited in the Library. That shows contempt for the public, for adult education and for the House. Hon. Members are being invited to pronounce on an issue without having had the benefit of seeing the evidence that the Government rely upon for their case.

The hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Carr) spoke about the important contribution made by community colleges in rural areas. I emphasise that that contribution is also important in urban areas. The hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) spoke from his experience of community college provision in his constituency. I understand that the hon. Gentleman may have made his last contribution to our debates. We shall all miss the characteristic sincerity with which he spoke on behalf of his constituents. He underlined the damage that the Bill would cause in Leicestershire. It will be interesting to see how his hon. Friends who represent Leicestershire constituencies vote.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) made a powerful case for fairness of treatment between institutions which, under the terms of the Bill, will remain the responsibility of local education authorities and those which are incorporated. The new clause and the amendments are all about fairness. My hon. Friend spoke about the impossible difficulties that would be encountered through countywide services having to make bids via a further education college. He said that community education centres in Humberside would be at risk. They will also be at risk in Essex, Leicestershire, Cambridgeshire, Devon, and Surrey and all the other areas from which we have had so many representations.

Community colleges, adult colleges and community education services are being placed in an impossible position educationally, managerially and financially, because they will have to look to different sources of funding and will never know where they stand in relation to the planning of courses and the finance that is available for them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) was uncharacteristically soft-spoken and gentle in his demolition of the Government's case. My hon. Friend may be called in the Budget debate, but if his speech tonight turns out to be his last, we shall miss the force of his arguments, his personality and the brightness with which his political principles burn through all his comments.

The hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) made a persuasive case on the vital contribution made by adult education as a bridge to widen educational opportunities. Many people on so-called non-vocational or leisure courses have an opportunity for the first time to develop self-confidence, and their involvement in a collegiate atmosphere leads them to further studies and qualifications. When people start such courses, it is impossible to predict whether they will proceed to qualifications. That is the fundamental flaw in the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) made a powerful case for liberal non-vocational education which is provided in colleges all over the country. It is indefensible that that is totally overlooked in the Bill. The Government have not been interested in listening to what the public and those who are involved in adult education have been saying. From the publication of the White Papers last May to these guillotined proceedings, the Government have not paid attention to the hundreds of representations that they have received.

If the White Papers and the Bill have one achievement, it is that they have assembled a formidable coalition of opposition. It is not, as the Secretary of State suggested, a politically motivated coalition, but one that is concerned about education and its members range from women's institutes to the Association of County Councils and from some Conservative Members to the Workers Educational Association and the trade unions.

The Government have not listened to the concerns expressed by those bodies, any more than they have listened to the adult education colleges, the community education centres and the open college networks. Throughout our deliberations on the Bill, they have treated adult education and the 3·4 million people it serves as poor relations—as an afterthought. They have hacked the service about to fit their predetermined policy on further education colleges.

Deaf to the chorus of protest, the Government have whipped and guillotined to ensure that their measure goes through unchanged, threatening the division and destruction of adult education should the Conservatives be returned to power. The Government have not listened, and the Government have not learned; but the millions who care about adult education will know from the Government's shabby treatment of the service in the Bill that only Labour can be trusted to make a reality of educational opportunity for all our citizens.

The Conservatives will learn the hard way. Adult education will prove to be one more reason why they will lose the election and we will win. I urge the House to support the new clause and the amendments.

Mr. Eggar: At least the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) had the decency to smile when he claimed that Labour would provide the solution for adult students. He knows the record of the last Labour Government. In real terms, funding for adult education centres fell by 12 per cent. over five years. Under the present Government, it has risen by no less than 31 per cent. in real terms; moreover, there has been an increase of nearly 50 per cent. in the number of adults educated in further education colleges.

The Bill is concerned with finding ways in which to provide more students with a better quality of adult education. That is its whole objective. That is why we have chosen to provide ring-fenced funding for schedule 2 courses for adults, and that is why we have given a categorical assurance that local education authorities will have no excuse for raising students' fees or cancelling classes as a result of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) and my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) raised the question of capital funding. Capital funding for LEA-maintained institutions, including those which do schedule 2 work, will come from LEAs, and we shall expect LEAs to bid for capital allocations as they do at present.

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe asked whether a countywide service could apply through one further education college. The answer is yes. The hon. Member for Oxford, East referred to the consultants' report. Ministers have not yet received that report, but as I have said, when they do it will be placed in the Library. In the meantime, the Labour party might urge Labour-controlled LEAs which have not yet returned their questionnaires about the provision of adult education to the Department to do so.

My hon. Friends the Members for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) and for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) spoke eloquently about community colleges in Devon. I have not had the pleasure of discussing the Devon case with them, but I have discussed the position in Leicestershire in considerable detail with my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr). I recognise the very considerable service provided by community colleges to adult education. I am wholly committed to open and flexible learning, and I accept that community colleges provide a type of open and flexible learning which is especially suitable to rural communities.

The Bill contains sound mechanisms to secure the funding of schedule 2 education which is provided in adult colleges and centres and in community colleges. There are three methods. The first is incorporation through clause 16, but I know that my hon. Friends believe—understandably—that that is not appropriate for most community colleges.

Another method which has been drawn to the Committee's attention is that of designation under clause 28. There has been some misunderstanding about designation because it is not appropriate for a college or institution which is not an independent legal entity. Therefore, as my hon. Friends have made clear, most community providers will decide to use clause 6(5).

Under clause 6(5), further education colleges must forward the community college application to the councils where the provision in question would not otherwise be adequate in the area—that is, the application from the community college. It is the specific purpose of clause 6(5) that community providers should have the opportunity to have their schedule 2 work considered for funding by the funding councils. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) that there will be a number of safeguards to ensure that that happens.

For the procedure to work effectively, there will need to be a clear framework and the Government will assist by giving guidance on the procedure for schedule 2 applications. Indeed, a circular letter has recently issued from the Further Education Funding Council unit which provides initial guidance to institutions on clause 5. That guidance will be supplemented at a later date by further guidance on procedures. I recommend my hon. Friends who have not yet seen the guidance which was issued on 28 February to study it. It states:

"If it"—

the further education college—

"decides not to support such an application, it will be expected to give its reasons for not doing so. The LEA institution"—

in other words, the community college—

"will have the right to appeal against the decision to the Council."

However, protection for community colleges goes further than an appeal to the council. Of course, I expect that this procedure of application to a further education college and then, if necessary, an appeal to the council will sort out almost all—if not all—the problems which might arise, but if the community provider is still not satisfied it is open to the community institution to appeal to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State on the ground that the FE college or the council has acted unreasonably or has failed in its statutory duty. The Secretary of State will seek to deal expeditiously with such complaints. If it is not possible to resolve the matter before the funding council announces its annual allocation—this was the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton—it will be possible to hold back the small sums involved for later distribution.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton mentioned structure in terms of the methodology of bidding. Community colleges will be able to bid to the funding council for a package of provision according to the timetable that has been set down. It will not be a matter merely of waiting to see whether the students turn up, as my hon. Friend implied. Bidding will be well in advance, on a timetable, so that colleges and community providers will know exactly what courses they can lay on.

We believe that it is right that applications from community colleges and other community providers should go through the appropriate FE college. We believe that the FE colleges will act responsibly in response to local demands for courses. In most cases, if not the vast majority of cases, they will accept the bids put forward by the community colleges. We are totally committed to better quality adult education and to more being available in all areas. I urge the House to reject the new clause.

It being Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER, *pursuant to Order [11 February], put the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

The House divided: Ayes 218, Noes 300.

Division No. 105] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Farr, Sir John
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon [illegible]tanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Robinson, Geoffrey
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Nicol
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Robin Maxwell-Hyslop and
Mr. Tony Speller.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet

Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir D. *(Calder Vly)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Speaker *then put forthwith the remaining Question which he was directed to put from the Chair.*

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 305, Noes 210.

Division No. 106] **[10.14 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh

Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Sir D. *(Calder Vly)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug

Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Robinson, Geoffrey
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Nicol
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Taxation of Chargeable Gains Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

10.25 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill is a consolidation of the enactments relating to the taxation of chargeable gains presently found in the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970, the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979 and in annual Finance Acts from 1970 onwards. It extends throughout the United Kingdom.

The legislation re-enacted in the Bill provides for the taxation of chargeable gains accruing to both individuals and to companies and has not previously been consolidated in one Act.

The Bill, which is pure consolidation, has been considered and approved by the Joint Committee on Consolidation, &c., Bills. It has been drafted by a former parliamentary counsel, engaged by the Law Commission. The Law Commission and the draftsman are to be congratulated on their efforts in tidying up this complex aspect of the statute book.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Appropriation (Northern Ireland)

10.29 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I beg to move,

That the draft Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 12th February, be approved.

The draft order has two purposes. The first is to authorise expenditure of £49·2 million in the 1991-92 spring supplementary estimates. This will bring total estimates provision for Northern Ireland departmental services to £4,725 million for this financial year. The second purpose is to authorise the vote on account of £2,140 million for 1992-93, to enable the services of Northern Ireland Departments to continue until the 1992-93 main estimates are brought before the House later this year.

The Northern Ireland block has faced significant resource pressures this year, with expenditure on a number of demand-led programmes being higher than anticipated. The extra demands placed on the law and order programme have contributed to this. But, in fact, the major increases are encompassed by the supplementary estimates we are now considering—in particular in the health and education programmes. In the interests of prudent financial management, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 9 December 1991 a temporary pause on spending on new capital contracts in order to accommodate those new demands. We have always made it clear that this would apply only to the current financial year. I am happy to be able to confirm today that this is so. Indeed, the moratorium is already effectively drawing to a close. Departments are gearing themselves to release those projects which will not now involve expenditure until the 1992-93 financial year. In addition, within the sums in the estimates, my colleagues and I will continue to take the opportunity to release projects selectively where resources permit.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Before we leave the issue of the dreaded moratorium, the Minister should be aware that what he has just said will provide a great deal of encouragement to those institutions and bodies that were clobbered as a result of it. Many of them were given the impression, rightly or wrongly, that the clamp on expenditure would be long term. In some cases it was rumoured that programmes would be put back for three years. I am glad that the Minister has been able to give us an assurance about that.

Dr. Mawhinney: I should be distressed if people felt that programmes would be put back for three years as a result of my right hon. Friend's announcement. It was always our intention, if at all possible, to limit the pause on spending to this financial year and I believe that we shall be able to do that.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): Given what the Minister has said to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), is he aware that the Department of the Environment road services division has already written to local councils to inform them that schemes have been put off as far as 1995-96?

Dr. Mawhinney: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that I have called into question what either he or the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) have said. It is open to hon. Members representing Northern Ireland and local councils to take this matter up again with Departments, should they so wish.

To give hon. Members the maximum time, I shall refer only to the main areas where supplementary provision is sought. In Department of Agriculture vote 1, the major increases are £2·3 million for payments under the agriculture and horticulture development scheme and £4·4 million for the hill livestock compensatory allowance scheme, reflecting increases in rates of allowances and in numbers of eligible animals. Those increases are partly offset by reduced requirements of some £3·4 million on other capital grant schemes, where uptake and investment levels are lower than had been expected.

In Department of Agriculture vote 2, additional provision of £4·1 million includes £2·3 million for the disease eradication programme, following an upturn in the incidence of diseases such as tuberculosis and brucellosis.

For the Department of Economic Development, additional provision is sought on three votes. In vote 1, an additional £3·9 million is sought for expenditure on custom-built factory premises, including the building of two advance factories in west Belfast, an area of particularly high unemployment. That is offset by other adjustments, including increased receipts of £3·5 million from the sale of surplus land and buildings. In vote 2, an additional £1·1 million is sought for the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. Also in this vote, an additional £2 million is sought for financial assistance to the gas industry to cover expenditure on clearing the Ormeau road gasworks site in Belfast, and £4·6 million is required for consultancy costs in connection with the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in Northern Ireland.

In relation to the Department of the Environment, vote 1, an additional £4·5 million is required. That includes £1·3 million for roads and bridges, including a major road scheme in Craigavon; £500,000 is for road lighting, and £700,000 for payments to Northern Ireland Railways. Those increases are offset by reductions in other areas and by additional receipts, leaving a token increase of £1,000 in the vote. In vote 2, an additional £5·4 million is sought; £12·3 million is required for the Northern Ireland housing executive, mainly to enable it to repay loans. That is offset by additional receipts from housing associations and by a fall in the number of applications under the co-ownership scheme.

Department of the Environment vote 3, covering expenditure by the water service, shows a token increase of £1,000. That reflects various reallocations of resources within the vote, and includes an additional £3·4 million for consultants' fees for design work on water and sewerage capital schemes associated with EC directives. In vote 4, an additional £3·3 million is sought. That includes £3·7 million for community economic regeneration schemes, bringing total expenditure on urban regeneration to £39 million. Funds continue to be targeted at areas of social, economic and environmental need.

For the Department of Education, a net increase of £10·7 million is sought for vote 1. An additional £11·8 million is required for grants to education and library boards, including £4·5 million for the youth training programme; £8·7 million is for mandatory student awards, reflecting the success of Government policy to increase the proportion of school leavers who enter higher education.

[Dr. Mawhinney]

The pause on capital expenditure has had an impact on a number of capital projects in the education sector, but I assure the House that all major works contracts will be reactivated over the next few months. We also considered it a high priority to make funds immediately available to provide temporary classrooms at St. Anthony's primary school in Craigavon, which was destroyed in a despicable IRA bomb attack. I have visited the school three times, once with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, and I pay tribute to the resilience of the staff, pupils and parents in their efforts to maintain the education process in such difficult circumstances.

For the Department of Health and Social Services, a net increase of 2·8 million is sought in vote 1; £2·5 million is for grants to health and social services boards to meet increased costs; and £15 million is required for expenditure on the family health services. That arises from the new general practitioner and dental contracts, increased demand for sight tests and increased drug costs. Those increases are offset by increased receipts of £2·7 million and by reductions of £13·5 million in capital expenditure, which will of course, be reconsidered in the next financial year.

In vote 4, which covers social security, nearly £15 million is sought to meet increases in the numbers receiving a wide range of benefits, including income support and disability benefits.

In these brief remarks I have sought to draw the attention of the House to some of the main provisions of the order. In replying to the debate, my hon. friend the Under-Secretary of State will respond to detailed points raised by hon. Members. I commend the order to the House.

10.38 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): These days, it would be strange to hear a Minister's speech that did not include an electoral bribe. Northern Ireland Members will be pleased to know that the expenditure on capital is to be removed in the next financial year. I presume that it is another example of promise now, pay later.

Dr. Mawhinney: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that, in the unlikely and bizarre event of the Labour party being elected to power, the moratorium will continue throughout the next financial year?

Mr. Marshall: No, I am not saying that. Northern Ireland Members will have heard me make speeches before saying that we intend—economic circumstances permitting—to enhance public expenditure in the Province. I am simply saying that in the past few months, members of the Government have been increasing the public expenditure borrowing requirement with no apparent regard for the country's economic state of affairs. It just shows the depths to which they are prepared to stoop to bribe the electorate and gain a majority at the election. I have always respected Ministers who are responsible for Northern Ireland for their probity and lack of deceit and admired the open way in which they have addressed the House. It is appalling that, on this occasion, which is likely to be the last Northern Ireland appropriations debate of this Parliament, the Minister of State should fall from his usual high standard of probity and honesty and stoop to such low levels. It ill becomes him.

I have often thanked Ministers in such appropriation debates in the past. Leaving the bribe issue aside, I should like to thank the Minister for going through the order with such clarity and lucidity. The House will be wiser for his speech.

I have enjoyed the debates in the past four and a half years and I hope that hon. Members will agree that I have always sought to be fair, even-handed and non-partisan. It is a little unfortunate that the Minister introduced a degree of partisanship into this evening's debate. I have an added pleasure this evening because, although this is the last appropriations debate of this Parliament, I know that in the next few weeks the Labour party will be responsible for administering the affairs of the kingdom. The people of Northern Ireland can rest assured that, when that situation arises, it will herald a fresh start for the socal welfare and economic life of the Province.

Dr. Mawhinney: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Marshall: I shall give way in a few minutes, because the Minister may wish to respond then.

May I give a few words of assurance to the Minister of State and the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley)? If the Minister of State retains his seat, the probability of which is a little higher than——

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): Both their coats are on a short nail.

Mr. Marshall: May I make my own point? It is just as good as the one that my hon. Friend seeks to make.

The probability of the Under-Secretary retaining his seat is less than the probability of the Minister retaining his. The Minister has been looking harassed in the past few months. The strains and stresses of his high office over the past few years are showing, but they will quickly disappear once he is languishing on the Opposition Benches, an experience that will be new to him. It will outline for him a new life that he has not experienced since 1979, as a member of the governing party and, latterly, a member of the Government.

I am sorry that the Secretary of State is not here this evening because I remember meeting him at the cricket ground in Leicester some years ago. He was showing his son the beauties of cricket and of the ground at Leicester. I am delighted that the Secretary of State——

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will it be possible to stick to the appropriate order, rather than wandering round the playing fields of Leicester? We have only an hour and a half, and such debates do not happen often.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): That is a perfectly reasonable point of order. When the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) had finished, I was going to appeal for short speeches as I see that a number of hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye, and I should like to call all those who wish to speak.

Mr. Marshall: My speech will be short, Madam Deputy Speaker. This point is not out of order as the Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 refers to the expenditure of Government Departments in the Province.

Naturally, some of that expenditure is incurred in providing services and facilities to Northern Ireland Ministers. I accept that Members from Northern Ireland wish to have a considerable time for the debate and I assure them that that will be available to them. I will not wander out of order.

I am sure that the Secretary of State is looking forward to renewing his love affair with cricket. I wish that the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), were present, as we shall miss his private conversations becoming public. The absence of his knowledge of agricultural affairs will be a severe loss to me and, I am sure, to the general public.

For the past four and a half years I have always paid tribute to Northern Ireland Ministers for the way in which they have sought to protect the economy and social welfare system of the Province from the worst excesses and ravages of successive Tory Governments. I pay tribute to them again. But we must never forget that, since 1979, Tory policies have had a deleterious effect on the economy in the Province. Without any shadow of doubt, the industrial base of the Province is smaller now than it was 13 years ago. There is no doubt that a sound manufacturing base is essential for the future of the Province, as it is for the kingdom as a whole.

Nationally, we shall establish the economic conditions conducive to investment and growth—conditions that the Government have signally failed to obtain. In the Province, we shall create institutions to encourage inward investment, particularly in those industries based on the exploitation of the new technologies.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): My hon. Friend introduced the order with such rapidity that there was scarcely an opportunity to intervene. I seek clarification from the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) on one point. Page 28 of the report refers to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and the most appreciable increase of taxpayers' money that is devoted to it. Will the hon. Greater refer to that most appreciable investment and explain whether he finds it acceptable? Is taxpayers' money being wisely dispensed in that way?

Mr. Marshall: My hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) will refer specifically to the Housing Executive, but if the hon. Gentleman wishes me to respond to his specific point, I shall. I pay tribute to the Government for the good work that the Housing Executive has carried out. I am one of the first to pay tribute to the Housing Executive, which has sought to house people without discrimination and irrespective of the community from which they come.

One point that my hon. Friend will make—perhaps I can rehearse the argument for him—is that we are a little worried about the moratorium on capital expenditure in that sphere. We are also concerned that capital expenditure is being held down because of the need to pay compensation for damage caused by IRA terrorist activities. We hope that that moratorium will be removed and that the Housing Executive and those seeking public accommodation through that executive in Northern Ireland are not made to bear an additional punishment because of terrorist excesses. When the Minister of State replies, perhaps he will address that issue.

Previous industrial strategies have floundered on the lack of skills at all levels throughout industry. It is our intention to establish training programmes so that all young people are equipped for the labour market. We shall establish a pool of skilled labour that is attractive to new employers. Our objective is to establish a modern, diversified economic base for the Province, which offers the prospect of a job at home, rather than the prospect of dole at home or work over the water.

As proof of my good intentions—not to speak for too long—I shall conclude by saying something about the community workshops. That movement is in dispute with Ministers about levels of funding and the way in which it is provided. People in the community workshop movement feel that that reflects Ministers' lack of confidence in the movement. I should like the Minister to take this opportunity to allay that fear and to join the Opposition in complimenting the workshops on trying to provide a service to young people in the Province, especially the most disadvantaged among them.

I look forward to more being spent on the Northern Ireland Assembly. We hope that it will prove necessary to increase the budget of the Assembly so that it becomes a real, not a shadow, Assembly.

If I may be allowed to stray out of order for one final sentence, we wish the talks, whether they are held now or after the election, all the best.

10.50 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): We have heard speeches by both Government and Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen this evening. The people of Northern Ireland will remember the old saying, "Live old horse and you will eat grass." The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) assured us that if the economic situation held up, we would be well looked after. That reminded me of the old professor in college who used to say that if a cow had a long enough tail it would reach the moon—"if".

I welcomed the comments by the hon. Member for Leicester, South about the community workshops. We have pressed the Minister on them before; I hope he can assure us that, far from falling over the next three years, expenditure on the workshops will be maintained, to deal with the challenges that await them.

Mr. Jim Marshall: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that Labour Governments have always sought to deliver to the Province on the economic front.

Rev. Martin Smyth: When Labour was in power we were treated as a full part of the United Kingdom, not pushed on to the sidelines—despite claims to the contrary. But the economic situation is not so bright as the hon. Gentleman painted it. He asked us to believe that there would be an economic revival under a Labour Government. What I have to say will be of cold comfort to the House, but the people of Northern Ireland will not be taken in by such promises.

I do not imply that the Minister misled the House tonight, but people in the Province know that the true picture is quite different. We look forward to the Minister's commitments this evening being put quickly into practice.

The Poswillo report made several sweeping recommendations on the use of general anaesthesia, sedation and resuscitation, but the Government have failed—we heard

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

nothing more about this today—to allocate funds to its implementation in Northern Ireland, despite having provided £9 million for that purpose in Great Britain, as announced in a statement on 22 January.

Dentists who do not receive help have two options: they can use their own money, thus cutting back on an already under-funded area of the national health service; or they can refer patients to hospitals and thereby take up beds and hospital time, both of which are under pressure from other sectors. Will the Minister ensure that the necessary funding is allocated?

Does the Department of Health and Social Services vote contain any provision to bring the allocation to the Northern Ireland hospice into line with that recently announced for England and Wales? I understand that allocations for hospice provision in England and Wales amount to 42 per cent., whereas it is 30 to 33 per cent. in Northern Ireland.

The Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) will remember a conversation that I had with him and his colleague the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) about the funding of Fairholme in my constituency. I am still waiting for a definitive answer. I understand that the matter has been batted around Departments.

From time to time emergencies may cause upsets, but there is a degree of short-sightedness in the Department when planning future expenditure. I refer specifically to the provision of a surgery in Great Victoria street. That has been on the stocks since 1988 and the Department and its valuer have been aware of it. Now the Department says that it cannot even consider the matter at least until the summer, and possibly not until the 1993-94 funding. What is to happen to the property in the meantime? It is in a redevelopment area.

There has been talk about the needs of west Belfast. That property was in west Belfast before the last redrawing of the boundaries, as the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) will confirm. It is in an area of need, and work in an inner-city practice is being held up because the Department is not able to say that the problem can be taken on board, although it has been aware of it since 1988 and has been seeking to provide a facility. The Minister should consider the practical outcome of delay and act accordingly.

10.56 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): I am sure that to hon. Members who are not from Northern Ireland these appropriation debates seem exceedingly parochial. But until the House determines that it will deal with Northern Ireland business in a better way and until Northern Ireland itself has structures capable of dealing with day-to-day issues in a better way, Northern Ireland Members have no choice and therefore make no apology for getting down to grass roots issues under the appropriation accounts.

Vote I for the Department of Economic Development covers expenditure relating to the Industrial Development Board. I do not intend to make any cheap jibes about the publicised statistics on the IDB. All Northern Ireland Members are aware of the difficult task faced by the IDB in trying to encourage investment in Northern Ireland. Now there is an opportunity for the Government to ensure something of a new start for the IDB.

When the Government are considering a replacement for the outgoing person in the IDB, Mr. Tony Hopkins, they should put in post someone who has the drive and enthusiasm to bring jobs to Northern Ireland and to sell the Province as a suitable location for investment. Much can be done if the right person is in post and I, like many others, think that it would be better to look to the business world for someone to fill it.

In the vote for the Department of Economic Development, under the heading of labour market services, expenditure is set aside for the use of the Fair Employment Commission. This evening's issue of the *Belfast Telegraph* states that on Monday the commission intends to publish its religious breakdown of workers in 1,700 companies in Northern Ireland. The list will give details of the number of Protestants and Roman Catholics in each firm in the Province.

That move has, I believe, been opposed by all the employers' organisations. It has certainly been opposed by my colleagues in the House and, I understand, by the Ulster Unionists. It is an act of utter folly: the commission will, in effect, be publishing a hit list for terrorist organisations.

I can think of no greater administrative lunacy than to publish a head count of Protestant and Roman Catholic work forces throughout Northern Ireland. It will help terrorist organisations to target employers who, in their view, are not employing appropriate percentages and enable members of a work force to know exactly who is Protestant and who is Roman Catholic, thus helping to isolate small numbers of people.

Just as serious in economic terms is the fact that such a list will undoubtedly provide a basis for the boycotting of certain goods throughout Northern Ireland. We shall now have Protestant and Roman Catholic goods, and people will be encouraged to buy goods that happen to have been made by firms that are either Protestant or Roman Catholic. That may seem far-fetched to some hon. Members on this side of the Irish sea, but there is not the slightest doubt that it will come about if the list is published.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): My party opposed the proposal to publish such information, in the best interests of both communities, and to protect them in their work-places.

Mr. Robinson: I do not doubt that every hon. Member holds the same view. The danger is just as great for one section of the community as for the other. When disaster strikes—as it undoubtedly will—let them turn to Bob Cooper and ask him why he had to be so pig-headed and proceed with this lunacy, in the face of all the advice that he had received from so many people who had been involved in both the business and the political worlds in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that, over the past few years, the commission has published a series of reports in respect of individual firms—for instance, banks and insurance companies? The reports have concerned a large number of employers, but there is no evidence that any of those firms suffered any diminution of their trade or income as a result, or that their work forces were attacked. If evidence of what he says exists, will the hon. Gentleman present it to the House?

Mr. Robinson: We are not talking about large employers; we are talking about every firm in every back street that employs 25 people or more. The opportunities are thus multiplied considerably, and people will become much more exposed and vulnerable.

Let me join the hon. Members for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) and for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) in supporting the call for the Government to make clear their intention in relation to the community workshop projects. Those hon. Gentlemen have already said that there is something of a crisis in the community workshops in Northern Ireland. I should have hoped that every hon. Member would strongly approve of those bodies because they have a very worthwhile role in the Province.

Indeed, if it were not so, the Government would not have funded them initially, but there has been no significant increase in the money available to them since the financial year 1989-90. To date, they have still not been told what increase—if any—there might be for the new financial year.

If it is the Government's intention to add the community workshops to the moratorium, those organisations will expect a reduction in the amount of money made available to them. Although, thankfully, inflation has decreased considerably in the past few years, it is still in the round and likely to be 4 per cent. in the next financial year. That means that there will be less money available to the community workshops in that year while, at the same time, their expenditure is likely to increase.

I ask the Minister, therefore, if he will assure the community workshops that the finance available to them will be increased above inflation because they are lagging behind, not only in terms of inflation but in comparison to equivalent organisations such as other training centres. I understand that the average cost per place is about £550 higher in the training centres than under community provision, so I hope that the Government will examine the issue and remove the concern of those deeply involved with the community workshops.

In his opening remarks, the Minister referred to the moratorium. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) said that there had been concern in Northern Ireland that the moratorium might have been longer lived than the Minister implied. There is much concern in Northern Ireland that vital projects—especially road and housing projects—have been held back, and for much longer than the Minister said. I cite the example of the roads programme.

In the borough of Castlereagh, two vital projects at Purdysburn road and Ballymaconaghy road have been put off until the mid-1990s well beyond the date of the moratorium. If those projects do not proceed, one can conclude only that the Department is not going to live up to the promise that it made in the Belfast urban area plan that, where it zoned for housing and other purposes, it would provide the infrastructure as a priority. If there is no such infrastructure, there will be no housing. If there are no houses, there will be fewer homes for people and fewer jobs in the construction industry.

I know that, if the Minister at the Department of the Environment had more money available for roads, we would certainly be able to use it. The Treasury must ensure that finance is made available for those roads. There are only pence in the purse of the Department of the Environment's roads services and the money must be increased considerably.

I was concerned to discover that, because of the IRA terror campaign in Northern Ireland, the Housing Executive's budget was being cut. It seems that the people of Northern Ireland have to pay twice for terrorism. They have to endure the attacks of the Provisional IRA and its bedfellows and, at the same time, the finances are cut for the essential projects that might make life much easier for them. That is unfair, especially for my constituency. When cuts are made, they hit east Belfast harder than west Belfast. I shall not take this opportunity to tell the Minister where the bombers come from who wreck Belfast and who cause compensation to be paid, but it is surely unfair that my constituency has to suffer more as a consequence of IRA terrorism. Indeed, it has to suffer twice over. If the Housing Executive has to make cuts, I hope that it will be even-handed.

There is a long-awaited report—this may stretch the Minister—on the Crumlin road and the consequences of separation. There are consequences for the community generally. I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us when the report will be produced and when the Government will be prepared to act on it.

11.11 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (Down, South): I am grateful to the Minister of State for speaking briefly and enabling more hon. Members to take part in the debate, but I would have been grateful also if he had outlined the reason for the moratorium on public expenditure. It commenced on 9 December, and it has caused great distress in Northern Ireland. The local buzz was that it was the result of the IRA bombing campaign in Belfast in the autumn of 1991 and onwards. It was thought, however, that the ensuing claims would not enter the pipeline for at least two or three years and could not be a draw, as it were, on the current budget. It was felt that a substantive budgetary error had been made.

During business questions and questions to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, I requested that a statement be made to explain why a moratorium on all public expenditure—both capital and revenue, as far as revenue could be withheld—was applied for four months of the fiscal year, without explanation to the House. I find that remarkable and unsatisfactory.

I was told by the Leader of the House that I had an opportunity to raise the matter during this debate. It is only three weeks before the end of the fiscal year, and four months of the year have been dead in terms of expenditure. I do not understand why that should have been so, and I find it unsatisfactory. The moratorium had a devastating effect on the provision of services across the community. The construction industry and service industries suffered a tremendous cut, and that contributed in no small measure to increasing unemployment. Why did the moratorium occur? I hope that the Minister of State's assurances that it is now over will be further explained. I am not clear about what the hon. Gentleman said and what he meant.

The Minister who opened the debate was responsible for education and was involved with the Dromore high school's playing fields. There were difficulties because this large school had no playing fields and was landlocked. there was a willing landowner, however, and a contract, was signed, at long last, three weeks ago. Then the Department said, "Sorry, you can't do that. Send the money"—£600,000—"into the central kitty. It would not be fair to the North-Western education board which had to hand in £2 million, if you spent that money."

I inquired, and discovered that the North-Western board did not hand in £2 million. Are we now being told that that contract, which was signed, can be fulfilled tomorrow, and the £600,000 spent as planned by the Southern education board, in co-operation with Banbridge district council and the Department of Education? That would be a clear explanation of the whole thing and we would know where we were going from then out.

I wish to comment in particular on health and social security matters. It is evident to me from my constituency experience that massive cuts are being made in the provision of health care to the consumer —both in hospitals and in the community. I can only extrapolate from those experiences and assume that the rest of Northern Ireland is suffering in exactly the same respect.

Take the three hospitals in the South Down area—the Downe hospital, Downpatrick, the Mourne hospital, Kilkeel, and the Cowan Herron hospital, Banbridge. One has been closed; one is in a state of flux and no one knows whether it is opening or closing; the other—the Downe hospital, Downpatrick—has been waiting 26 years this month for rehabilitation and resiting. A quarter of a century is a reasonably acceptable period after which to ask when and if that rehabilitation and resiting will happen.

The Minister will probably say that that is a matter for the Eastern health and social services board. But the terms of the 1948 Act—if I remember rightly, require equity of treatment and accessibility of provision for the consumer. This has not been implemented in the Downe area and is not being provided by the board, and the Minister must surely have a duty to direct that they should be provided.

Similarly for community and residential care, there is a litany of closures. St. Leonard's house, Warrenpoint closed. Mourne house, Newcastle is threatened with closure. Navan house, Newcastle is to be closed, and other homes have been targeted—not on the basis given by the Southern and Eastern boards in those cases, which was to divert money into the community services. I know, as sure as I am standing here tonight, that we are talking not about transfers of finance but about cuts in finance.

The community service will never see the money that has allegedly been saved by the closure of those residential homes. The level of community service now is very poor indeed. Those cuts have allegedly been made in the interests of providing better care in the community, but I do not think that that will ever materialise. We are talking about straightforward financial cuts without any compensation. I shall be glad if I am proved wrong about that.

The closures also belie the Government's own policy on residential and community care. The Government have stated clearly that consumers will have a choice between the public and the private sectors. I have given a litany of cases tonight in which public provision is being obliterated in a scheduled way. There will be no choice for consumers: they will be forced into the private sector whether they like it or not.

On the general question of the provision of health care, will the Minister take on board—now that he has direct responsibility for it—the fact that waiting lists are growing day and daily? In nearly every aspect of medical care, including cardiac surgery, orthodontics, dermatology, opthalmology and the ear, nose and throat specialty the queues are getting longer.

In reply to my parliamentary question about cardiac surgery, which is probably the most vital surgery because without it, people die, I was told that, between 1981 and 1986, there was a 250 per cent. increase in the waiting lists for cardiac surgery at the Royal Victoria hospital in Belfast. The Minister will respond to that by saying that he has provided a fourth cardiac surgeon and has set up an additional unit. However, we need a fifth cardiac surgeon to keep alive the young men and women who are not receiving the medicine, care and surgery that they need. The House need not take my word for that; hon. Members need only refer to the detailed report of the Northern Ireland Chest, Stroke and Heart Foundation, which provides a more detailed story than I can relate.

I was interested in the remarks of the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) about the roads executive budget, which I believe he referred to as pence instead of pounds. I understand that, for the next financial year, there will be £3 million for actual road works. On the basis of £1 million a mile, we are going to get three miles of new road in the next fiscal year. What annoys me so much about that is that, in the years of plenty, when roads were built, nothing was done in the area that I represent.

For 13 years, not a single pound has been spent on major capital road works in my constituency. The new ring road proposed for the town of Downpatrick has been abandoned in the past two months. That is a very sad reflection, because, like the hospital to which I have referred, it was subject to much study over the decades. Indeed, that led me to coin the phrase "paralysis and analysis". It got nowhere at all.

We must also consider unadopted roads. In that respect, I mean not necessarily roads on new estates, but countryside roads that have never been properly transferred into the public sector from the old days of local government.

I hope that the Minister will be able to address those points when he replies. If he cannot, I hope that he will write to me. This is my first experience of a Parliament running down and, although I am not sure whether it is appropriate, I want to put on record my sincere thanks to Northern Ireland Ministers for the courtesy with which they have always received my requests. On many occasions we have differed vehemently on policy and practical matters, but at all times I have received courtesy and help, which I appreciated.

11.22 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I can raise only two matters in the short time available to me if the remainder of my colleagues from Northern Ireland are to be allowed time to speak in this debate.

The town of Hollywood in my constituency has a very ancient history and concerned citizens of all ages from that town came together at a public meeting to protest in an orderly and effective way about the lamentable lack of recreation facilities in the town. Hollywood has grown in size by leaps and bounds in the past 20 years and, because of the size of its population, the town deserves proper facilities for all ages in the community, including the provision of a swimming pool. I have raised the issue in the House before and I have made representations to the Minister who always points out, rightly, that this is a matter for North Down council. However, I urge the Minister to use his considerable influence to persuade the council to place on its list the need for a recreation complex for Hollywood. If necessary, the Minister should earmark a sum of money for that provision.

The Queen's hall in Hollywood has been mentioned as a possible place where some recreation facilities could be provided, but I am against that because Queen's hall is the civic centre of the town of Hollywood and should be kept as such. Therefore, I ask that a separate site be provided for that much-needed complex for the people of Hollywood who deserve it. It would certainly be beneficial for people of all ages, in particular the young and the elderly.

My maiden speech in 1964 was about the needs of the elderly, and in the dying days of this Parliament it is right that I again refer to that matter. I have mentioned it many times during my time in the House. In fact, I have urged that there should be a Bill of Rights to protect the elderly and retired people in our community. Many people suffer mental stress worrying whether they can meet heating and food bills, for instance. I pointed out in the House last month that many elderly people turn down their heating because they are scared that they will not be able to meet their bills. They worry about ill health and what will happen to them when they become ill.

Not only the elderly, but all retired men and women worry about whether they have made enough provision for old age. Retirement should not be the beginning of the deterioration of life but a period when people should be able to relax and enjoy life, having spent their lives working and contributing to the country. It is essential that the quality of life be maintained, and every support should be provided by the Government to enable people to do so in their own homes, in residential homes or in hospitals.

I note what the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady), said about cuts—sometimes savage cuts—in hospital social services. There is not time to mention all of them, but I refer again to hospitals, such as the Dundonald and Bangor hospitals where cuts have meant that beds have had to be closed and nurses dismissed.

The time may come when an invalid person must forsake his or her cherished independence and seek the support of a residential home. I am deeply concerned about the standard of some residential homes —fortunately, there are not too many such cases—and there is a need for more thorough and frequent inspections.

In my constituency is the Banks residential home. The Minister is a caring person, and he may have had that home pointed out to him. It is a beautiful building in an idyllic setting on Groomsport road, Bangor. It has a friendly atmosphere and efficient and helpful staff. I am shocked that the Eastern health authority is considering expelling the elderly residents and taking over that wonderful building for its own bureaucracy.

If officials need offices, there are plenty of places in Belfast, Dundonald and the streets of Bangor, but not in that beautiful place, which was specifically built for retired people. The bureaucrats in the Eastern health board have specially woven carpet in their entrance hall, at great expense to the taxpayer. I appeal to the Minister to use his influence to make sure that those bureaucrats do not close the beautiful Banks home.

The board has offered the lame excuse that there has been a rapid expansion of the voluntary and private sectors and that there is no waiting list for the Banks. I assure the Minister that that is not correct. I know many people who are waiting for a place at the Banks, but they are turned away because the bureaucracy do not want to provide them with beds. If people are in that home, it will be more difficult for the bureaucracy to close the building and take it over for its own purposes.

The board also claims that it is under pressure to switch resources from residential care to domiciliary care—in other words, it is blaming the Government. It is high time that the onus was placed on the Eastern health board.

I now refer to a case involving one of my constituents. She is 94, it is not long since her husband died, and she is now living alone in a large house. On the evening of Monday 20 January, she became very ill. She called her doctor, who was worried when he examined her. She had a temperature and a bad chest cough. Naturally, as the patient was a woman of 94 years, he was anxious about her health. Therefore, the doctor called an ambulance at 11.15 pm to take her to hospital, where he thought that tests

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could be carried out and she could stay for a period of observation. He gave the ambulancemen a letter in which he set out her medical condition.

At about 1 am the following morning, that elderly lady was told by the hospital medical staff that she was being sent home. The old lady, who has an agile mind, pointed out that there was no one at home and the fire would be out. She was agitated, but none the less she was turfed out of the hospital. She was brought home by ambulance and left in her empty house at 1.20 am. That is a disgraceful experience for a person of any age, but for an old lady of 94 years it is absolutely disgusting.

Not surprisingly, the lady's doctor was amazed. I am still amazed at the callous treatment that was meted out to her. I wonder how many other elderly patients have suffered in the same shocking way. It is possible that the duty officer decided that she was not in need of hospital care or medical observation, despite her doctor's comments and his anxiety, but how could anyone send a woman of that age who lived alone back to her home in the early hours of the morning? The reason could not have been a shortage of beds in the Ulster hospital: there are plenty of beds. The only trouble is that the Eastern health board has closed them. Surely a spare bed could have been found for her.

The reason may have been a shortage of nursing staff, as the board now employs fewer nurses—to the detriment of my constituents who are in need of nursing attention. I am deeply disturbed by that disgraceful position. I represent the area of North Down, which has an ever increasing number of retired people. We must protect the elderly. We must fight for them because they are vulnerable and they cannot fight for themselves. We must ensure that their dignity is not undermined and that their lives are not shortened as a result of callous and inhuman treatment.

11.31 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): It has been said that it is only through debates such as this that Northern Ireland Members can raise matters that are probably local government matters and would be handled by local government in Northern Ireland if there was any local government worth the name. It is utterly unsatisfactory that we are given only this brief opportunity of merely an hour and a half to debate the matter. As other hon. Members wish to speak and we wish to allow the Minister to reply, one must keep one's comments extremely brief and simply highlight certain main issues.

As has been said, the moratorium has been handled in a most unsatisfactory way. There has never been a proper statement in the House. Proper information has never been given to the House. Written questions were tabled by me and other hon. Members. They were not answered. I hope that at some point the Minister will get round to giving an answer. We want to know the precise effect of the moratorium and what programmes have been affected. The Minister of State claimed that the effect of the moratorium was spent and programmes were being reinstated. We want details of what has been reinstated and when. I know of one scheme—the Minister knows to what I refer—which has not been reinstated. We would like something to be done on that matter.

I suspect that, if the truth were told about the moratorium, we would find that the financial affairs of the Northern Ireland Office and the Departments of Ministers were in a mess and that Ministers were not in a position to come clean about it. That underlines the need to have a more satisfactory way of handling such matters and to have better parliamentary scrutiny of the Northern Ireland Office. That ought to be done through a Select Committee. The Public Accounts Committee tells us that, of all the Departments with which it deals, the Northern Ireland Office is the worst in terms of how it handles its money. A Select Committee would remedy the lack of scrutiny.

I must raise one important issue—that is all that I can do in the short time available—concerning the United Meat Packers plant at Annsborough, near Lurgan in my constituency. As the Minister will know, a receiver has been appointed for the plant, with the consequence that farmers who supplied carcases to it are not being paid and are having to prove that they are unsecured creditors. They find the comparison between treatment of that plant—it is owned by the Halal group—and the group's four other plants, one in the Republic of Ireland and three in Great Britain, extremely distressing. The three plants in Great Britain were wound down and closed in a relatively orderly fashion and farmers there were paid in full. The plant in the Irish Republic is being administered by the court, under its equivalent of the "Chapter XI" proceedings, and farmers are also being paid in full there.

I am told by the Department of Agriculture that the plant in Northern Ireland was one of the best-equipped plants and was a profitable undertaking, but the Northern Ireland farmers who supplied it are not being paid. It appears that the financial liabilities of the firm have been cast upon a profitable element and that other elements, which were not so profitable, seem to have got away.

I appreciate that the Minister's actions are limited because of receivership. Will he find out whether there is some way to inquire into the financial affairs of the group, not merely at the plant in Lurgan but at other plants that it operates, and into the connections between plants and other overseas bodies which I believe were involved with it? At the moment we do not have a lot of information, but one gets the feeling that there is more to this story than meets the eye. It is an appropriate case for a thorough inquiry.

That was the major item that I wished to mention, but I cannot forbear commenting on the matter raised by the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson)—the Fair Employment Commission's proposals to publish the religious breakdown of 1,700 firms within Northern Ireland. Only a couple of weeks ago we met the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), and forcefully expressed to him our reservations about that course of action. We were told at that stage that, although the Fair Employment Commission proposed to publish that detail, the Secretary of State was considering the timing and content.

After that meeting, I felt that there was some conflict between what the Minister and the chairman of the Fair Employment Commission—who was also present—was saying, and I wrote to the Minister. I received a reply on Thursday last week, which, while somewhat opaque, left one with the impression that he was still seriously considering what was to be done about publication.

I appreciate that time is short, but I hope that the Minister who replies to the debate will state exactly the

Government's position on the matter and what will be done. I endorse completely all the comments made by the hon. Member for Belfast, East about the consequence of that publication.

11.37 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Time is short and the Minister will want to reply, so I shall be brief. I back up what the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) has just said about the fair employment issue. It is not right for the House to think that there have been no repercussions from other publications.

A frantic employer phoned me no less than seven days ago. His firm had been named before and his deputy managing director's car was shot up by a gunman in the factory yard because of the lady's religious persuasion. That man employs a large number of people and he told me, "I have now to decide whether I will close this entire undertaking and go back to where I came from." So it is wrong to say that there are not legitimate fears.

I also met Mr. Cooper with my colleagues and with two representatives of small firms, who said that there is a great difference between pinpointing the religious breakdown of a firm with 200, 300, 400, 500 or 600 employees and that with only 25. There is great fear. I will hold the Fair Employment Agency responsible if those firms are picked out by gunmen, on either side of the divide, for intimidation or killings. The House should take note of that great fear.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the hon. Gentleman also acknowledge that other reports on the religious persuasion of the work force in the banks have dealt with the total work force employed, rather than with the make-up of employees in specific branches? It is important to acknowledge that.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Yes, that point must be stressed.

If the Minister is unable to reply to me tonight, I hope that he can write to me about the progress reached on the local hospital in which I am interested. I know that an announcement has been made about money, but I should like to know about the timetable for progress. The Conservative candidate in my constituency announced that the brickwork for that hospital had been completed, but it has not even been started. Such is the honesty we are up against.

A deputation has been to see the Minister about the River Bush and we would like to hear what he has to say about it.

The Government must do something about the community workshops, which inspire a united front. The people served by those workshops must be treated properly.

I back up what the hon. Member for Upper Bann said about United Meat Packers. Is it the Government's policy to withhold their grants in respect of that firm? If the company changes hands and becomes viable, I trust that that money will not be taken by the present receiver to pay the debts to the banks. I hope that that money will be used to repay the debts to the farming community. In my constituency, a young man, not long in business but doing well, was owed £18,000 by that firm. His cheque from it bounced and that young man suffered a complete nervous breakdown. That firm has left a trail of sorrow.

I must not say any more, because other colleagues want to speak.

11.42 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I want to discuss Department of the Environment vote 1, which relates to the moneys spent on roads and certain associated services.

Many of my constituents on the Shore road at Green island are concerned about the proposed realignment of route A2. They consider that proposal even more objectionable than earlier ones, which were subsequently abandoned. The DOE officials seem to be judge and jury on their case. It is felt strongly that a process of attrition is being conducted by the visiting officials to wear down the objectors to the scheme proposed. Those officials have tried to buy off or negotiate away legitimate objections to the development.

Many of the 130 frontagers would have objected in writing, but as a result of contacts with others they have decided that that is pointless. It is disappointing that consultation should come to that and that those who believe that they have valid objections should give up rather than pursue them through appropriate procedures.

Has Government approval been given for the scheme? Is it not possible to hold a public inquiry? Is the Minister satisfied that the scheme is not flawed on social or environmental grounds and that his officials are not ignoring DOE legislation? Will the Department vest the land and buildings to enable the project to commence? If so, when will that happen, and when is work likely to start?

Various questions arise in relation to road work throughout Northern Ireland. For example, is the Minister aware that there is no regulation in force in Northern Ireland on noise insulation? Circular 10/73 entitled "Planning and Noise" has never officially been adopted in Northern Ireland, although it is recognised as a useful planning tool by planners and local authority environmental health officers. Will the Minister promise to examine the matter with a view to having the noise insulation regulations that apply in England, Scotland and Wales being applied to Northern Ireland?

I wish that there had been time to address many other matters. I would have gone into the failure to encourage the development of nursery schools; the difficulties faced by education and library boards because of the insurance policies, or lack of them, operated by the Department when schools and libraries burn down; and the failure of the Northern Ireland tourist board to consult adequately with district councils before publicising information internationally. Because time is short, however, I will resume my seat to enable other hon. Members to speak.

11.46 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): Time is not on our side tonight, so in deference to the Minister, who I know wishes to reply to the debate, I shall keep my remarks as short as possible. The House will have an opportunity on Thursday to debate the political future of, and security situation in, Northern Ireland, but the appropriation Orders that come before hon. Members from time to time raise the real bread-and-butter issues that concern the elected representatives of the Province. It is therefore only right that they should have the opportunity to explain to the Minister their difficulties and the problems facing their constituents. I make no complaint about that. I have often complained

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about the Order in Council procedure, but it is not for us tonight to take up the time available to hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland constituencies.

I have a few matters to flag up to the Under-Secretary, who I appreciate is not responsible for education in the Province. The Minister of State was formerly responsible for education there and was responsible for introducing the relevant education instrument. I am pleased to see him in his place, because the only item in that instrument with which I agreed resulted from his dedicated work on behalf of the Province's integrated schools. I reinforce that view tonight, for he did remarkably well in helping the growth of integrated education in Northern Ireland.

Like other hon. Members, last week I had a meeting with the chief executive, Fiona Stevens, and chairperson, Fiona Stelfox, of the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education and we discussed the whole issue of integrated education in the Province. I will not tonight go into that in detail, but having listened carefully to the Minister's opening remarks about the financial allocation to the Department of Education in Northern Ireland, I was suprised that the hon. Gentleman did not once mention nursery education.

The chief executive and the chairperson of the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education are extremely worried because their nursery schools, which are attached to the existing integrated schools in Portadown, Dungannon, Omagh, Larne, Portrush, Ballymena and Belfast, are feeder integrated nursery schools for four and five-year-olds who are at a crucial stage in their education development.

It must be remembered that we are talking about Northern Ireland. The two people who came to see me last week told me that, if funds are not forthcoming, all those nursery schools, which deal with a crucial stage of children's educational development and are attached to Northern Ireland integrated schools, will have to close in June this year. There appear to be no such funds in the appropriations that we are discussing this evening.

I realise that the Under-Secretary of State is not directly responsible for education in Northern Ireland, but something should be done, in the brief period in which the Government are the custodians in Northern Ireland before we take over, to assure the integrated schools movement that nursery provision is protected. Although nursery provision in Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom is woeful beyond belief, it is embryonic in Northern Ireland and we should ensure that it survives.

I should have liked to say an awful lot more tonight, but the best speeches always fall on the cutting room floor. In deference to the Under-Secretary of State who will answer the debate, I shall leave him the remainder of the time.

11.52 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): I am most grateful to the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) for his kind generosity, which is typical of the courtesy that is extended on these occasions. I also thank all those who have participated in this debate for the measured way in which they have expressed matters of grave concern to them and their constituents. These debates are among the best that we have and are a model for debates in the House of Commons. They rarely sink to the level of some of the parliamentary procedures that we experience.

I exclude the opening speech by the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall), who had a good old go at the Government about the economy in Northern Ireland. In his visits to the Province, he must have ignored the health of Harland and Woolf and Short's. He said that the Government had denuded manufacturing industries of investment, but in the past three years output in production has risen by 6 per cent. and in manufacturing industry it has risen by 7 per cent., which is even better than in Britain. So the hon. Gentleman's target is completely wrong.

Mr. Trimble: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hanley: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I cannot deal with the points that he and others raise in interventions.

Mr. Trimble: May I draw attention to the recent survey of manufacturing firms, which shows that employment is likely to fall by 2 per cent. in the current year?

Mr. Hanley: A number of reports have been published recently. I was simply explaining that, over the past three years, Northern Ireland's economy has been extremely healthy, and that we shall continue to do all that we can to ensure that that record continues.

Naturally we do not wish to impose a moratorium on the Province, but when one is managing a block of some £6·5 billion, resources inevitably need to be reallocated from time to time in line with new requirements and block priorities. During the year, we found increases beyond what we had expected in valuable areas. For instance, in education, there were higher numbers and costs of mandatory student awards and the increased cost of the youth training programme. In health, requirements under family health services increased. Those included general medical, dental, ophthalmic and pharmaceutical services. Increases also arose from the review body for pay awards. In addition, the need for cover for security costs increased. All those items needed to be adjusted during the year.

The total amount that has been secured from that is only £30 million to £33 million net, so we have had good value. The impact on particular projects may seem severe to those who had expected them to be completed by now, but I am sure that they will be resuscitated within schemes as soon as possible.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South mentioned the moratorium on the Housing Executive. The amount of income to the executive from all sources has been reduced in total by the swingeing sum of 0·1 per cent. The only impact has been a delay in the starting dates of some of the schemes by two or three months.

The hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth), who is always wise and thoughtful, raised the subject of hospices, which are dear to my heart. I am sure that he knows that Her Majesty the Queen visited the Northern Ireland hospice last year. In Northern Ireland, there is already almost 50 per cent. funding of hospices, and the extra money that has been granted in England in the past few days was designed to try to give hospices here the high standard of support of those in Northern Ireland. We have a good record on hospices, and shall try to continue that—it is one of my priorities.

With regard to the Poswillo report into dental anaesthesia, there is four times the level of anaesthesia in dentistry in Northern Ireland than in England. It is therefore a serious matter which will be addressed, but at present there is no specific allocation of funding.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) mentioned a number of matters. I shall not be able to cover all the points. However, I assure all hon. Members that the appropriate Minister will write to them in the near future.

In relation to community workshops, the current youth training programme rates in Northern Ireland compare favourably with those elsewhere. Following representations made recently by the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) and representatives of the Northern Ireland Association of Community Based Training Organisations, the Government have agreed to extend assistance to the payment of redundancies and arrangements for advanced funding for a further period. Those concessions should help the community workshops to continue their important work.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will report to the House in the near future on the matter of prisons, which was raised by the hon. Member for Belfast, East.

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) also mentioned the moratorium, and I believe that I have addressed that issue. He also spoke of care in the community. There is no relaxation in our drive for care in the community. The points that he raised were important and specific, and I will write to him on them. We are close to an announcement on waiting lists. There is a commitment in the patients charter, of which my hon. Friend the Secretary of State spoke just a few days ago. We shall achieve the aim of a maximum waiting list of two years for almost all matters.

There are particular problems in relation to cardiac surgery, and we shall set a date slightly more than two years ahead to clear the backlog. But when the hon. Member for South Down says that, if a patient does not undergo an operation, that patient will die, I can assure him that clinical need is paramount. There will be no shortage of operations for those registered as needing those operations now. Such operations now take place throughout the United Kingdom—the world is becoming a much smaller place in terms of heart operations. I am pleased that we shall be able to reduce that backlog. I hope that, within a time scale to be published within a few days, we shall be able to reduce such waiting lists to the two-year limit.

No one has espoused the cause of the elderly more assiduously and eloquently than the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder), and I will certainly write to him about his 94-year-old constituent.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) also mentioned the moratorium and the case of United Meat Packers, as did the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley. I am concerned about the issue. As the hon. Member for Antrim, North knows—although, if I were a betting man, I would not admit it in his presence—I would bet that everyone will be paid. However, that is a matter for the receiver. We in the Department of Agriculture are trying to help to find a buyer as it is a good plant and, unlike some of the other plants mentioned by the hon. Member for Upper Bann, it is a going concern. There is a secure future for its suppliers, employees and customers, and we must ensure that we obtain exactly the right deal. I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's show of concern today.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North mentioned Causeway hospital. I think that it will be taking patients before the end of the century—before the end of the decade. We hope to buy the land soon. Bricks and mortar will follow the purchase——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 12th February, be approved.

PETITIONS

Cold Weather Payments (West Yorkshire)

11.59 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I have great pleasure in presenting this petition which is from the whole of the Bradford metropolitan district and contains signatures from that district. It concentrates on my part of the constituency, the wards of Wyke, Wibsey, Tong, Great Horton, Queensbury and Odsal.

The petition concerns cold weather payments and the criteria which the Government have imposed and which result in great difficulties for pensioners. They are left cold and confused and without adequate and easy means of obtaining payment for the cold weather to provide enough heating.

The petition has been organised by Age Concern and is supported by Labour-controlled Bradford council. Councillors have also expressed their concern about the district being covered by different weather centres, and payments being triggered only when seven freezing days are predicted. That criterion leaves many pensioners cold and vulnerable to hypothermia.

The petition is signed by a good friend of mine, Alice Brown, and reads as follows:

> To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of concerned citizens of Bradford, Bingley, Ilkley, Keighley and Shipley in the County of West Yorkshire. Sheweth that great distress is being suffered by the elderly inhabitants of our area during winter months; in particular those two-thirds of our elderly population who are entirely dependent on state benefits and who through poverty cannot afford to keep themselves warm, and for whom the current means of relief such as the Cold Weather Payment scheme are both confusing and inadequate.
>
> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that Members of your Honourable House urge Ministers: *(a)* to carry out an urgent review of all those current means of relief given to the elderly to help with heating costs during winter months, in particular to the cold weather payment scheme.
>
> *(b)* to consider and implement new proposals which will ensure that no elderly person need suffer from the cold through poverty.
>
> And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

I hope that the Government will do this before the election.

To lie upon the Table.

Education (Rochdale)

12.1 am

Mr. Jim Callaghan (Heywood and Middleton): I wish to present a petition signed by more than 12,000 electors in the Rochdale borough, many of them constituents who are worried about the underfunding of the education service in the borough. The petition was organised by 60 head teachers who represent all 107 schools in the borough. They asked me to present the petition to the House, which I now proceed to do:

> The humble petition of the people in Rochdale, showeth: that we the undersigned express our grave concern at the serious underfunding of the education service and the effects further cuts to the service will have on our children's education. Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House urge the Secretary of State for Education and Science to ensure that our children's education is fully and adequately funded. And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Crime (New Cumnock)

12.3 am

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): It is my privilege to complete the worthy trio of petitions today with a petition from the citizens of New Cumnock—from 2,176 adults, representing almost the whole adult community in the town. It is one of the small but important towns in my constituency, led by former Councillor Willie Goudy, Mrs. Mary Morrison, John McWhirter and other members of an action group formed by the community following a meeting of 400 residents in New Cumnock concerned about the unacceptable level of crime and intimidation in the town. The petition is to the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled:

> The Humble Petition of the Citizens of New Cumnock sheweth That there is an unacceptable level of crime and intimidiation in their community.
>
> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House shall address the issues contributing to this situation and take such measures as to allow the citizens of New Cumnock to enjoy peace of mind and security once again namely:
>
> (i) To increase police resources in this rural area.
> (ii) Review sentencing policies in order to create a real deterrent to crime.
> (iii) To expedite the processing of trials.
> (iv) To instruct the courts to exercise greater discretion in the granting of bail to persistent offenders.
> (v) To ensure that appropriate compensation is made to victims of crime. The courts to take initial responsibility for payment of such compensation.
> (vi) To promote greater responsibility by increasing parent liability for their children's misdeeds.
>
> And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

To lie upon the Table.

Selective Investment Brokers

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neil Hamilton.]*

12.5 pm

Sir Charles Morrison (Devizes): In almost 28 years in the House, this is only the second occasion on which I have the Adjournment debate. It will almost certainly be the last, because I shall not be here after the next election. The matter which I propose to raise is of great importance to many unfortunate people, and I am pleased to have this opportunity to air their real grievances and to call on the Government to consider now and later, action to ameliorate the condition of those people.

I emphasise that I raise the issue of Selective Investment Brokers Ltd. and the role of the Department of Trade and Industry with the complete support of the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham). He has taken a lead in this matter and will continue to do so, if need be after the election. I am sure that he will be supported by other hon. Members who have written to me and by my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs). Unfortunately, my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North cannot be here because of his duties in Northern Ireland.

I have spoken to the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck), who says that in his view it is highly likely that the Committee will wish to look at the ombudsman's report on the case after the general election.

In early February, Anthony Wheeler, former mayor of Chippenham and formerly a respected local citizen, was convicted and sentenced to four years in gaol for fraudulent trading between 1986 and 1988. He was also convicted of the theft of money belonging to Selective Investment Brokers Ltd. and of procuring the execution of a valuable security by deception.

Selective Investment Brokers Ltd. was set up in 1980 in Chippenham. Among the financial investment products that it offered was a tax-free investment in what was described as the Cotswold Trust. The trust gave all the appearance of being similar in every respect to a unit trust whereby the investors invested their money with the trustees who had absolute discretion to determine which investments would form the basis of the underlying trust fund. Investors, who consisted mostly, but not entirely, of local people, were advised to spread their risk by investing part of their disposable capital in well-known, authorised products, but including a proportion in the Cotswold Trust.

Before the passing of the Financial Services Act 1986, the operator was not a licensed dealer in securities, nor was he a member of any authorised body. After the passing of the Act, the operator became a tied representative for an authorised investment institution. The Cotswold Trust was an unauthorised investment product in any event and not one which could be lawfully marketed.

Since 1984, SIBL had been in receipt of statutory correspondence from Companies house regarding its failure to provide annual returns and accounts. On at least two occasions, Companies house had indicated its intention to exercise its powers to remove the company's name from the list of companies as it appeared that the company had ceased trading. In 1985, Companies house had passed this information to the Inland Revenue. On all occasions, the company's auditors had replied to Companies house, stating that they were still trading and would supply the relevant returns and accounts in due course.

In November 1985, the company became the subject of an investigation by the special investigation department of the Inland Revenue, which concentrated specifically on the tax-free status of the products that the company was offering. The Inland Revenue served the company with an assessment of unpaid tax and demanded that immediate steps be taken to pay the unpaid amounts assessed while the Revenue carried out a full evaluation of the total figure.

In December 1986, an independent accountant preparing an account for a client contacted the Department of Trade and Industry to identify the trading status of the operator of the Cotswold Trust. His concern related to whether his client's investment in the trust was tax-free and whether the investment itself was authorised. His information was examined, and as a result it became clear that the DTI believed that an investigation of the affairs of SIBL was urgently warranted.

The DTI took no action, but invited the accountant to report his concerns to the Wiltshire police. The accountant wrote to the DTI again, expressing his surprise and concern at its apparent lack of interest and was yet again urged to report his concerns to the police. In April 1987, the informant went to the police.

In May 1987, the police found that they could undertake no immediate investigation into the company, as at the time they had no information that would constitute sufficient prima facie evidence that a criminal offence was being committed. They referred the matter back to the DTI, with the request that the Department undertake an urgent investigation using its powers under section 447 of the Companies Act 1985. The DTI, however, took no further action in the case.

The company continued to solicit investment in the Cotswold Trust and, throughout the remaining period, accumulated in more than half a million pounds in new investments. In June 1988, the Inland Revenue presented its final accounting for unpaid revenue to SIBL, which resulted in the company's placing itself in voluntary liquidation, leaving investors with a loss of £1·3 million.

Those facts were subsequently reported to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, who conducted an inquiry into an allegation of maladministration on the part of the DTI on the grounds of its having failed to take any action in May 1987, when it knew—or ought to have known—that the responsibility for investigating the company lay with it. Subsequently, however—in 1991—the ombudsman exonerated the DTI of maladministration, which occasioned amazement and disbelief.

Indeed, the ombudsman's findings were considered to be so transparently at odds with the facts of the case, and the precedents created by previous ombudsman's decisions, that the report was referred by the company's creditors—who had formed a group called Creditors in Action—to an independent QC, who conducted a full examination of both facts of the case and the ombudsman's investigation. He found that the

[Sir Charles Morrison]

Ombudsman had erred in his findings and that the DTI's failure to act constituted maladministration of a most serious kind.

The case reveals a number of factors, adding up to a degree of inevitability that the investors would lose their money. It is, however, not simply the latest example of a series of cases in which the DTI has been shown to have failed to evince the most basic understanding of the meaning of investor protection, clearly illustrating the way in which regulatory incompetence leads to loss. What is perhaps most clearly identified—along with the degree of incompetence and maladministration displayed by the DTI in its failure to appreciate the urgency of the need to investigate the affairs of SIBL—is the obvious extent of its complicity in an unauthorised and unhealthy relationship with the Inland Revenue. That enabled the Revenue to collect moneys to which it would not have been lawfully entitled had the proper course been taken at the right time.

The DTI was aware that the company had not made any financial returns to Companies House for a number of years yet was continuing to trade. It was aware that the company was not authorised to conduct investment business and that it was dealing in investment products of an unauthorised nature. It was aware of the previous relationship between the operator of SIBL and another investment adviser who had been investigated in regard to a similar operation which had led to investor losses. It was conscious of the need to undertake investigations into SIBL as a matter of urgency, because that fact had been identified by a member of the companies investigation branch. It was conscious of the fact that investors' money was at risk.

The question that must be asked is, why did the DTI fail to take any action at the appropriate time? Also, why did the ombudsman lean over backwards to ensure that no findings of maladministration were proved against the DTI? It would appear that the explanation can be found in the relationship between the DTI and the Inland Revenue.

It is clear that SIBL owed the Inland Revenue a considerable sum in unpaid tax. If any action had been commenced to wind up the company, the Inland Revenue would have been unable to recover any of that money and would merely have been included on the list of non-secured creditors who would have remained unpaid. The only sums for which the Inland Revenue can claim to have a preferential interest are moneys collected by the employer for pay-as-you-earn and national insurance contributions. Therefore, stopping the company trading would have meant that the Inland Revenue would have lost a great deal of unpaid money.

However, permitting the company to continue to trade meant that the Inland Revenue could continue to receive moneys by way of assessment, moneys that it would not otherwise have been entitled to receive had the company been wound up—in other words, the Inland Revenue was enabled to be preferred directly at the expense of new investors in the company.

Had the ombudsman found that the failure of the DTI to act decisively in May 1986—when it knew or should have known that it alone possessed the power to conduct the necessary investigation into SIBL—amounted to maladministration, the legitimacy of the actions of the Inland Revenue would undoubtedly have been called into question. If the practice of allowing the Revenue to collect unpaid but non-preferential taxes from companies that would otherwise be wound up had become widely known, a number of similar cases would undoubtedly have been uncovered, leading to questions being asked about the amount by which the Revenue has benefited at the expense of other creditors.

This case is an unattractive story which reflects badly on the DTI and the Inland Revenue. The DTI is a regulatory body, "regulatory"—I emphasise that word—on behalf of the public. On this occasion, the public were severely let down. The creditors of SIBL want the DTI to admit that it made a mistake and that investors suffered as a result. In consequence, the DTI should take action to put that right, and I hope that the Minister will make a start on that now.

12.17 am

The Minister for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): My hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison) referred to the report of the Parliamentary Commissioner on the actions of the Department of Trade and Industry in relation to Selective Investment Brokers Ltd. I shall try to draw a distinction between the actions that could be taken by Companies house—striking off a company that is no longer active—and the actions that can be taken by the police or the investigatory authorities if there is suspicion of wrongdoing. I am pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) present in the Chamber. I know that he takes a great interest in this matter, which has affected some of his constituents.

I am naturally distressed to hear of the losses sustained by investors in the company. It was incorporated in January 1980 and went into liquidation in July 1988. The Parliamentary Commissioner criticised the actions of Companies house in failing to pursue SIBL for overdue accounts and for initiating action to strike off the company instead, but he did not find that that failure led to injustice or loss to the company's investors. Companies house accepts the criticism that it failed to pursue the directors of the company as it should have done, and I apologise to my hon. Friends and to the House on its behalf for that mistake.

The Parliamentary Commissioner also concluded that potential investors could have searched the records held by Companies house and obtained a warning from the lack of up-to-date information. Companies house records exist to protect members of the public who intend to deal with limited companies, and those services should be used. The fact that a company has not filed accounts or is late in doing so should act as a warning to people thinking of trading or dealing with it.

The Inland Revenue and other creditors can seek to prevent an active company from being struck off in error. An intention to strike off a company must be published in the *London Gazette*, and it would be open to the Inland Revenue or any other creditor to petition to avoid such an error being made.

Since the criticism by the Public Accounts Committee of the low level of compliance in 1984, Companies house has made great progress in raising the level of compliance with the filing requirements of the Act. The target set for Companies house is to achieve 85 per cent. compliance by the end of June 1992. This target is still less than I would like, and I have told Companies house that raising compliance is the highest priority. Its efforts have met with considerable success. It sends out more than 2 million default letters and prosecutes a considerable number of directors each year. It is striving continually to improve the level of compliance still further. It has improved its computer systems, introduced road shows throughout the country, advertised nationally, and produced a publicity video which is widely available. July will see the implementation of late filing penalties. These will apply to any company which delivers its accounts to the registrar after the statutory period has expired. I hope to see a further increase in compliance as a result of these measures.

As my hon. Friend is aware, the Parliamentary Commissioner found no evidence of maladministration in the actions of my Department's financial services division or of companies' investigation branch in relation to this case. When the matter was first drawn to the attention of the companies' investigation branch, my officials established that the Wiltshire police were undertaking investigations into associated business concerns. The police told my officials that they wished to extend their inquiries to Selective Investment Brokers. It was accordingly suggested that the complainant should contact the police with the complaint. This was eventually done, and my Department decided not to undertake an investigation under either the Companies Act or the Financial Services Act.

That decision was entirely in accordance with my Department's long standing and sensible policy not to duplicate police inquiries into a company. Such duplication would be wasteful of investigative resources and might prejudice possible police action. However, my Department will always consider whether to use its investigatory powers if requested to do so by the police or by the prosecuting authorities looking into the case.

Thereafter, as is stated in the Parliamentary Commissioner's report, the police said to my officials that the client of the firm of actuaries who had contacted my Department had declined to make a formal complaint. The police officer concerned told my Department that he would be reporting to the Director of Public Prosecutions. He said that he would be suggesting in that report that the Director should request my Department to undertake a confidential investigation under section 447 of the Companies Act, as my hon. Friend mentioned.

The Director, having considered the matter, decided that the police report should not be passed to my Department. I understand that he was satisfied that the police had been unable to find any additional evidence which would add weight to the material which the complainant had passed to my Department. My Department took no further action.

The Parliamentary Commissioner weighed whether the DTI should have ordered a further inquiry at this point. He concluded:

> "I do not consider that DTI acted maladministratively in waiting on the DPP or, in the absence of further approaches about SIBL from members of the public, in not having initiated a section 447 enquiry into SIBL before its liquidation."

The ombudsman is an independent figure who is empowered to look into these matters and to have a judgment independent of Ministers. His report speaks for itself.

Following the liquidation, it became apparent that much was wrong with SIBL and a further police investigation ensued. That resulted on 7 February in Mr. Anthony Wheeler, the principal director of the company, being sentenced to four years' imprisonment on counts of fraudulent trading, theft and breaches of the Prevention of Fraud (Investment) Act 1958.

About 180 companies will be investigated under section 447 this year. The Department is not shy to use the section when it is the right means of investigating and when police inquiries are not already under way. In the first three quarters of this financial year, to 31 December 1991, 14 companies were wound up by the court on the petition of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State following investigations under the section. There were also 19 prosecutions. Additionally, a great deal of valuable information obtained through the use of these powers was made available through the statutory gateways to other regulators to assist them in the exercise of their functions. I am determined that Department of Trade and Industry and other regulatory powers should be used to expose fraud and malpractice wherever it is suspected. I have today met City regulators to discuss with them how they can improve their chances of detecting it earlier.

I am extremely sorry about the losses that my hon. Friend's constituents have incurred, but I rest on the ombudsman's report.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 4 March 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON UNDERGROUND BILL

Order for consideration of Lords amendments read.
To be considered tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Soviet Union

1. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the programme of aid and assistance for the former Soviet Union.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Britain has pledged more than £80 million in bilateral aid to the former Soviet Union and is contributing through the EC budget about 18 per cent. of Community technical assistance and food aid, which totals £595 million. The Community has also agreed a programme of food credits worth £1·225 billion.

Mr. Pawsey: I thank my right hon. Friend for that full reply. Clearly, the United Kingdom and the Community are doing a great deal to assist the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe generally. However, what additional measures will be taken, particularly to assist with the distribution of foodstuffs once they reach eastern Europe? My right hon. Friend will agree that empty bellies make poor counsellors. What positive action will be taken to assist people in eastern Europe and in the former states of the Soviet Union?

Mr. Hurd: It is important that food should be not only dispatched but distributed to those who need it. That is why my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has ensured that the Crown Agents, for example, are working with the authorities in St. Petersburg so that our feed aid for animals around St. Petersburg—£20 million worth—reaches its destination. We are ensuring that the beef that we sent to St. Petersburg and Murmansk has got through, and we are tackling the remaining problems of distribution in Moscow.

Mr. Flannery: Is there not a grave danger of the former Soviet Union lapsing into anarchy? Did we not recently see riots on the streets of Moscow, with two factions fighting it out? Therefore, should we not use our strength and influence to try to organise throughout the west a Marshall plan, similar to the one after the second world war, to strengthen the hands of those who are doing their utmost to stave off anything approximating to anarchy?

Mr. Hurd: It is certainly in our interest that the republics of the former Soviet Union should not disintegrate into anarchy and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) said, starvation. We believe that the next step, in considering large-scale help for the former republics, should be taken through the International Monetary Fund. That is the orderly and sensible way to proceed, which is why we are pressing and encouraging others to press for the earliest possible membership of the former Soviet republics in the IMF. Meanwhile, we are pressing for IMF teams already in Moscow and elsewhere to start preparing the ground.

Dr. Michael Clark: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a delegation from the Inter-Parliamentary Union has just returned from Russia and the Ukraine? Does he agree that western aid should be given to and deployed in the former Soviet Union with care and tact so that those proud people are not humiliated or offended? Is he also aware that there is apprehension about the possibility of strings being attached to western aid? Under what conditions is western aid being given to the former Soviet Union?

Mr. Hurd: I know of the visit and am grateful to my hon. Friend and his colleagues for undertaking it. There is no doubt that such contact now is particularly useful. My hon. Friend is entirely right about the pride of the Russian people, which must be respected as we seek to help them.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) said, when people are starving, one does not impose conditions. But the republics know that the help that is increasingly coming in technical assistance and the possible eventual macroeconomic help is tied to the prospect of reform and is dependent on the continued impetus of both political and economic reform.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Foreign Secretary awarere is a case for feeding people who are starving in Russia, as there is for those who are starving in Africa and Latin America countries? There is also a case to be made for the Government to spend more money on overseas aid. There is a case to be made for those starving and living in cardboard boxes just around the corner——

Mr. Speaker: Question, please.

Mr. Skinner: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there is no case to be made for taxpayers' money being used to prop up Boris Yeltsin, who will turn out to be the David Owen of Russia?

Mr. Hurd: I do not know if the hon. Gentleman has got around to reading his *Financial Times* this morning. If he has, he will have seen the eloquent article by the Russian Finance Minister. The case that he makes, which we must listen to, is for help from this country in privatisation, and the creation and stimulation of the free market and the other basics of prosperity.

Africa

2. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the prospects for increased democracy in Africa.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): The prospects for democracy in Africa are probably better now than at any time in the post-colonial era. Although there are some countries where little progress has been made, most African nations now have, or are moving towards, multi-party political systems.

Mr. Dickens: Bearing in mind that encouraging answer, may I ask whether the Minister considers that the worsening drought in southern Africa may have implications for the process of democracy in Africa?

Mrs. Chalker: Yes, indeed I do. We are deeply concerned about the dreadful effects of the drought in southern Africa. That is why, as a first step today, I have approved £2·5 million each to Zambia and Zimbabwe in balance of payments aid to ease the difficulties that will be caused by the need to import food. We have also agreed on a further £3·9 million worth of food aid to Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique and Mozambiquan refugees in Malawi.

Sir David Steel: Following the welcome change in Kenya's constitution towards a multi-party democracy, and in view of the unhappy news from Kenya yesterday of the repression of demonstrations in Nairobi, will the Minister not only advise that country on the international standards of multi-party democracy, which she has ennunciated from the Dispatch Box before, but suggest that, in order to disarm such demonstrations, it is time that the Government start a dialogue with the Opposition on both the timing and ground rules for an election?

Mrs. Chalker: The right hon. Gentleman knows that we shall encourage dialogue wherever it is needed to promote a democratic system. The incidents in Nairobi are regrettable, but we deplore all use of violence and provocation, whether from protesters, the Opposition or Government forces. The way to resolve political differences is through debate, dialogue and the ballot box, not on the streets. That is why we urge all Kenyan political leaders to open up a constructive dialogue on free and fair elections.

Mr. Lord: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best method for underpinning democracy is through economic stability? Has she seen the great efforts being made this year to obtain private inward investment into southern Africa in the form of conferences and other initiatives? Will she give all such initiatives her fullest support?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is right: economic stability is the only foundation for the sound development of democracy. Therefore, it is absolutely critical that open market systems are developed, subsidy is abolished and there is a proper market economy in all parts of southern Africa. That is one reason why we are putting so much effort as a nation into helping countries in southern Africa to achieve just that.

Mr. Kaufman: On the question of democracy in the republic of South Africa, does the right hon. Lady agree that our objective should be to ensure that the white electorate fully appreciates that South Africa will face unprecedented international isolation should there be a "No" vote in this month's referendum? Should not we support the negotiating process now under way through the Conference for a Democratic South Africa, and so secure the maintenance of international pressure for rapid progress towards a new, genuinely democratic constitutional order? Will those be the objectives of this Government this month, as they will be the objectives of the Labour Government next month?

Mrs. Chalker: Through the whole of their period in office, the Government have supported efforts to do away with apartheid and to ensure that when change came with President de Klerk, there would be a start towards a new constitution and the transitional arrangements that are now being discussed within the Conference for a Democratic South Africa.

We have always sought to maintain contact with all the parties and we have urged them to build on the fundamental principles already agreed. Through our influence, we shall do all that we can to ensure that there is a "Yes" vote in the referendum, because that is the only way to achieve a peaceful, prosperous, successful and democratic South Africa.

United Nations

3. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives Her Majesty's Government have proposed for reform of the United Nations.

Mr. Hurd: In January, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister convened a meeting of the Security Council at Heads of Government level, which called on the Secretary-General to report on how the peacekeeping role of the United Nations could be strengthened.

We proposed the appointment of a United Nations disaster relief co-ordinator and the introduction of a United Nations arms register, and both proposals have been accepted. We have also encouraged the new secretary-general to reform the secretariat and we applaud his first achievements in that area.

Mr. Loyden: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the global position in which the United Nations was established has little relevance to today's world? Is it not true that, because of the break-up of the Soviet Union, the balance of power has shifted towards the United States? Does not that make it difficult for the United Nations to carry out a peacekeeping role? Do not the problems of the third world, which is still suffering economic deprivation, need to be addressed? Therefore, will not there be a need for radical changes in the United Nations if it is to maintain any confidence and respect throughout the world?

Mr. Hurd: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. The United Nations has found it much easier to undertake a peacekeeping role since the end of the cold war because its efforts are no longer frustrated by the clash between the super-powers. We are fortunate that the super-power that remains has no instinct or appetite for dominating the world by oppression and force.

Sir Michael Marshall: My right hon. Friend referred to the summit. Will he take this opportunity to say what progress is being made on the question of preventive diplomacy, for which the secretary-general has set a deadline of 1 July? Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that he will take fully into account the role of parliamentary diplomacy through the conference on security and co-operation in Europe, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the North Atlantic Assembly and other relevant organisations?

Mr. Hurd: The secretary-general has been asked to produce his report on a range of subjects by 1 July. I am sure that he will not neglect the parliamentary context—which my hon. Friend leads in the IPU. It is an important element in preventing conflicts reaching the stage of war.

International Meetings

5. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the most important international non-EC meetings which he expects to attend this year.

Mr. Hurd: There is the North Atlantic Council consultative meeting and the conference on security and co-operation in Europe ministerial meeting this month; the North Atlantic Council meeting in Oslo in June; the economic summit of the Group of Seven in Munich in July and the CSCE summit in Helsinki in July, both of which I shall attend with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister; the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September; the CSCE council of ministers in Stockholm in early December, and Western European Union ministerial meetings in June and November.

Mr. Hague: Will my right hon. Friend reflect on the fact that when he attends those international meetings and many others in the EC he will discover that Britain's standing, authority and reputation are vastly higher than they were a few years ago? Is not that a tribute to the work done not only by him but by his recent predecessors? Would it not be a national tragedy if that were all to be thrown away by any alternative team of Ministers, who were wrong about every international defence issue in the 1980s and who carry no conviction in the 1990s?

Mr. Hurd: That is rather a difficult question to answer. I hope that we have a reasonable record on piloting Britain's foreign affairs through troubled times. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and his team are always ingenious in defending whatever the policy of the moment is; it is just that that policy is changed so often that it leaves a little bit of a question mark over whether they have any plan or direction at all.

Mr. Galloway: When the Foreign Secretary visits the Group of Seven summit in the summer, will he bang some heads together to try to bring forward a new deal for the third world? The announcements made by the Minister for Overseas Development a few minutes ago about the food situation were welcome, but people in Africa are starving and the terms of trade that they receive in their dealings with the developed countries, the problem of their huge indebtedness to the developed countries and the world order over which we now preside are such that hundreds of millions of people live on the edge of catastrophe. The Group of Seven has a responsibility to the human race to deal with that this summer.

Mr. Hurd: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman is looking forward to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and myself going to the G7 summit in mid-July. He was specific on that point; rather markedly so I thought. We shall be delighted to seek out his advice just before we go if he is still a Member of the House at the time. Of course he is right on his serious point about debt and that is why my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been so energetic in pressing what are called the Trinidad terms to enable the poorest countries of the world to benefit from those terms. We shall do our best within reason and common sense to ease those burdens as best we can.

Miss Emma Nicholson: In the wake of the impressive list of meetings that the Secretary of State will be attending for the remainder of this year, will he encourage the Security Council to have a special meeting, after Britain's anticipated endorsement of the Van den Stoel resolution on the destruction of human rights within Iraq at least to ensure that human rights monitors are in south Iraq to protect the unfortunate Shias?

Mr. Hurd: We are worried about the extent to which Saddam Hussein is still able to inflict hardship and persecution on the peoples of Iraq, both the Kurds in the north and the Shias in the south. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development is trying to arrange a donors conference to bring further help, but, as my hon. Friend would agree, the best relief of human rights would be if the Iraqis accepted resolutions 706 and 712 and began to sell oil, the proceeds of which could go to the relief of poverty as well as the compensation of those whom they have victimised.

Mr. Foulkes: I advise the Secretary of State to ensure that all his flight bookings are transferable. However, in the few weeks remaining to him, will he pursue at all relevant meetings the question of the massacre at Santa Cruz in East Timor. In particular, will he urge that the Indonesians should immediately abandon the trial of the two East Timorese survivors and press for a full United Nations investigation? Finally, will he make it clear, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has done, that British aid and trade depend on Indonesia seeking an agreed solution and ending its illegal occupation of East Timor.

Mr. Hurd: If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that our trade with Indonesia depends on a resolution to that question, that is a new and rather remarkable policy statement. The hon. Gentleman must not beg policy in that way. If he does, his place on even the Opposition Front Bench will be at stake. He is, however, right about the basic seriousness of the problem, which I discussed with the Indonesian Foreign Minister—as, perhaps, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has done. The report published by the Indonesian Government and the action that they subsequently took—for example, against certain military commanders involved in the incident—show that they are not concerned simply with a cover-up. I agree that further action needs to be taken. We are in close touch with the Community and the United Nations about how the issue should be progressed.

Vietnam

6. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the United States Government

regarding that country's aid and trade embargo against Vietnam and its veto against Vietnam's membership of the IMF and the World bank.

Mrs. Chalker: We regularly discuss those issues in the relevant forums.

Mr. Mullin: Is the Secretary of State aware that the United States still appears to be at war with Vietnam and that it is blocking all aid and trade in the International Monetary Fund and World bank and through misuse of the COCOM regulations? Only recently vice-president Quayle remarked that most of the refugees in Hong Kong are political—which, as the Secretary of State will be aware, led to a halving of applications for voluntary repatriation. No quantity of private representations in the relevant forums will make any difference. It is about time that the Government said something publicly to the psychopaths who run American foreign policy, with a view to achieving change.

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that United States Government policy is a matter for the United States. Now that change is coming, we are trying to ensure that Vietnam will have access to international financial institutions. We already keep under review financial contributions to the support group, because clearing the arrears to the IFIs is absolutely critical. Those to the IMF already amount to £108 million, and to the Asian Development bank, $6 million. There is no United Kingdom trade embargo. This country is Vietnam's fifth largest investor, at some $143·6 million. British industry is taking a clear interest in the opportunities that exist in Vietnam, and I hope that others will follow our example.

Sir Peter Blaker: While I cannot associate myself with some of the language used by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), many people feel that it is high time that the United States modernised its economic relations with Vietnam and started to observe the common action programme agreed between 24 countries in respect of the Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong. In view of the events surrounding the Haitian boat people who attempted to enter the United States, does it make any sense for that country to continue opposing the implementation of the common action programme?

Mrs. Chalker: We consistently encourage observance of the common action programme in respect of Vietnamese boat people and in the light of events in other parts of the world, such as that to which my right hon. Friend referred. We have done well in trying to ensure that we could help Vietnamese migrants—more than 20,000 of whom have returned from all over the region. The success of our work, with the full support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, leads us to believe that the American Government would do better to adopt a plan similar to our own.

Middle East

7. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current middle east peace talks.

Mr. Hurd: The peace process continued in a fourth round of bilateral negotiations in Washington last week. A regional settlement remains an important and realistic aim. It is encouraging that all parties remain determined to continue the process. I strongly applaud Mr. Baker's continued commitment to pushing for a settlement and we will maintain our full support of that effort.

Mr. Janner: I am sure that the Secretary of State recognises the sensitivities of the middle east peace process. As he knows that the Syrians spent the money that they received for their support during the Gulf war on sophisticated missiles from North Korea—all of which are pointing towards Israel—can he reassure the House that Britain is not getting involved in that arms process? Will he confirm the inaccuracy of reports stating that British Aerospace is involved with Egyptian scientists in uprating scud B missiles for use by the Egyptian army? Surely we must keep out of that arms process, if we are to maintain our nation's influence in the peace process that we all hope will succeed.

Mr. Hurd: The position regarding the supply of arms to Syria remains as it was when Ministers were last questioned about it in the House. As for Egypt, I do not think that the hon. and learned Gentleman is seriously suggesting that it is about to launch an attack on Israel, or is to be feared in that connection. Egypt's pioneering efforts in regard to peacemaking are well established and respected, and I do not consider such a line of questioning helpful.

Sir Dennis Walters: Now that the Palestinians have presented serious proposals on autonomy, does my right hon. Friend agree that no progress can be made unless Israel responds by agreeing to freeze the illegal settlements, and by abiding by the Geneva convention? In that context, is not the continued closure of Bir Zeit university, which was announced the other day, an intolerable provocation, and should not it be condemned?

Mr. Hurd: Clearly, it is good that the Israelis and the Palestinians are sitting around a table in Washington, and that each side is advancing ideas for the future of the occupied territories. That is a considerable plus. I have not yet studied the Palestinian proposals, which, I believe, were tabled only yesterday, but I hope that there will now be proper discussion of the proposals that are on the table.

Given that background, my hon. Friend is right in saying that—as we have often commented—the Israelis ought to halt the policy of establishing settlements in the occupied terrorities which is provocative and, in our view, illegal. I equally deplore the continued closure of Bir Zeit.

8. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet the Israeli ambassador to discuss the Government's policy on the occupied territories.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no specific plans to meet the ambassador, but both he and I have met him recently. We are in regular contact with the Israeli Government at the highest level on this issue.

Ms. Hoey: Will the Minister take time in the next week, as a matter of urgency, to meet the Israeli ambassador and tell him about the feeling in the country generally that the Israeli Government are literally getting away with murder? I refer to the case of Mustapha Akkawi, who was killed after being tortured in prison just over a week ago.

Just what does Israel have to do—what can it get away with—before the Government are prepared to do something internationally about sanctions and to treat Israel as we treat other countries that break the Geneva convention?

Mr. Hogg: Like the hon. Lady, we believe that the fourth Geneva convention—the protocol—applies to the occupied territories. When grave breaches of the convention occur, we raise them frequently, and directly, with the Israelis. The incident mentioned by the hon. Lady is clearly deplorable, as are the deportations that occur from time to time and the closures of universities, about which we have also protested.

The hon. Lady can be sure of this: we do protest to the Israeli Government when there are clear, serious and obvious breaches of international law.

Sir Philip Goodhart: Does my hon. and learned Friend recognise that, in recent years, several hundred Arabs have been murdered by terrorists for co-operating with the Israelis? Does he accept that those brutal killings, which are still taking place, do not help the peace process?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the pattern of killing involving those who are described as collaborators. That is dreadful and we deplore it, as we deplore all violence. It emphasises the importance of trying to push ahead with the peace process that is now under way.

Horn of Africa

9. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his latest view of the prospects for long-term peace *(a)* in Mogadishu and southern Somalia and *(b)* in northern Somalia.

Mrs. Chalker: The situation is very grim for the innocent people of Somalia. We welcome the United Nations initiative on Somalia. We hope that the factions will honour their commitment to a ceasefire in Mogadishu. This must be the first step towards national reconciliation.

Reports from northern Somalia suggest that instability is, once again, growing and clan divisions widening.

Mr. Michael: I am grateful for the Minister's reply and I know that she will have been as horrified as the rest of us by the images and the conflict that was reported from Somalia last weekend. Does she agree that one unfortunate thing about the United Nations effort to seek peace between the factions in the south is the implication that those factions, together, represent a Government? Does she agree that the factions that are fighting in the south have no claim to represent the north, which has the main link with the Somali community in this country, and that all factions in the regions of Somalia must be involved in reaching a settlement that can be expected to last?

Mrs. Chalker: It is extremely important that all the factions—not just the clans but the sub-clans—in northern, southern and central Somalia come together under the United Nations plan for the ceasefire. I sent one of our officials to Mogadishu and northern Somalia just over a week ago. He reports that stores and vehicles belonging to the Save the Children Fund and Médecins sans Frontieres—MSF—have been looted and that individuals have been abused. If that is starting again, it is as bad as what is going on in Mogadishu. It requires all people to be involved in a ceasefire and a total cessation of hostilities if the aid that we are willing to send—we have sent £8 million to Somalia since early last year—is to get to the people who desperately need it.

Mrs. Currie: Given that the appalling tragedy in the Horn of Africa will not end until there is peace, and given the changes in the pattern of the United Nations' work in recent years, which our Government have so actively supported, does the Minister think that we are now reaching a stage where British troops could be deployed under a United Nations banner in humanitarian action as a precursor to effective aid?

Mrs. Chalker: In northern Iraq, we have used British troops to help in that situation. We need a UN relief plan for Somalia as soon as possible. I cannot foretell what proposals it will contain, but without an effective ceasefire no one can be deployed. Having talked to James Jonah following his visit and having seen the national reconciliation plan, I am prepared to consider what is necessary. But we should be very careful not to expect to send troops all over the world. I believe that there are ways of getting local people to participate in their own ceasefire with some help from outside, but it should not need mass troop movements to do it.

Mr. Anderson: The Minister will be aware of the valuable contribution that is made by members of the Somali community in this country and of the tremendous work that is done on their behalf by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael). Since only the United Nations can do the job of peacemaking, is the Minister concerned that just over half the value of the assessments on individual countries for last year has been paid, and will she therefore press other members of the international community to ensure that they give the United Nations the resources to do that necessary peacemaking and peacekeeping job?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman may already have guessed that we have been pressing others to play their part in the important work in which the United Nations is engaged. I shall add that to the list of discussions that I shall be having shortly with other assisting countries who are aiming to relieve the awful effects of the wars, wherever they may be occurring.

Mr. Bowis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is a tragedy if law and order is beginning to break down in the north of Somalia, in what is, after all, the old British Somaliland and is now known to local people as Somaliland? If it is breaking down, it is to some extent because the international community has not recognised the separate nature, if not the independence, of that part of Somalia. Will she do everything within her power, with our European Community partners, to ensure that all the people of Somaliland are listened to, not just the factions in the south who, after all, have an Italian connection rather than a British one?

Mrs. Chalker: I cannot speak too highly of all the British people who have been in the northern part of Somalia seeking to give help and to assist. They will go on doing so, but they can be effective only if the fighting which seems to have broken out and the looting that I described cease. It is not a question whether it is a separate country

—it obviously is not. The relative stability in the months following the purported declaration of independence back in May last year was very welcome and we must do all that we can to re-establish it, but sheer names on pieces of paper will not do so. We must have a relief plan that the United Nations can implement throughout Somalia if there is to be peace and if the people are to be relieved.

EC Presidency

10. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are Her Majesty's Government's principal goals during the United Kingdom presidency of the EC.

Mr. Hurd: Our first job will be to run an efficient presidency. We aim to complete the single market, prepare for enlargement of the Community, support democracy and reform in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe, and prepare the ground for carrying out the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Stevens: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government will remain firm against raising the present European Community budget ceiling and that they will continue to encourage EC financing arrangements based on supply-side economics, not on the massive transfers of money between one country and another through the Commission?

Mr. Hurd: We had a first skirmish on that at the Council on Monday. I do not believe that the Commissioners justified their proposal to raise the ceiling. There is headroom within the existing ceiling—for example, we are not in favour of financing an interventionist industrial policy or increased spending on the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Bernie Grant: If the Foreign Secretary is still here —which I doubt—when Britain takes over the presidency of the European Community, will he insist that some race legislation is passed in the European Community to protect black and minority ethnic citizens when they move around Europe?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that that is a matter within the competence of the Community.

Mr. Onslow: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that our European partners are not losing sight of the need to make the European Commission democratically accountable, any more than they are losing sight of the need to conform to the European Commission directives that we scrupulously honour?

Mr. Hurd: When I talk about implementation of the Maastricht treaty I mean that one of the things that must be done is to set up the arrangements agreed at Maastricht by which member states can be taken to the European Court and punished if they do not carry out obligations that they have assumed.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Secretary of State accept that one of the Government's principal goals during the United Kingdom's presidency of the European Community should be to secure recognition and acceptance of national boundaries by all member states?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that there is any question in the Community of the boundaries between the member states.

Mr. Soames: Has my right hon. Friend seen the excellent proposals tabled by Sir David Williamson for the reform of the bureaucracy running the European Community? Does he agree that if—in his admirable phrase—we are to prevent the Commission interfering in the nooks and crannies of everyday life, it would be greatly to the advantage of all European countries if there were a thorough overhaul of the mechanics for the administration of the Commission?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed. What the Commission has to do now there is a new article in the Maastricht treaty is to ensure that its practice complies with it and that it does not encourage the drafting of legislation or the working out of projects on matters that can perfectly well be dealt with by member states, or even closer to the citizen, and that applies to English and French cheeses.

Mr. Robertson: Of course, this Government will not be responsible for Britain during the presidency—they will be watching from the Opposition Front Bench. That is fortunate for Britain. Is the Foreign Secretary aware that the Government's attitude in Maastricht has left a crippling legacy of anger and resentment among our Community partners about the double opt-out, and that it has even led to a denunciation of the Prime Minister and the Government by their own right-wing allies in the European Community? The new Labour Government who will be elected five weeks tomorrow will immediately sign the social charter and set about getting the social chapter firmly into the treaty itself. By doing so, and by being at the heart of Europe, that Government will be able to represent Britain properly during the presidency.

Mr. Hurd: There seems, not for the first time, to be a division between the Opposition Front Bench and Back Benches. Opposition Back-Bench Members have been questioning my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself on the basis that we shall be here for a long time, whereas Front-Bench spokesmen still nurse the occasional illusion. Let us not shatter that illusion for a week or so. The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) is not usually given to fanciful rhetoric, and if he studies the movement of opinion in Europe he must know that since Maastricht more and more people have begun to comment on the future of Europe in the same sort of way as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I did before. There is no doubt about the direction in which the intellectual tide is flowing. On the whole, that is a good thing. Another reason that we should be against the Labour party is that we should not put them in a position to buck the trend.

Russia

11. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further assistance he is providing to help political and economic reform in Russia.

13. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British relations with the Russian Federation.

15. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the United Kingdom is assisting the process of political and economic reform in Russia.

Mr. Hurd: Our relations with the Russian Federation are excellent. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office will visit Russia on 9 March. We have strongly supported Russia's application to join the IMF. We have pledged more than £80 million in bilateral aid to Russia and other republics of the former Soviet Union. I have already given the House the details about Community aid in which we participate.

Mr. Macdonald: Will the Foreign Secretary also help to provide a breathing space for the Russian Government, by supporting their call for a suspension of interest payments on the debt? Would not it be a disaster if Russia ended up having to pay as much in interest rates as it received in aid? Would not that fatally undermine the radical, bold and much-needed programme that President Yeltsin is now trying to push through?

Mr. Hurd: The crucial factor is that Russia and the other republics should be eligible for macroeconomic aid on an IMF basis. For that to happen there has to be an arrangement about the former Soviet Union's debts. An agreement has been reached. It is important that it should be honoured and that republics such as the Ukraine, which have not yet found a way of doing so, should join in the process. That is a necessary part of providing the kind of aid for which there is an increasingly strong case.

Mr. Arnold: Is not one of the problems of Russia in its current economic difficulties that the country might turn in on itself and revert to its usual historic xenophobic tendencies? Is not it our job to keep open the window on the west? What are we doing in terms of establishing contacts right across the range with Russia, to keep it closely tied in with western Europe?

Mr. Hurd: We are doing more and more, with all kinds of projects. I shall name just the latest, launched yesterday evening—the British Emergency Action for Russia and the Republics Trust, founded by Lady Braithwaite, the wife of the ambassador—which is trying to bring together in an imaginative way charities and non-governmental organisations in this country to make contacts and help to build up that kind of self-help in Russia. That kind of spontaneous effort, by all kinds of people in this country, will be just as important in the long run as what Governments do.

Dr. Kim Howells: Does the Secretary of State agree that until now, there has been little to encourage the new democracies of central and eastern Europe to change their minds about the EC being a rich man's club? Will he do all that he can to ensure that within the EC, there is some agreement about how we shall tackle the enormous problems, which will not be tackled by charity, however welcome that is? If we do not do that, shall not we see hordes of people sweeping from eastern Europe into western Europe simply looking for jobs?

Mr. Hurd: That is right and that is why we have pressed energetically for almost two years for the association agreements, which include trade and political discussions, with Poland, with Hungary and with Czechoslovakia. That is why we are now pressing for trade and co-operation agreements with the republics further to the east. Effort on all those fronts, including trade and being willing to open our markets to goods from those republics, is necessary. We shall continue to press for that and, as I have said, it is one of the priorities of our presidency.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is crucial to persuade Russia that its political stability depends on the stability of the region as a whole, especially its neighbours? To that end, will he encourage Russia to use its good offices to intervene in the appalling situation in Nagorny Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan, if Russia is to win its spurs as a member of the Security Council and ultimately as a member of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe?

Mr. Hurd: I urged especially Mr. Kozyrev, the Russian Foreign Minister, to persevere with his efforts. Realistically speaking, it will be a little time before there is an answer to the terrifying question between Armenia and Azerbaijan. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State will go to that part of the former Soviet Union next week and I look forward to hearing what he recommends.

Lockerbie Bombing

12. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what developments there have been in relation to the attempts by Her Majesty's Government to secure the extradition of the two Libyan nationals accused of bombing flight PA 103 in 1988; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 731 on 21 January endorsing certain requests put to Libya on 27 November by the United Kingdom, the United States and France in connection with the bombings of flights Pan Am 103 and UTA 772. Those included the request that Libya surrender those accused of the bombing of flight Pan Am 103 for trial in Scotland or the United States. The secretary-general will report formally on the Libyan response to the Security Council later today. I have, however, seen an advance copy of the report, which makes it clear that Libya has still failed to comply with resolution 731.

Mr. Grant: Will the Minister confirm that under the terms of the 1971 Montreal convention, which was signed both by Libya and by Britain, any dispute can be referred for arbitration to the International Court of Justice? Now that Libya has referred the matter to the International Court of Justice, will Britain desist from trying to get the United Nations Security Council to impose sanctions or take military action against Libya until the International Court of Justice has ruled on the matter?

Mr. Hogg: Her Majesty's Government have the greatest respect for the International Court of Justice and we look to co-operating with it. However, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the Libyan Government have been taking steps in parallel—that is, they have made an application to the ICJ and, at the same time, they are making a response to the UN Security Council. They are working in parallel. That being so, it is appropriate for us to act in a similar way.

Mr. Allason: Will my hon. and learned Friend confirm that, apart from the political complexities, the matter is straightforward? Two suspected murderers have had international arrest warrants issued against them and the Government's intention is to pursue those arrest warrants. Will my right hon. Friend confirm to the House that there will be no secret deal and no secret negotiations, but that the international arrest warrants will be executed as soon as the opportunity arises?

Mr. Hogg: Her Majesty's Government have put the position plainly and it has been endorsed by the Security Council. There is a prima facie case against two named individuals which is sufficiently strong to justify the issue of warrants. We are anxious—indeed, we are determined —to ensure that those individuals appear before a competent court as speedily as possible. We think that the courts of Scotland are well placed to judge them.

Cyprus

14. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to have discussions about the Cyprus problem with his European Community colleagues.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): No. The EC has made clear its continuing full support for the United Nations Secretary-General's mission of good offices, which offers the best hope of progress towards a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the intercommunal dispute. We shall continue to give full and active support to the United Nations.

Mr. Dunnachie: I thank the Minister for his reply. Is it not time that the Government stood up and were counted by telling the Turkish Government to remove their troops from occupied Cyprus and saying that if they do not do so the British Government will veto any attempt by Turkey to join the EC?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I share, and I believe that the whole House shares, the hon. Gentleman's frustration at the tragic situation in Cyprus. But I am sure that, as a reasonable man, he will agree on reflection that the wisest course of action for the Government is to continue to support the secretary-general's efforts. That is what we shall do. Of course, we shall also continue to encourage the other guarantor powers,—Greece and Turkey—to play an equally constructive role. I am sure that that is the way forward.

Dr. Twinn: I thank my right hon. Friend for his clear statement of the Government's policy on Cyprus. Does he agree that Cyprus's application to join the EC provides a positive opportunity for other EC states, including Britain, to take a positive attitude to finding a solution to Cyprus? I hope that our Government will encourage other EC states within the United Nations fully to back up the United Nations and put pressure on Turkey to find an early solution.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) and, indeed, to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and all Members of Parliament for their continued interest in the matter. The EC application was referred on 30 September 1990 to the Commission for an opinion, in accordance with the treaty. When that opinion emerges, we shall, of course, examine it with our partners. But we remain keen, as many partners do, to strengthen relations between the Community and Cyprus.

Mr. Kaufman: Surely the Minister ought to be a great deal more forthright and clear on the subject than that. Will the United Kingdom advocate the early admission of Cyprus to the European Community? Will he say that the United Kingdom will not agree to Turkish membership of the EC so long as any Turkish troops are present in Cyprus against the wishes of the present sovereign Government of Cyprus? Does he agree that Turkey should not be admitted to the European Community until its human rights record is rectified? Will he give active support to a federal solution for Cyprus which does justice to both communities within the integrity of the sovereignty of the republic of Cyprus?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has been rushing up and down the country making what I take it he regards as encouraging noises to Cypriots, Kashmiris and others. British Cypriots are well able to judge what weight to place on his remarks. The policy of Her Majesty's Government, which is to support the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations is the wisest policy for both the British Government and other Governments in the Community. No amount of faffing around by the right hon. Gentleman will convince either our allies or Cypriots.

Mr. Alexander: The presence of Turkish troops is clearly a hazard which makes life difficult in seeking a compromise agreement. Is it not clear that the northern Cypriots are afraid that if the troops go they will simply be overrun? Is there not a case for the EC to reassure both sides that they can live in peace if the troops go? I underline that the presence of the troops is causing the problem at present.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend that a significant reduction in Turkish troops in northern Cyprus would improve the climate for a negotiated settlement. However, we also have to recognise that the Turks are unlikely to agree to that in advance of a settlement. My hon. Friend and the House will be aware that our contribution and support for the secretary-general is not merely a matter of words. We make a substantial troop contribution to the United Nations peace-keeping force in Cyprus, UNFICYP, which we think is a tangible measure of the efforts that we are giving to peace there.

Soviet Union

16. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit the former Soviet Union to discuss matters relating to technology transfer and aid for the republics.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State visited Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine in January and discussed such question then. I visited St. Petersburg also in January.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Minister believe that a vitally important stabilisation fund for Russia can be made to work successfully without tackling the problems of food supply in Russian markets, especially when we consider the consequences for money supply and wage inflation?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman will know from our debate this morning that the United Kingdom is fully ready to play its part in providing the financial assistance, on a multilateral basis, which is likely to be necessary to support an IMF programme—such as the stabilisation fund or some other suitable instrument—for the former Soviet Union, and especially for Russia. I sought to explain to him then and before that we not only need to sort out finance but to get on with distributing the food that they can grow, with the production of the food that they do not grow, and sort out their system of feeding the people. That is why, through the know-how fund, endless new ideas and help available, which are being paid for by this country to assist with the production and distribution of food. That work will continue, but so will work on economic reconstruction.

Northern Ireland (Prison Management)

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Brooke): With permission, I should like to make a statement on Lord Colville's report on the management of paramilitary prisoners in Belfast prison. Before dealing with the substance of his report, which is published today, I should like to express my thanks to my noble Friend Lord Colville for the thoroughness and speed with which he carried out a very difficult task.

The House will recall the tragic events which gave rise to his review. On 24 November last a device exploded in the dining hall in C wing in Belfast prison. One prisoner was killed outright, another mortally wounded, and several others less seriously injured. The efforts of staff in rendering first aid immediately after the explosion were in the highest traditions of the Northern Ireland prison service and earned the thanks of the relatives of the prisoners who died. On 26 November the Provisional IRA admitted responsibility for the outrage.

Three inquiries were established: a murder investigation by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, which continues; and an internal and necessarily confidential review of security procedures in the prison by a senior official of the prison service. Most of its recommendations have been implemented and decisions on the others will be made shortly. The third strand was Lord Colville's inquiry into the operational policy for the management of prisoners of opposing factions in Belfast prison.

The central conclusion of his report is strongly against further segregation within the prison system. It also recommends: that, in Belfast prison, numbers in A wing, the only wing at present housing exclusively paramilitary prisoners, should be reduced; that, out of concern for visitors' safety, those prisoners should have separate visiting arrangements; and that time on remand in custody awaiting trial should be reduced, his preferred method being that the powers in section 8 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 should be used.

I accept the report. I shall comment on each of the recommendations in turn. First, the question of segregation. Lord Colville brings out very clearly the increased risks posed to security by segregation. He says:

> "All the lessons from history suggest that segregation facilitates escapes, and escapes will give freedom to paramilitary fanatics, of both factions, who will kill and maim outside prison."

On security grounds I am satisfied that Lord Colville's recommendation is right.

Moreover, I am also satisfied that segregation would make it more difficult to offer constructive regimes for inmates, as it already has at the Maze. It would constrain the flexible and effective use of the available accommodation. The opportunity which segregation would provide the paramilitaries to reinforce their cohesiveness within the prison would have an adverse effect on the morale and self-esteem of staff.

I turn now to the reduction of numbers in A wing. There are obvious advantages in keeping untried prisoners together in a more central location. I am pleased to tell the House that the governor can implement this recommendation within the next few weeks, when the necessary construction work will have been completed, without the need to move those prisoners out of Belfast prison.

The recommendation on separate visits is not free from difficulty, but Lord Colville believes that the change is justified in the interests of the safety of visitors, and I have concluded that it should for that reason be accepted.

The case for cutting down remand times has always been strong. Lord Colville concludes that it is now unanswerable and I accept that conclusion. Delays in these cases are, of course, inextricably linked to the terrorist situation, which gravely complicates the investigation of crime and the criminal process as a whole. But it is not acceptable that people should remain for long periods without a trial. Together with my ministerial colleagues, I am urgently considering how the very real problems which exist might best be resolved so that those unaeceptable delays can be overcome.

Segregation remains a key objective of the paramilitaries. In resisting campaigns by both factions, prison governors and their staff have implemented the policy of successive Administrations. There now have been three major reports by respected and independent figures which say that segregation is wrong. Lord Gardiner, in his report published in January 1975 on measures to deal with terrorism, recommended that special category status—segregation writ large—should be ended and that the influence of the terrorist leaders must be reduced. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, Sir James Hennessy, in his 1984 report into the Maze escape of the previous year was in no doubt about the increased threat to security posed by segregation. Lord Colville, having taken evidence from a wide range of people, has come to the same conclusion.

My predecessors accepted the recommendations of Gardiner and Hennessy and I, in turn, have concluded that I should accept the recommendations of Lord Colville. I do not believe that it would be acceptable to this House for the clear stand which has been taken over the years against segregation to be set aside as a result of paramilitary violence and in the face of unequivocal advice from three such distinguished sources and the powerful arguments that they have deployed.

The bomb explosion in C wing in Belfast was an act of terrorism no different from the murder of workmen at Teebane or the killing of people who happened to be in a betting shop at the wrong time. None of those events will deflect the Government from what they believe to be in the best interests of the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I thank the Secretary of State for coming quickly to the House to make this statement.

Before I deal with the content of the statement, my hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) has asked me to convey his apologies for his absence this afternoon. He was on his way to the airport this morning when he came upon the scene of the foul murder of one of his constituents, who was known to him. He has asked me to express his horror at such a vicious killing—a horror tht I know the House shares. My hon. Friend was looking forward particularly to making his observations on Lord Colville's important report.

Lord Colville was asked to produce his report in the aftermath of another vile act of savagery within Belfast prison. We owe him our thanks for the thoroughness and rigour of his report—qualities which we have come to expect from him. We welcome the fact that the

Government have been prepared to accept his recommendations so quickly and largely in full. Our only regret is that the Government have been unable to follow a similar course with many other recommendations that Lord Colville has made about other issues associated with prisons in Northern Ireland.

It is also proper on such an occasion that we should pay tribute to the staff of Belfast prison. They have to work in very primitive conditions, in a highly charged and emotional atmosphere. The staff, at all levels, conduct their difficult task with bravery and dedication. We should pay them proper respect for doing a job that many in the House and within the country would not be happy to carry out.

A number of questions arise from the report and the incident that gave rise to it. The Opposition are glad that the Secretary of State has decided to accept the recommendations. In particular, we are pleased that he will use his powers to reduce remand periods, a course of action that we have urged on him and his predecessors for quite some time. What time limits is he considering? Will he flesh out what he said about the discussions that he will be having with his ministerial colleagues? The House and the country would like further information on this because the reasons for these long periods of remand in Northern Ireland give rise to many accusations.

Will the Secretary of State accept that the physical state of Her Majesty's prison in Belfast, despite recent improvements, is still very much a blot on the face of the Northern Ireland prison service? We know that much money is being spent and many improvements are to be made, but it is still an old, expensive, badly designed prison, which will always cause problems not only for the prisoners but for the staff.

Can the Secretary of State assure the House that prisoners will be kept in humane, secure, sanitary and safe conditions? Will he assure the House that he will take whatever action is necessary to ensure that this is the case? Lord Colville spoke about the best of private practice in Humberside. Will the Secretary of State be able to establish the same sort of regime in Belfast prison, as we shall ensure that it is maintained in the Humberside prison once it is brought back into public control?

Mr. Brooke: I know that the House would want to respond to the apology that the hon. Gentleman made on behalf of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). I am sure that the House will join the hon. Gentleman in his condemnation of the murder of Mr. Gray in County Armagh this morning.

I am grateful that the hon. Gentleman thanked my noble Friend Lord Colville, as I did. I am particularly grateful for his tribute to the prison staff in Belfast prison and throughout the prison service in Northern Ireland. It was my privilege to meet a number of the staff who were directly involved in the incident after it occurred, and I join the hon. Gentleman in his admiration for the work that they do.

It will take a little time to conclude our examination of the various steps that we can take to improve the remand period. Some steps have been taken and we can take further steps, but I would not want to be drawn today on how we can determine the target times. I have accepted the spirit of Lord Colville's recommendation.

As to the improvements to Belfast prison, it is known that a rehabilitation of it is envisaged, but that is necessarily somewhat more for the longer term. As to Lord Colville's recommendation to which the governor has reacted, the consideration that the hon. Gentleman mentioned will have been taken into account in the rearrangements made.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): The Secretary of State will know that we wish to be associated with his tributes to the prison staff and to Lord Colville.

On the basic principle of segregation, the Secretary of State will know that we agree with Lord Colville. Nevertheless, as the Secretary of State will also know, there is a de facto separation in A wing. Will the Secretary of State give us an assurance that prisoners there will not be compelled to mix?

As to the general position of the prisoners, the right hon. Gentleman will know of the general condition in the prison, and that the length of time that people spend on remand is crucial. I have seen plans for the refurbishment that the prison governor wishes to take place and for the restructuring of the cells, and I hope that the Secretary of State will accept the prison governor's ideas and implement them as soon as possible. When will refurbishment take place?

We accept Lord Colville's views on time limits for remand, and his view that the Scottish model is the best one to follow is right. What is the problem with regard to the length of time on remand? Lord Colville says that delays are not caused by lack of prosecuting counsel, that there is no shortage of court accommodation, and that delays are not caused by requests for a particular defence counsel. What, then, is the problem?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's tribute to Lord Colville and the prison staff. His first question related to the de facto arrangements within Belfast prison. Following representations in 1990 by certain public representatives, the Government introduced new unlock arrangements to reduce the possibility of confrontation between the factions. Those involve staff making an assumption about which faction will accept the offer of exercise or evening association. Those sensible and pragmatic arrangements fall far short of segregation, and I confirm that the position will remain as the hon. Gentleman asked.

The hon. Gentleman asked about remand times. When the enabling powers on the application of statutory time limits to which I referred in my statement were taken in 1987—they were renewed in 1991—the then Minister of State said that the Government would have to be confident that any scheme was unlikely to have the effect of procuring the release on bail, or even the discharge, of a person indicted for serious terrorist crime. That prospect was still a possibility when the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 was debated, and it remains so today. Therefore, that consideration will weigh with us in examining the issue.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the difficulty of raising the time limit. Several conditions will apply. He will know from his research that the number of weeks on remand had been falling and that the trend then reversed. One of the questions that we have been asking ourselves is why that change occurred. The upsurge in terrorist violence since 1989 greatly complicated investigations by

[Mr. Brooke]

the RUC and has resulted in a number of complex, multi-defendant trials, which largely negated the effectiveness of our initiatives.

There is no value judgment in what I am saying—I am simply being descriptive. Additional factors have been the increasing tendency of the defence to challenge police notes, and to request ESDA—electrostatic data analysis —tests and the problems experienced by the RUC in interviewing witnesses in certain areas.

I reiterate that the issues responsible for the delay in remand times are being considered urgently in the light of the reversal of the trend.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I join in the expressions of thanks to Lord Colville for his report and to the prison staff for their excellent work in difficult circumstances.

There is a real problem with lengthy remands in custody. Has the Secretary of State noticed that, when a case comes to trial, the defendant or defendants sometimes plead guilty at that late stage? Can discussions take place to ensure that, if a defendant is to plead guilty, his case is brought before the court as quickly as possible?

Mr. Brooke: I shall look into the hon. Gentleman's question. It may be helpful to the House if I list the administrative measures that have been introduced in the past few years to help reduce waiting times. They include: a review of the organisation and staffing levels in the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, relevant sections of the RUC and the Northern Ireland forensic science laboratory; the establishment of a fast stream to identify and take forward cases that can be brought to trial relatively quickly; the appointment of a presiding judge at Belfast Crown court to oversee the listing of cases, and two additional High Court judges, one additional county court judge and 12 additional Queen's counsel, significantly increasing the number of senior counsel available for criminal cases.

In answer to the question by the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), I should have said that the major building work at Belfast prison is in preparation. The Government are taking it seriously, but I do not wish to commit myself to the precise moment at which it will be done.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I also wish to express my appreciation of the work of Lord Colville and my satisfaction at the fact that the Secretary of State has been able to accept Lord Colville's recommendations. I am glad that the Secretary of State is working towards implementing the remand recommendations, while understanding the difficulties. Will the right hon. Gentleman undertake to report progress to the House as soon as he can?

The Secretary of State referred to the internal and necessarily confidential inquiry into security procedures, and said that decisions were expected shortly. Naturally, I do not ask him to reveal the nature of those recommendations, but can he say whether there has been full consultation with the prison staff, both about matters that may have been thrown up by the security inquiry and about the implications of the intentions regarding the numbers in A wing? Have they met with the understanding and backing of the staff?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he said about Lord Colville. I shall as soon as possible vouchsafe further information on the recommendations on remand times that we are considering. Most of the recommendations of the internal security review at the prison have been implemented. Unless we are prepared to countenance draconian measures that would seriously and adversely affect the quality of life for all prisoners and their visitors, absolute security cannot be guaranteed.

The prison service has rightly earned praise, both in the Province and elsewhere, for the overall quality of the regime that it provides. Neither it nor I wish to make life less tolerable for the many because of the actions of the few. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the prison service has always made it clear that it will seek properly to carry out the Government's decisions about the prison regime.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I am all for integration, as distinct from segregation, in Northern Ireland, but is not relative integration among paramilitary prisons presenting many problems? The significant point in Lord Colville's reports seems to be that, if groups are segregated, it leads to cohesion within them, which means that escapes and other activities are more likely. Relative integration begins to break that down. Are there not other methods, apart from relative integration, to break down that cohesion?

Mr. Brooke: I think that the central point of Lord Colville's report is that segregation makes the planning of escapes easier. The fact that those held on remand in Belfast prison are prisoners who have recently been arrested and whom the paramilitaries would particularly like to have outside prison reinforces Lord Colville's recommendation, to which I think the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) gave support.

Separation is a word that has been quoted as the antithesis to segregation, perhaps along the lines mentioned by the hon. Gentleman. The governor has already introduced sensible arrangements to reduce the chances of confrontation. It is significant that the prisoners to whom Lord Colville spoke drew no distinction between separation and segregation.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): My colleagues and I should like to express our sympathy to the relatives of the person most recently murdered in Northern Ireland. We have repeatedly condemned violence, terrorism and murder. The report came about partly as a result of the murder of one of my constituents in Belfast prison, which naturally heightened concern among prisoners and their relatives outside prison for the safety of prisoners.

What progress has been made to date in tracking down those responsible for the bomb and the murder? Does the Secretary of State agree that the safety of prisoners and prison staff remains paramount? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that every effort is made as quickly as possible to improve the conditions under which prisoners have to remain in Belfast prison?

Mr. Brooke: I know that the whole House will wish to join me in agreeing with the sympathy expressed by the hon. Gentleman for the family of his constituent who was killed in the incident concerned.

On the question both of the security of prisoners and of the safety of prison staff, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, there can be no guarantee of absolute security—as I said in my answer to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan).

All prison governors take practical and reasonable steps to discharge their duty of care. However, segregation does not guarantee safety; the two prisoners murdered in prison were segregated. Most of the recommendations of the internal security review of Belfast prison have been implemented. I recognise that that mainly concerns prisoners, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that it also concerns prison officers.

I referred in my statement to the Royal Ulster Constabulary investigation into the murder of the hon. Gentleman's constituent. That investigation is continuing, and the RUC hopes to bring it to a conclusion.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leigh): As I understand it, republican terrorist groups get their arms and explosives from the middle east and America. Will the right hon. Gentleman have a quiet word with the Governments concerned, and especially with George Bush, about that matter? Where do the loyalist terrorists get their arms—and, more importantly, what are the Government doing about it?

Mr. Brooke: I would not want to be confrontational towards the hon. Gentleman, but if he wants to make charges about the American Government providing military assistance to anybody within the island of Ireland, it would be better if he presented his evidence privately to me before making such accusations in the House.

The Semtex involved in the episode on which I made my statement today is widely thought to have come in the pre-Eksund consignment from the Libyan Government to the IRA. We should look in that direction for the source of the offence in this instance.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): During the urgent considerations to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, would he be prepared to accept any useful suggestion from those of us who come across fairly regular information in the course of our constituency duties?

Mr. Brooke: If any right hon. or hon. Gentleman wishes to be of assistance privately in that way, the Government would be happy to receive such help and advice.

Points of Order

3.58 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise to you and the House for being late for Foreign Office questions. I assume that it was my lateness that caused you not to see me, rather than the sobriety of my dress this afternoon. The reason for my being late is that the 1.52 pm train from Forest gate to Liverpool street was rather peremptorily cancelled. By way of consolation, a rather satirical member of British Rail's staff gave me a copy of British Rail's passengers charter to read while I was waiting for the next train. I was able to read it in full and there are many questions that I wish to ask——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It will be a point for me, I hope.

Mr. Banks: When I arrived at Liverpool street and made my complaint, I was told that if I looked very carefully I would see that the passengers charter is in fact entitled "Passenger's Charter", and that therefore it did not apply to me because I was not the passenger for which it was actually devised.

I want to know whether you, Mr. Speaker, have received any application from the Secretary of State for Transport to come to the House to give us more details about the passengers charter so that we can know whether it applies to all of us or whether it is just a way for the Tory Government to save money.

Mr. Speaker: I have not had such a request.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: In fairness, I shall call the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) first.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a personal point of order. It has been brought to my attention by a journalist who hopes to be covering a general election in the near future that, the last time the House debated capital punishment, I was shown as having voted on both sides of the issue. That appears in the guide for journalists covering the election. I do not suppose that there is much that you, Mr. Speaker, can do about that, but if there is one subject on which it is improbable, to say the least, that I would vote on both sides it is on capital punishment. Ever since I entered the House, I have voted against it. I would not have made such a mistake, and if the record could be corrected, I should be grateful.

Mr. Speaker: That is a proper way in which to deal with such a matter. I hope that we shall have other legitimate points of order.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Has the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry requested your permission to make a statement on an important matter? It has come to light that stolen money has been given to an organisation—£400,000 to the Conservative party—from the chairman of Polly Peck. Could it be returned?

Mr. Speaker: There is an early-day motion on the Order Paper about that. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I refer to early-day motion 793. Has the Prime Minister or the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster requested your permission to make a statement to the House about the donation by Mr. Asil Nadir of £440,000 to Conservative party funds?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has tabled an early-day motion on that very subject. It is not a matter for me. He can ask about it tomorrow at business questions.

Mr. Hain: With respect, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not a matter for me. The hon. Gentleman has tabled an early-day motion. He asks for the matter to be debated. I cannot do anything about it now.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you had a request from the right hon. Member for Northavon (Sir J. Cope), the deputy treasurer of the Conservative party, to allow him to clear his name of the charges that he solicited and received illegal funds from a company based in Cyprus?

Mr. Speaker: That is a similar matter. I hope that the hon. Gentleman gave the right hon. Member for Northavon (Sir J. Cope) notice that he intended to mention him. That would be in the proper traditions of the House.

Interest on Business Debts

4.2 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide that business debts should carry interest after a period of 28 days.

The Bill is an attempt to crack down on businesses—usually, but not exclusively, large businesses—which drive thousands of other businesses, usually much smaller businesses, into bankruptcy by failing to pay their debts on time.

If passed, the Bill would allow a much freer flow of money for jobs completed and goods supplied. Without it, many firms will continue to crash. Not because of Government policies, not because of high interest rates, not because of difficulties with the banks, but because they cannot get in the money to which they are justly entitled and without which they cannot pay their way and continue in business.

The actual rate of interest and the actual number of days after which interest is to be paid, whether it be 28 or 30, can be decided in Committee. At this stage I simply seek justice and fairness on business debts which underlie the need for the Bill.

The chairman of the National Westminster bank, Lord Alexander—no relation I am afraid—has warned that the unfair practice of paying debts late is hampering Britain's economic recovery. That bank has surveyed business problems and second on the list is late payment of debt. The Bill will give the opportunity to redress that problem.

My Bill is designed not to give easier recourse to the law or to the courts but to achieve a change in business climate. Of course, businesses and their customers can agree between them at the time of contract that interest will be payable if the debt is not settled by a certain time. However, that is easier said than put into practice. Most suppliers are not strong enough to insist on such a condition. They have neither the muscle nor the bargaining power. The Bill will redress that.

Most of us have a Barclaycard, and many have American Express cards. We know that if we do not settle our statements by the end of a stipulated period, interest will be charged in the next statement. That concentrates the mind and brings out the cheque book. In the same way, if a debtor business wanted to take another month or so to settle its debts, it could pay to do so. It is an added cost on that business, not to the innocent supplier.

It is not only Barclaycard and American Express that charge interest on late payments—the Inland Revenue does so as well. The business man, however, has no recourse to interest in respect of his late payers—and they are often the people who cause him to delay his tax payments. The problem is one which mainly affects small businesses, but they are not the only ones to suffer.

Businesses with the largest muscle and biggest bargaining power are usually the culprits, and they can be large or small firms. The dominant customer can choose from a dozen or more suppliers and do exactly as he likes in respect of late payment. The less dominant supplier is in no position to insist on interest at the time of contract. If he does, the business may be placed elsewhere. My Bill addresses the problem created by dominant customers in an economic climate in which business is hard to win in the first place.

Mine is not a new idea. Several attempts have been made in the House to change the law. The Government have hitherto believed that a voluntary code accepted by all would achieve the desired effect without legislation, in the belief that any company that embraced a voluntary code would abide by it. Anyone does not and will not, and no amount of codes will deal with him.

There have been several codes since 1986, but over that period the problem of late payment has demonstrably grown worse. In 1986, a survey by the Forum of Private Business found that all businesses, excluding the very largest, were owed £57,000 million, and they themselves owed £47,000 million. When that exercise was repeated in 1990, companies were owed the horrendous sum of £145,000 million, and themselves owed £75,000 million. Those immense figures account for a huge proportion of this country's gross domestic product.

Last year, there were 47,777 recorded business closures. Dun and Bradstreet say that one of the main causes was slow payment. The whole business structure has a domino effect, so that if one business goes bankrupt, two or three others to which it owes money usually fail in its wake.

Businesses in England and Wales have the worst record in Europe for paying their bills on time. In 1986, the average bill settlement period after an initial 30 days was another 44 days—a total of 74 days before a supplier received payment. The average is now 51 days on top of those 30 days, making a total of 81 days before a supplier is paid, and this is the average.

Surely that position cannot continue. There is a statutory right to interest in all the other EC countries except Greece, Portugal and the Republic of Ireland. It can be no coincidence that, in countries where such a right exists, the average number of days that elapse after the 30-day payment period is as low as 22 in Denmark, and 18 in Germany.

It is probably the kiss of death for any hon. Member to say, "If the Bill is passed, it will bring this country into line with the majority of other EC countries." Nevertheless, I believe that reform will come about—and, for many small companies in particular, but for some quite large ones too, it cannot come soon enough.

I urge my party to include a commitment to such reform in its manifesto for the next election. In the meantime, I commend my Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Richard Alexander, Mr. Derek Conway, Mr. Christopher Gill, Mr. Michael Mates, Mr. Andrew Rowe and Sir David Mitchell.

INTEREST ON BUSINESS DEBTS

Mr. Richard Alexander accordingly presented a Bill to provide that business debts should carry interest after a period of 28 days: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 20 March and to be printed. [Bill 101.]

Local Government Finance Bill (Allocation of Time)

4.11 pm

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. Michael Portillo): I beg to move, That the Order of the House [12th November] be supplemented as follows:—

Lords Amendments

1. The proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting and, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be brought to a conclusion two hours after the commencement of the proceedings on this Order.

2. For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—
   (a) Mr Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment of the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment, or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;
   (b) Mr Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of privilege and shall—
      (i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or, as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;
      (ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion moved by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;
      (iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr Speaker which have not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendments; and
      (iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;
   (c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

Stages subsequent to first consideration of Lords Amendments

3. Mr Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on the Bill.

4. The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

5. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—
   (a) Mr Speaker shall put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on

[Mr. Michael Portillo]

any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

6.—(1) Mr Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) Such a Committee shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

7.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments or on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(4) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.

The Bill carries through the Government's decision to abolish the community charge, and to replace it with a new council tax. Once we had made that decision, as part of the review of local government, we were determined to carry it through as quickly as we could. I am sure that everyone in the House and outside will agree with that intention.

The timetable motion continues the momentum that we have established. We set ourselves the demanding but achieveable target of introducing the council tax on 1 April 1993. The Opposition said that that could not be done, and pressed us to return to a rating system based on the discredited 1973 rateable values; but the progress that has been made through this Bill and in other ways now demonstrated just how wrong the Opposition were.

The first stage was to pass the Bill. We had it ready for introduction at the very start of the present session, and, once the House had accepted its principle on Second Reading, we sought approval for a timetable motion. The House's agreement to that motion ensured that the Bill could be enacted on the fastest possible timetable, which will give local authorities a firm basis on which to plan for the introduction of the council tax in April next year.

Today's timetable motion is appropriate, not least because we have taken further action in parallel with the parliamentary debates in order to ensure that all the necessary parts of the jigsaw will be in place in time.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): My opposition to the guillotine motion is not based simply on the fact that it perpetuates the poll tax for a further year—it will not be abolished until 1993. My opposition is more specific. I think that we should devote far more time this afternoon to discussing Lords amendment No. 57, which relates to computer evidence.

I am advised by those who helped my constituents David and Eleanor Bullard to take their case all the way to the High Court—it related to computer evidence, and lay behind the introduction of the amendment some days ago—that it is defectively drafted. It merely allows the Government to use computer evidence to prove payment of the poll tax; they cannot prove non-payment. For that to be possible, the amendment would have to use the precise words, relating to negative hearsay, that are contained in the Civil Evidence (Scotland) Act 1988. That is why two hours will not be enough. The Minister has not closed the loophole, and if he does not believe me, we will see him in the High Court.

Mr. Portillo: The only way in which two hours may not be enough is if I am interrupted at length in the debate on the timetable motion, thereby preventing us from debating the amendments. I am keen to debate the amendments.

We have drafted the key orders and regulations that local authorities will need to design their computer software and other systems for the new tax; drafts have been placed in the Library. We intend to make the necessary statutory instruments and lay them before Parliament as soon as possible after Royal Assent.

We have taken further action to ensure that computer software will be up and running before April 1993. The Department has sponsored a specification for users for council tax computer systems, and a copy was sent to each billing authority in December.

Preparations are well advanced on every front for the introduction of the council tax in April next year. No one, not even the Opposition, is saying that it cannot be done.

I commend the motion knowing that Parliament has given the Bill full scrutiny. In Committee, it was subject to 88 hours of detailed examination, including lengthy debate of all its important aspects. It was debated for two days on Report. In another place, the Committee stage lasted six full days, followed by a further three days on Report.

Throughout all its parliamentary proceedings, the details of the council tax have been subjected to rigorous examination. Alternatives have been proposed and discussed, but the council tax has stood the test. The principles have emerged with the endorsement of both Houses.

Today's consideration of Lords amendments is not controversial. Where improvements have been suggested in either House, we have listened and, where appropriate, have amended the Bill, although it is worth noting that it has not needed much amendment.

The House will recall that in Committee we introduced additional powers to allow a scheme of relief for disabled people. In the other place, we clarified the information powers of local authorities. Throughout proceedings on the Bill, we have responded positively to constructive suggestions. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) will recall that I even added my name to one of his Committee amendments about certificates for students.

That constructive approach continued in another place. The majority of the Lords amendments represent the outcome of that approach. I am glad to be able to say that the Government will urge the House to accept all their Lordships' amendments.

I hope that the Opposition will take a constructive approach today. I am heartened to see that no official Opposition amendments have been tabled seeking changes to the Lords amendments.

The consideration that the Bill has received is a possible model for future parliamentary procedure. There can be no possible reason for suggesting that proceedings this evening should be delayed beyond the time allocated in the motion. The key is to get the Bill on to statute book and to give local authorities the firm base that they need to implement the tax at the earliest practical date—1 April 1993. We can now either debate the motion for an hour or the Bill for nearly two hours. I commend the motion to the House.

4.18 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): It is now well known and established that the Government have had recourse to the guillotine on more occasions than any of their predecessors. It is perhaps worth establishing a further point: we are not talking about an agreed and planned timetable for legislation—an idea that has sometimes commended itself to some of our more responsible parliamentarians. Not a bit of it. There was a hint in the specious argument advanced by the Leader of the House that this procedure might be a model for other legislation, but that simply is not the case. This is not an agreed and planned procedure designed to produce good legislation. It is being unilaterally and irresponsibly imposed. It is the negation of good government and good legislation.

We began with a bad Bill and, by virtue of successive guillotines, we have at the very least failed to make it better and, in some senses, it could be argued that it has been made worse.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): "They", not "we".

Mr. Gould: My hon. Friend is right: the Government bear the responsibility for that sequence of events.

We now have a two-hour debate in which to debate the very motion that limits debates to two hours and which then, in what is left of the two hours, allows us—magnanimously—to debate the implications of no fewer than 77 Lords amendments. To discuss a guillotine motion and 77 amendments in two hours is not serious government or serious debate. It is almost laughable that the Minister can with a straight face pretend to support the motion on the ground that it guarantees the merits of the legislation. Indeed, the reverse is true.

The Minister argued that the amendments deal with issues that are not controversial. I beg to differ. The matters covered by some of the amendments are matters of the greatest controversy. They are the product of an attempt by the Government to resolve that controversy, but we should at least have the opportunity to debate properly the so-called solutions suggested by the Government.

Let us consider some instances of matters of considerable consequences which are now enshrined in the amendments and which we shall have precious little time to debate in proper form. One such matter is the question of the joint and several liability of the unfortunate people who suffer from Alzheimer's disease and who were rightly singled out originally in schedule 1 for exemption from liability to pay their own poll tax. We pressed on the Government the illogicality—even in terms of the Bill's own perverted logic—of exempting such unfortunate people from liability for the personal element of their own council tax but then making them potentially jointly and severally liable for the personal element of someone else's tax.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that there has been an important development relating to that point? There should be some provision in the Lords amendments for recovery from Alzheimer's disease because, as my hon. Friend will recall, Mr. Ernest Saunders was discharged because he developed Alzheimer's but made a remarkable recovery. That complicates matters because the legislation needs to be suitably amended.

Mr. Gould: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. It is barely relevant to the debate but it is certainly the case that, contrary to received medical opinion, great medical advances have been made. I heard that particular person arguing with great clarity and coherence not only that he had been dealt with unfairly and that the procedures were wrong but that he was innocent. He was compos mentis to that degree.

The amendments are shot through with illogicality. The Government have dealt with a particular aspect of the problem, but the Minister has still not acknowledged the illogicality of the exemptions in schedule 1, combined with the joint and several liability provisions in the early clauses.

Mr. Nellist: On the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), it is interesting that Mr. Ernest Saunders was let out early because of the circumstances described, having served one day in prison for every £30,000 that he was alleged to have defrauded and found guilty of having defrauded during the Guinness scandal. However, Mr. Cassidy, a pensioner from Northumberland, was sent to Durham maximum security prison—with no possibility of remission because non-payment of the poll tax is a civil offence—for one day for every 62p that he owes. That was not just a question of a good recovery being made from a tragic disease, but a classic illustration of the old story that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor.

Mr. Gould: That is a powerful point, but I do not propose to be diverted further by it, important though it may be.

The second group of amendments provides examples of the important debates for which we ought to have time. Those amendments concern the obligations imposed on taxpayers to divulge information to the collecting authorities—the Minister of State referred to that matter—and the authorities' plea to be given in turn the statutory authority to maintain what they accurately describe as a council tax register.

The amendments deal with that problem up to a point, but it may be useful for the Minister of State to hear, simply as an illustration of the anxiety that remains, a quotation from a letter written by the Birmingham city council treasurer to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett):

[Mr. Gould]

> "The Government is proposing that there will be a statutory obligation to answer questions on liability so that I can, in effect, maintain a 'Council Tax Register'".

Incidentally, it is interesting that the city treasurer immediately sees through the pretence that no register is to be kept. He continues:

> "In my view, and this is shared by many colleagues throughout the country . . . this does not go far enough. I would wish to have a statutory right to require people to provide me with information on discount entitlement so that the Property Register contains all the information needed to calculate at the outset the proper Council Tax liability for a dwelling. It is of the utmost importance that local authorities are able to issue bills for Council Tax next year which are as accurate as possible. If we have to rely on people claiming discount status then I can see all sorts of administrative problems because people will think they will get discount automatically when in fact the Government's current proposals require them to claim it."

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman will recall that, when we debated the matter on Report, I said that I intended to discuss it with the local authority associations. I did so, and the associations, while calling for the power which is now included in the Bill, did not call for the power that the hon. Gentleman quotes the Birmingham city treasurer as requesting. If the hon. Gentleman found himself in government, would he respond to every individual request made by a city treasurer, or would he tend, as I have done, to base what he put into legislation on what local authority associations said to him formally?

Mr. Gould: For the sake of brevity, I omitted a phrase from my reading of the letter. I shall now read the full sentence:

> "In my view, and this is shared by many colleagues throughout the country as well as the Local Authority Associations, this does not go far enough."

The city treasurer then went on to make the fuller point. The Minister had better resolve with that gentleman which of them has the right interpretation of the views of the local authority associations. I would lay a small bet that the city treasurer is more in tune with those views than is the Minister of State.

The group of amendments likely to be of greatest concern is that intended to plug the legal loophole concerning the use of computer records which has arisen over recent weeks and months. No one should doubt the enormous problems that that loophole has caused local authorities, and the Opposition believe that it should have been foreseen and acted upon much earlier. As soon as it became clear that magistrates courts, and then the High Court, had ruled to the effect that computer records could not be relied upon, the Government should have acted immediately.

I have repeatedly offered our co-operation for a short Bill, which could have been completed in a single day, to ensure that local authorities collecting the poll tax were not frustrated in that way. Instead, we have the measure in the Lords amendment, which has been long delayed and simply does not deal with some of the legal problems, including problems of retrospection, that local authorities now have to face.

The truth is that the Bill is complex. It began with 117 clauses and 14 schedules. It could hardly have addressed a more difficult and important problem than the replacement of what is probably the most important and most damning single policy mistake made by any Government in modern times. Yet throughout the proceedings on the Bill, we have been forced by Government diktat to treat the legislation with a cavalier disregard for proper debate and proper principles.

The Bill started as a hotch-potch and it ends up in no better condition. The council tax preserves all the worst features of the poll tax. It preserves the unfairness of the exemption for those at the top of the income scale from the liability to pay their fair share. It preserves the whole concept of the head count and, as we have heard from the city treasurer of Birmingham and many others, it preserves the requirement for a register. It also preserves the administrative complexity. It adds to those known problems all the difficulties of a wholly new and untried property tax proceeding on the basis of a Mickey Mouse valuation which is already throwing up huge problems because it has been carried out so unsatisfactorily.

One of the most bizarre aspects of the proceedings on the Bill has been the transformation in the personality and style of the Minister of State who has piloted it through. When we began, we were confronted by a man who was perhaps slightly austere, certainly rather detached and even commendably academic in style. We should no doubt have been put on notice that things were about to change when he changed his hair style to a sort of Heseltinian haystack.

We then found that, instead of the rather attractive, reserved and academic figure, someone came to the Dispatch Box—but for his perfunctory speech, we might have seen another illustration today—whose eyes flashed, whose lips curled, whose nostrils flared and whose voice vibrated with synthetic outrage. He gives all the appearance of having enrolled in a youth training scheme leading to a diploma in the "Michael Heseltine school of Labour bashing".

Clearly the qualifying test is the ability to spout absolute nonsense with utter conviction. I have every confidence that the hon. Gentleman will shortly be awarded his diploma. The only point in which we can take comfort is that he shows no sign so far of reaching for the peroxide bottle.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend is talking about the Heseltine factor. Has he considered the fact that 25 Victoria street, the well-known headquarters of the person who challenged the previous Prime Minister and who led the way to the change when she was kicked out like a dog in the night, was also the headquarters of that little coup? I passed it the other day. I do not know what will happen to the poll tax or the council tax on that property. It has turned into a slum and there is nobody there any more. It is almost as though it was bought and used for the purpose I have mentioned, which suggests that the Secretary of State for the Environment has a lot of money.

Into what council tax bracket will the property fit? It is a slum-like building with barred gates and rubbish chucked inside. It is now not even fit for someone with a cardboard box. Will it be at the bottom of the range, at the top or somewhere else? One thing is certain. The Secretary of State paid a lot of money for a building to get to the top of the tree. The Minister of State was with him, although that has not served any useful purpose.

Mr. Portillo: I was not.

Mr. Skinner: Well, the Minister is now. They have finished up with the poll tax round their necks when they wanted the top job.

Mr. Gould: My hon. Friend is understandably interested in 25 Victoria street. I do not know what council tax liability will be attracted by that property. What I can tell my hon. Friend may be even more interesting. The millionaire house of the Secretary of State in Westminster will pay less than £200 in council tax, which will be lower than the council tax paid by the poorest people in virtually every other London borough. That alone tells us something about the fairness or lack of it of the Government's proposals.

We are entitled to draw only one set of conclusions from the whole tawdry performance. The Government are acting so irresponsibly and piling up such obvious problems for themselves in the passage and then administration of the council tax that I and many others conclude that they have literally no intention of ever implementing such a hopelessly confused and ill-prepared measure. If by any chance they win the general election, it is clearly their intention that this ill-digested dog's breakfast will be immediately regurgitated. But that would mean—let us be clear—that, if the council tax or something rather like it was ever properly implemented, there would then have to be a further delay in getting rid of the poll tax. This measure replaces the poll tax, but a new measure would not be in a position to do so by 1 April 1993. The voters should be put on notice that a re-elected Tory Government would certainly give a further lease of life to the poll tax while they worked out a scheme to replace it that would work.

There is only one other interpretation of the Government's irresponsibility: the Government, or at least that part of the Government represented by the Secretary of State for the Environment, realise that the game is up and the general election is lost. They know that there is no prospect of their ever having to implement this ill-prepared legislation. The Bill is their continued effort at a face-saving device, a last desperate throw at pretending that a Government who have wibbled and wobbled over the poll tax have something decisive to say or do about it. The truth is that the Government are still ducking and weaving over the poll tax. First, they tried to put the blame for the poll tax and for this year's high bills on local councils. But that simply has not worked—for a very good reason. The problems in collecting the poll tax are clearly intrinsic to the tax. It is not only the Labour party which says so: the Prime Minister described the poll tax as virtually uncollectable.

Local government has been engulfed in the biggest debt collection exercise in the history of the world. Local authorities have had to issue 11·5 million summonses. Local councils are still chasing at least £1·5 billion-worth of poll tax arrears. The Government have not helped. They have made things worse. They have no one to blame but themselves for the current problems facing local government and, for that matter, poll tax payers.

First, the Government have consistently turned down the urgings of the local authority associations that the Government should at the very least fund an advertising campaign to make it clear to people that they are still obliged to pay the poll tax and will be so obliged for at least another year. That campaign is necessary because of the Prime Minister's glib and unjustified assurance in October last year that "We have abolished the poll tax." How can people be sure of their obligations when the Prime Minister tells them that the poll tax no longer exists?

Secondly, the Government have kept the poll tax alive when they could have abolished it for the forthcoming financial year. If they had taken up our offer of support for a Bill to replace the poll tax with something along the lines of our fair rates proposals, we could indeed have seen the back of the poll tax by the end of this financial year.

Then the Government refused to abolish the 20 per cent. minimum contribution rule. They have conceded the principle, but they persist in maintaining for the time being the practical problems which even the Audit Commission excoriated when it said that it cost £15 in administrative costs for every £6 net revenue raised. Lastly, the Government have demonstrated amazing complacency about plugging a legal loophole that most students of local government and certainly most local government practitioners saw coming months ago.

We are entitled to conclude that, somehow or other, the Government misled themselves and believed for a time that they had some vested interest in stoking up the collection problems in the hope that they could be turned back on Labour authorities. It is a testimony to the good sense of of local government and of poll tax payers that the vast majority of the people of Britain rightly attribute responsibility for the difficulties to the Government who introduced the wretched tax in the first place.

As we have long suspected, the latest twist is an attempt to delay poll tax bills. The back page of *The Times* today gives the game away. Despite ministerial denials, it is quite clear that a paper was prepared on the instructions of the Secretary of State to put forward various ways in which poll tax bills might be delayed until beyond a general election. The report in *The Times* sets out the options considered in the paper. Each has as its objective the delaying of poll tax bills at least until after 9 April.

The Minister of State permits himself the faintest shake of the head. Since he appears—in that careful manner—to disagree with what I have said and with the report in *The Times*. I invite him to assure the House that those reports are wrong. Will he deny that the Government have considered any proposals which might lead to a delay in issuing poll tax bills? [HON. MEMBERS: "Come on, get up."] I suspect that the House and the country will form their judgments as to what has happened.

The truth is that the Tories are running scared. They know that poll tax bills will arrive during the week preceding 9 April and that there will be no more powerful invitation to vote Labour than their arrival. Thirty-eight million people will receive the reminder, in its most direct and potent form, that poll tax lives on and that it is rising, on average, three times faster than the rate of inflation.

No wonder the Government are doing all that they can to divert attention from that certain time bomb, which will blow up their electoral prospects. It will be poetic justice that the arrogance which led them to introduce the poll tax, the incompetence with which they applied it and their dithering attempts to keep it alive will come to judgment on election day.

Today's further disreputable episode will do nothing to avert that deserved judgment, when it is inevitable that the electorate will have its say on this vital and central mistake by a Government who have made so many.

4.42 pm

Mr. David Bellotti (Eastbourne): The Minister began by saying that there had been a great deal of debate on the Bill. Yet if one asked most people outside the House what the council tax was, they would be unable to answer, because the Government have not explained what it will mean for them. They have not done so because the detail of the Bill will be further bad news for the people.

The reason for the Bill in the first place was purely an attempt by the Government to bail themselves out of the poll tax fiasco in which they had become enmeshed. As a result, they cobbled together a mixture of measures—supposedly a tax on people and on property—which adds up to misery for millions of people.

I suspect that less than 10 per cent. of the people have heard of the council tax. In those circumstances, it is important that, given it has the opportunity, the House should scrutinise every aspect of the Bill. Serious defects in the legislation are still emerging at this late stage.

During 100 hours of discussion, the Bill has not been substantially improved. The only Government concession that I can trace is the decision to exempt people with a disability, by moving them one band lower. As the Minister will know, that change was prompted by me and my hon. Friends in an amendment. Apart from that, it is difficult to see that the original Bill has been much improved and it is still hugely defective.

We need time during the legal process to continue to investigate the results of using computer evidence to establish whether someone has paid the tax. Eleven million people have been summonsed for non-payment and the poll tax legislation has caused a hiatus in our courts, so so it is essential that we tackle that key issue when changing the system of taxation.

Mr. Nellist: I wish to correct something which is raised in these debates time after time. I am the one with all the information on that issue—statistics collated from Home Office computer information in the Library, on a quarterly basis.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): Oh yes?

Mr. Nellist: If my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) doubts that, we can check it later and go through all the parliamentary questions that I have asked in the past few years.

For the record, there are 11,051,000 summonses in England and Wales, to which must be added 2·75 million sheriff's warrants in Scotland. So 14 million people are being dragged through legal proceedings, not 11 million.

Mr. Bellotti: I am grateful for that correction, because it adds to my argument. I have no doubt that it is factually correct, because the hon. Member always checks such figures. If the Government sat back for a moment and thought about the number of people involved in that process, they would surely conclude that they had got something wrong. If they conclude, that they had got the poll tax legislation wrong they would realise that the council tax deserves closer scrutiny.

As the Lords have tabled more than 70 amendments, we certainly ought to have more than a two-hour debate. It is clear from the Government's attitude and from the Minister's opening speech that all they want is a vote in the direction they seek. They could not care less whether the House considers the Bill sensibly.

In Committee, there was considerable debate over joint and several liability and yet the Minister and his hon. Friends did not take on board the arguments. The Lords have tabled an amendment concerning joint and several liability and I think that the Government have today accepted the principle that people with severe mental impairment should not be responsible for another person's council tax. If the Government accept that principle, surely we should now debate whether another range of people ought not to be responsible for someone else's taxes. The question is, should anyone be responsible for someone else's tax? Should we not ensure that that principle is enshrined in future legislation?

There is a sense in which millions of people are responsible for other people's taxes. Millions of people are having to pay extra as a result of non-collection of the poll tax and because the Government introduced a tax which has been unworkable as well as unpopular. The Government did not care when they introduced the poll tax legislation and, in introducing this legislation, they do not care about inflicting the payment for some people's taxes on to other people.

In a short time, the Minister will be disappointed. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) suggested that, within a week or two, the Minister might be looking for a youth training programme. Unfortunately he is not quite young enough to go on one. I am sure that he might find opportunities in employment training, which is for adults. He would need to have a word with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, who in the last few months has substantially cut the amount of money available for people going on Government training programmes. Those opportunities are reducing fast.

Rather than placing his hopes in an employment training programme after the Government fall, the Minister would do better to tackle the issues seriously, by continuing to debate the Bill and by giving more serious consideration to the alternatives. We shall be able to explain to the public that the Government have continued during this two-hour debate to treat the people in the same way as they have always treated them. They have not considered what people can afford to pay or their ability to pay. They have taken only one thing into account—their desire to pass whatever legislation they wish without any consideration for the people.

4.49 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Today we have been given a very short time in which to deal with the most unpopular piece of legislation that has ever been brought before the people. That legislation is universally hated. There can be no doubt about that, given that 14 million people in England, Scotland and Wales are now subject to legal proceedings. The vast majority of them have never been dragged before a court before.

In fact, 20 times more people have been brought before the courts because of the poll tax than under the old rates system. Under the old system, about 1·5 million people a year were brought before the courts, but that figure covered not just domestic rates but industrial and commercial ones. Up to 31 December 1991, 11,051,000 people in England and Wales had been brought before the courts and a further 2·75 million people had faced legal proceedings in Scotland. Those 14 million have been taken to court in relation to the domestic poll tax alone.

This week, the oldest person charged with non-payment was brought before the courts. Tudor Rhys Jones, who is 94, was brought before Kensington magistrates on behalf of Hammersmith and Fulham council. He has severe hearing and eyesight problems and he was on the point of being sent to prison, but his case has been adjourned until 7 May because the magistrates are waiting for the passage of the Bill.

I have already asked the Secretary of State what powers are available to magistrates courts to adjourn cases in anticipation of a decision yet to be made by Parliament. Hon. Members are aware that I am neither a solicitor nor a lawyer; my knowledge of the law comes from the headline stuff that I have dealt with in my nine years in the House. I believe that it is strange that Parliament's role to set legislation can be usurped by a lower body, a magistrates court. However, a magistrates court has adjourned a case in anticipation of a decision that Parliament is about to make. Courts have been adjourning cases for some weeks—particularly since my constituents, David and Eleanor Bullard, appeared in the High Court some days ago—while they wait for the Government to make the amendments to the Bill that were accepted in another place.

I believe that the sole role of the court is to apply the law as it now stands and not to wait to apply the law as it wishes it might become in some weeks' time. The case of Mr. Rhys Jones, the 94-year-old who is on the point of being sent to prison, should have been thrown out. The council should have been told to return to the courts afresh once the legislation had been cleared up. The court should not have held the proceedings in abeyance. When I asked how that could come about, I was told by the Home Office that the magistrates courts have general powers to adjourn a case.

Since the particular case in the High Court in February to which I referred, what advice has been given to magistrates' and justices' clerks? I was told by the Home Office that, as a result of the decision on computer evidence on 20 February, it did not believe that there was any need for further guidance. That is not true. I have copies of guidance that has been issued—hardly anyone in the House is aware of it, including those on the Front Benches.

Letters were issued by the Department of the Environment on 31 January and by the Home Office on 4 February. Those letters anticipated the High Court decision on computer evidence and gave advice to clerks, local authorities and magistrates in advance of what this debate might decide.

The letter from the DOE contains misleading advice to councils. Notwithstanding decisions reached in the past 12 months in magistrates courts and by stipendiary magistrates not only in Clerkenwell but in the north, the DOE states that there is no obstacle to authorities proceeding with cases.

The Home Office letter contains advice about what procedures should be followed, which has far more serious implications. Because of the time limit, I shall paraphrase that letter. It gives direct advice to councils and to magistrates clerks to get together to decide on how long to adjourn cases in advance of this debate. I do not know what you think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but there must be a conflict of interest in magistrates clerks discussing with one party to an action, the local authority, tactics about the best way in which to proceed in a case. That tactical discussion is obviously not open to the other party in the dispute, the defence.

We should have far more time today to discuss the Lords amendments, especially No. 57, to which I have tabled a starred amendment. I know that that amendment will not be selected, but I tabled it because I believe that the Lords amendment, as drafted, is seriously defective. We should have more time to debate the technical nature of the amendments.

While Parliament has awaited today's debate, the Home Office, the DOE and the magistrates have been colluding to undermine the authority of Parliament. They have taken decisions in advance of possible parliamentary decisions. Surely that must colour the nature of today's debate.

If the Bill is passed in just over an hour's time, it will not get rid of the poll tax. It will perpetuate it for another 13 months, with all the injustices that flow from it. As I said, the cases of 11,051,000 people in England and Wales have already appeared before the courts and 250,000 of them have turned up in court to argue their case. It is because of their appearance that the problem of hearsay evidence came to light. Lords amendment No. 57 is supposed to address that problem, but it fails to do so.

As of 31 December, 28,325 hours of court time have been taken up by the poll tax and, according to Ministers, that has cost £217 an hour, which is equivalent to £6 million in court time. The vast majority of people who have been dragged before the courts are unable to pay the poll tax. So far, 11,259 means inquiries have been conducted, but no instruction has been given to magistrates to remit, in part or in whole, an outstanding poll tax debt or, as a result of the new legislation, an outstanding council tax debt. I have asked Ministers to issue such an instruction, but the amendments tabled by the Government do not address that issue.

Such an instruction should be given when it is apparent that a person cannot afford to pay his debt. I would prefer such powers of remit to be enacted at the liability order stage or, even better, that local authorities should have the power to write off that debt. Housing committees and housing chairmen have always had the power to write off rent arrears when someone is unable to pay and a similar power should be given to local authorities in respect of the poll tax. That has not happened and we have ended up with court cases by the tens of thousands in which there is no opportunity for a solid legal defence to be put.

Imprisonment for the civil debt of the poll tax is about the only occasion when one can be sent to prison for a maximum of three months without enjoying the right to the presence of a solicitor to ensure that one is dealt with fairly. The duty solicitor scheme does not apply to the poll tax. In July, I met the Lord Chancellor and asked him to change the rules either to make the duty solicitor scheme applicable in such cases or to grant legal aid at least in those cases where people are about to be sent to prison.

Earlier on, we talked about Ernest Saunders, but we could also cite the Maxwells and others who have no problem in getting hold of barristers who can charge £20,000 a day. The Minister will be aware of the solicitors who lobbied in Central hall a few weeks ago and of the strike that is taking place in the south of England because of concerns about legal aid. That strike is in protest against charges of £50 an hour for solicitors in criminal legal aid

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

work being insufficient. In these civil cases, charges are similar, and people who can afford £50 for a solicitor can afford to pay their poll tax in the first place.

The amendments from the other place will not stop the injustice of people being sent to prison for inability to pay. That is clearly the reason for non-payment in the cases of the 180 people who have so far been sent to prison—I have dealt with the families of those involved in most of the cases. Of those 180, there have been at least 15 pensioners, four people whose only income is disability benefit and at least 35 people whose only income is income support. Had they had solicitors, it is probable that magistrates would have remitted, in part if not in whole, the debts for which they were being charged.

Mr. Skinner Perhaps my hon. Friend would like to comment on the fact that in the past few days, we have heard about writs being issued on behalf of these people with money at Lloyd's who were supposed to pay their debts but did not want to. They were gambling at this posh gambling den known as Lloyd's and when the money came in, they took it. When they had to pay out some money, they decided that they were not going to. I have not heard any talk from those on the Government Front Bench about these non-Lloyd's payers who are trying to get out of their responsibilities.

Mr. Nellist: My hon. Friend is right. Perhaps it would strain your patience too much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I were to use the example of the Caribbeans who had their debts written off two or three weeks ago by the Minister for Overseas Development, or the £14·5 billion-worth of debt written off for privatised companies. However, I do not intend to stray any further down that road, as I do not wish to try your patience.

The Government should give a pledge to bring Scottish and English law into harmony. This involves not only bailiffs and what can or cannot be taken in the form of distress and distraint—we shall debate that when we consider a Lords amendment to the Bill—but imprisonment. Five years ago, the Government, including all those who are at the moment sitting on the Treasury Bench, voted in favour of imprisonment for debt being abolished in Scotland when the House considered the Debtors (Scotland) Bill. Despite repeated demands from Labour Members, not least from me, the Government have never introduced legislation to allow the same to take place in England and Wales and to stop this mediaeval barbarity of using imprisonment for civil debt as a weapon of fear over the poorest sections of the community in England and Wales.

Instead, the Government have introduced regulations to extend the powers that are set out in the Bill from two to six years. It is an admission of failure that the Government do not think that authorities will be able to collect debts within two years. Despite the Minister saying that it is all about the abolition of the poll tax, the Bill allows local authorities to use the barbaric methods of imprisonment, bailiffs, distress and distraint for a further four years on top of the original two years. That should have been amended, but it will not be.

I have two more points to make, and these are on the detail of the amendments, which I feel should be debated at greater length than the guillotine will allow. Some of the amendments will prescribe the individuals who can act as bailiffs in the collection of poll tax debt. At the moment, there is no restriction on who may act as a bailiff in a poll tax case. Local authorities are not required to employ only certificated bailiffs. Any private citizen can act as a bailiff and there are legions of stories from, among others, the National Consumer Council, about the way in which such bailiffs operate.

For example, a woman's wedding ring valued at £147 was taken in pursuance of debt, and sold for £14 by the bailiffs, who then took their commission out of that money before putting it towards payment of the debt. In another example, a car worth £700 was sold for £70 and again bailiffs took out their commission. There can be no sensible recovery of debt from such methods. They are only a way to engender in the minds of other people the fear that they may be treated in the same way.

The amendments will give the Government power, after the Lord Chancellor has had his review in three months' time, to bring in conditions as to who can and cannot be a bailiff and to prescribe what goods can be taken. On a matter as important as this, we should not be handing the Government a blank cheque. If they cannot bring before the House, at the same time as the Bill is supposed to complete its final changes, the detail of what they wish to implement, the House should not give them the authorisation to continue.

I know that this is slightly outwith the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it will take two sentences to explain. If I brought before the House an Industry Bill that would give a Labour Secretary of State the power to nationalise any company at some point in the future and told Conservative Members that in three months' time I would produce a list of companies that we intended to nationalise, there would be mayhem. They would say, "You can't do that." But that is what they are doing with this Bill. It is enabling legislation that will hand to the Government a blank cheque, just a few days in advance of the calling of a general election.

Computer evidence is dealt with in Lords amendment No. 57. I tabled an amendment on this, which I accept is starred and therefore not formally before the House so I cannot divide the House on it. However, perhaps I can use it to illustrate why I think that the drafting of the amendment is defective. The amendment on the use of computer evidence in courts allows, under the Civil Evidence Act 1968, something that should have been introduced years ago—the use of computer records in magistrates courts.

However, what the amendment does not do but what everything else in that Act has done is give advance notice to the defendant of the document or record that has been brought as part of the case. That is defective, because it means that what can be presented on the day is a record that the defendant and, if he is lucky, his legal adviser cannot check as they could do in any other circumstance at any other court under the provisions of the 1968 Act. We should have more time to debate that, so that others of my hon. Friends can take it up.

In Coventry, as in other places, two-year-olds have been dragged before the courts. We have seen distraught families whose deceased relatives have been summoned before the court because of computer—*[Interruption.]* It is not funny. I have dealt with those families and I know that it leads to great trauma. I will not mention his name because he is not present in the Chamber, but an hon.

Friend of mine, whose wife died five years ago, has repeatedly received notices, from the computer, asking for her poll tax payment. It is as distressing for him as it is for my constituents. If we had a minimum of seven' days notice before such records could be used in the courts, perhaps summonses would not be issued to two-year-olds and deceased people.

I have a technical point that I wish to put on the record. I gave the Minister some advance notice of it, so perhaps when he is winding up he will have had some advice from his civil servants. I am advised by the barristers for my constituents whose case went to the High Court at the end of February to test the rules on computer evidence that, as drafted, Lords amendment No. 57 will enable local authorities to bring computer records before magistrates courts to prove payment. However, computer records cannot be used in magistrates courts to prove non-payment. To achieve that, the words of the Civil Evidence (Scotland) Act 1988 should have been used, because it raises the question of negative hearsay.

As I have said on more than one occasion, I am not a legal expert. Like many other hon. Members, I take legal advice. However, there is a body of law, not least that concerned with the Walsall magistrates in the past year or so, in which the High Court has ruled that, when there is hearsay evidence, only Parliament is allowed to rule. Magistrates are not allowed to interpret.

I hope that the Bill will fail, because it perpetuates the poll tax. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) rightly said, the council tax is a dog's dinner and is no better. It would perpetuate many of the injustices toward ordinary people.

I warn the Minister, in what is probably the final debate on the Bill before an election is called next week, that if he thinks that his legal problems in courts throughout the country, including the High Court, are over because of the introduction of Lords amendment No. 57, we shall see him back in the High Court in weeks to come.

Mr. Gould: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We intend to vote against the timetable motion and it normally takes the House 14 or 15 minutes to divide. Can you advise us on whether that 14 or 15 minutes will be included in the two hours allocated for the debate? If that time will also be lost, does not that add insult to injury by denying us yet another period of time in addition to the two hours, which is already pathetically inadequate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): If the allocation of time motion is approved by the House, I shall be bound by it. It includes the following provisions:

> "the proceedings . . . shall be completed at this day's sitting and, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be brought to a conclusion two hours after the commencement of the proceedings on this Order."

That means that the 15 minutes or whatever time is taken by a Division will be included in the time allocated for debating the matter.

5.10 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) has made another forceful, forthright and immense contribution to the debate. I do not agree with him and seldom do. But the hon. Gentleman was awarded an accolade of Back Bencher of the Year for his activity, assiduity——

It being one hour after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the question necessary to dispose of them, pursuant to Standing Order No. 81 (Allocation of time to Bills).*

The House divided: Ayes 273, Noes 205.

Division No. 107] **[5.10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lee, John *(Pendle)*

Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Sir Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir D. *(Calder Vly)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Neil Hamilton.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*

Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Nicol
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Order of the House [12th November] be supplemented as follows:—

Lords Amendments

1. The proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting and, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be brought to a conclusion two hours after the commencement of the proceedings on this Order.

2. For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment of the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment, or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or, as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion moved by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr Speaker which have not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendments; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

Stages subsequent to first consideration of Lords Amendments

3. Mr Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on the Bill.

4. The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

5. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr Speaker shall put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

6.—(1) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) Such a Committee shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

7.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments or on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(4) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.

Orders of the Day

Local Government Finance Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 3

MEANING OF "DWELLING"

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, line 22, leave out from ("which") to line 23 and insert—

("(a) is a composite hereditament for the purposes of Part III of the 1988 Act; and
(b) would still be such a hereditament if paragraphs (b) to (d) of section 66(1) of that Act (domestic property) were omitted,")

5.23 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert Key): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 2, 12 to 14 and 16. Lords amendment No. 1 involves privilege.

Mr. Key: In Committee we debated the purpose of clause 3 and the difference between clause 3 of this Bill and the schedule to the Local Government Finance and Valuation Act 1991. The matter was similarly debated very fully in Committee in another place. In the course of those debates, the Government made it clear that the intention is to ensure that only properties that include living accommodation should be subject to the council tax. Garages, storage premises, yards, gardens and such like, which under rating were hereditaments in their own right, should not be chargeable dwellings.

Amendment No. 1 puts it beyond doubt that the same should apply to any composite hereditament that does not include living accommodation. The amendments specifically exclude from the definition of a dwelling any composite hereditament which is only a composite by virtue of the fact that it includes a domestic garage, storage premises, yard, garden or other domestic property that is not living accommodation. Amendment No. 2 is consequential.

Composite properties will quite properly be subject to both non-domestic rates and the council tax. Valuation for each will take account only of non-domestic and domestic uses as appropriate and will achieve a fair balance between the two taxes. If the balance of use of a composite changes or, more significantly, it becomes or ceases to be a composite hereditament, its valuation for non-domestic rating may change. The amendments give the potential for a corresponding change in valuation for the council tax. I commend them to the House.

Question put and agreed to.—[Special Entry.]

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 2, line 43, leave out ("or substitute another definition for")

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Bennett): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment limits the Secretary of State's power to change the definition of a dwelling on the face of the Bill by order. The Bill originally permitted the Secretary of State to substitute or amend the definition. The amendment takes away the power to substitute the definition of dwelling by order.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 6

PERSONS LIABLE TO PAY COUNCIL TAX

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 5, line 10, at end insert —

("(3A) Subsection (3) above shall not apply as respects any day on which one or more of the persons there mentioned fall to be disregarded for the purposes of discount by virtue of paragraph 2 of Schedule 1 to this Act (the severely mentally impaired) and one or more of them do not; and liability to pay the council tax in respect of the dwelling and that day shall be determined as follows—

(a) if only one of those persons does not fall to be so disregarded, he shall be solely liable
(b) if two or more of those persons do not fall to be so disregarded, they shall each be jointly and severally liable.")

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. Michael Portillo): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 7, 8, 10, 21, 22 and 24. All the amendments in this group involve privilege.

Mr. Portillo: Lords amendment No. 4, and the amendments grouped with it, are about joint and several liability where one of the liable persons is severely mentally impaired.

This was a matter which we discussed at length in Committee in the House. The Government were extremely concerned that the system should not be unfair. I explained that there were difficulties in trying to legislate for the private financial affairs of households.

I can well understand concern about a severely mentally impaired person being jointly liable for a council tax bill, but, as I explained in Committee, there will be cases where the interest in the property and all the resources will be in the name of the person who is impaired. There are obvious difficulties in providing that the sole liability should fall on the partner with no resources. In practice, it is clear that there would be no question of pursuing a person who was severely mentally impaired, and that in circumstances such as I have described, arrangements would be made for the bill to be paid.

Nonetheless, there continued to be concern. Opposition amendments were moved in another place, and carried. Those amendments were intended to prevent joint and several liability for the council tax from applying to people who are severely mentally impaired. But the effects of the amendments were unclear. Although they removed joint and several liability from the person with the impairment, it was unclear where the liability would fall. Indeed, the Opposition seemed not really to have thought through the way liability should work in these circumstances. However, following very helpful discussions, in which it was recognised that the situation was not straightforward, the Government were able to bring forward the amendments on Third Reading in the House of Lords, where they were accepted by the Opposition.

A particular problem arises in the case of a couple where the partner with the impairment has the sole interest in the property. He or she will continue to be liable, jointly and severally, with the other spouse or partner, but it would be wrong to provide that a partner who has no interest in the property should nonetheless be solely liable for the council tax on it. We have ensured that no person who is severely mentally impaired can be made liable when there are other liable people in the property, but we do not believe that it is right to impose sole liability where it would not otherwise exist.

I was a little puzzled by what the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said when he spoke on the timetable motion. He implied that there remained disagreement between the Government and the Opposition over the issue. First, the Opposition have not tabled an amendment to the Lords amendment. In another place, Baroness Hollis said on behalf of the Opposition:

> "My Lords, I shall be very brief. I should like to express our thanks to the noble Lord for coming back with amendments which will adequately reflect in drafting terms the intentions of your Lordships' House. We are delighted to support them."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 27 February 1992; Vol. 536, c. 399.]

I hope that the Opposition in this House will take the same attitude today.

5.30 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I shall be as brief as is necessary for the guillotine resolution to be effective. There is no fundamental disagreement between the Government and the Opposition about the amendment. However, we regret that it was due only to the diligence of Members in another place and their willingness to challenge the Government that the amendment has been introduced to resolve the outstanding problems.

We are aware that there are still outstanding questions that concern housing associations about those who will become liable for bills where there is multiple occupation—for example, those people who are not suffering from Alzheimer's disease but who share a dwelling with a sufferer. There is also the question of the liability of the owner of the property.

We understand the technical difficulties. It will not be long, I hope, before we are in a position to draw on the vast expertise currently available to the Government.

Mr. Bellotti: There have been many discussions about joint and several liability and, at last, the Government have conceded that principle in one minor area. It is a great shame that we cannot persuade them, even at this late stage, to consider the principle even further. With any property-based tax, there is the problem of who is responsible for paying it. The Lords amendment, which the Government are prepared to accept, will at least bring some small comfort to a small number of people. However, I suspect that there will be many disagreements about whether a person will qualify under the amendment.

The last thing that we would want to do with a person who suffers from a mental handicap of any sort would be to subject him and his family to the sort of inquiries that would be necessary to establish whether, under the amendment, that person would qualify not to be jointly and severally liable.

At least the Government have had something of a shock. It is a shame that they did not feel able to consider the rest of the principle. We will not reject the few small crumbs of comfort available, but we remind the Government that property taxes are unfair because they do not relate either to the ability to pay or to the ability to take the decision to pay. In that regard, the ability to know that a tax is necessary and that it must be paid is perhaps more important that the ability to pay.

We warmly welcome the amendment, although the Minister went far too far when he suggested that the Government were concerned about unfairness. If they had any such concern, the council tax Bill would not be before us and the poll tax legislation would have been repealed a long time ago.

Question put and agreed to.—[Special Entry.]

Lords amendment: No. 5, in page 5, line 12, leave out from ("person") to end of line 13 and insert

("as regards whom the following conditions are fulfilled—
(a) he has a material interest in the whole or any part of the dwelling; and
(b) at least part of the dwelling or, as the case may be, of the part concerned is not subject to a material interest inferior to his interest;")

Mr. Key: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I inform the House that the amendment involves privilege. With this, it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 6, 9, 20 and 23.

Mr. Key: Amendments Nos. 5 and 6 redefine "owner" for the purposes of the council tax.

Clause 6 provides for the owner of a dwelling to be liable to pay the council tax where there are no residents. The amendments made in the other place revise the definition of "owner". The new definition is based on a person's interest in the dwelling and covers both freeholders and long leaseholders. It is similar to the definition currently used for the standard community charge, under which the owners of unoccupied property are liable.

Clause 8 contains a power to place liability on the owner of prescribed dwellings instead of the residents. There is also a power to prescribe who should be regarded as the owner in certain cases. The new definition of "owner" may not, however, cover the person on whom it would be appropriate to place liability in all situations. Amendment No. 9 clarifies the position with regard to the definition of "owner". It extends the order-making power to provide for liability to be placed on a prescribed person in particular cases.

Dwellings occupied by Church of England ministers are one such example. We do not believe that those ministers should be liable to pay council tax on dwellings which they occupy in order to perform their duties. We discussed that matter in some detail with the Church authorities and agreed that the Church should be liable. However, the definition of "owner" introduced by amendments Nos. 5 and 6 would not, in all cases, cover the appropriate Church body. Amendment No. 9 allows us, through regulations, to place liability on the Church in the form of the Diocesan Board of Finance. The provision also allows for flexibility should difficult cases arise in the future.

The amendments are necessary to ensure fairness and they will assist in the administration of the council tax. I commend them to the House.

Question put and agreed to.—[Special Entry.]

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to, some with special entry.

Clause 24

ALTERATION OF LISTS

Lords amendment: No. 11, in page 15, line 8, after ("to") insert
("the whole or any part of").

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 15, 17, 25, 26 and 28.

Mr. Bennett: Amendments Nos. 11 and 25 clarify the position in relation to a relevant transaction in the rare circumstances that there is more than one freehold interest in a dwelling.

Amendments Nos. 17 and 28 also relate to the revaluation of dwellings following a sale, making it clear that the building, engineering and other operations referred to in the definition of "material increase" relate only to the dwelling concerned.

Amendments Nos. 15 and 26 make it clear that a listing officer or assessor may alter the initial valuation band shown on the valuation list if he agrees that it is wrong.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 65

DUTY TO CONSULT RATEPAYERS

Lords amendment: No. 18, in page 43, line 34, leave out from ("prescribed") to ("and") in line 35.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendment No. 19.

Mr. Bennett: These are technical amendments to improve the drafting of the Bill. Clause 115 provides that prescription under the Bill will be by regulations made by the Secretary of State. That renders unnecessary two references in clause 65(6) to prescription by regulation. Amendments Nos. 18 and 19 therefore remove the superfluous words.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to, some with Special entry.

Clause 87

ALTERATION OF LISTS

Lords amendment: No. 27, in page 59, line 10, after ("payments") insert ("or repayments").

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Clause 87(8)(a) provides for regulations to be made requiring a person to make adjustments to his council tax payments to reflect an alteration to the banding of his dwelling. It is thought that the clause would allow regulations to require payment to be made or to provide for repayment of overpaid amounts. However, the absence of the word "repayments", which appears in the equivalent English clause—clause 24—may cast doubt on that. The amendment, which is purely technical, would remove any such doubt.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to.

Clause 94

SUBSTITUTED AND REDUCED SETTINGS

Lords amendment: No. 29, in page 64, line 20, leave out ("that Schedule") and insert
("Schedule 7 to this Act")

Mr. Allan Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment. The amendment corrects a minor drafting error.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 30, after clause 101, to insert the following new clause

Transitory enforcement provisions for England and Wales

(".—(1) Schedule 4 to the 1988 Act (community charges: enforcement) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph 7 (distress), after sub-paragraph (3) there shall be inserted the following sub-paragraph—

"(3A) The regulations may include provision that—

(a) no person shall make a distress unless he is an officer of the authority concerned, or he is a person of a prescribed description and any prescribed conditions are fulfilled;

(b) no person making a distress shall seize goods of a prescribed description."

(3) In paragraph 8 (commitment to prison), in sub-paragraph (1)(a), for the words "it appears to the authority that no (or insufficient) goods of the debtor can be found" there shall be substituted the words "the person making the distress reports to the authority that he was unable (for whatever reason) to find any or sufficient goods of the debtor".

(4) After paragraph 13 there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"*Admissibility of evidence*

13A.—(1) Regulations under this Schedule may include provision that, in any proceedings before a magistrates' court under any provision included by virtue of the preceding provisions of this Part of this Schedule—

(a) a statement contained in a document of record shall be admissible as evidence of any fact stated in it of which direct oral evidence would be admissible; and

(b) a certificate which is made with respect to a document of record produced by a computer and purports to be signed by a responsible person shall be admissible as evidence of anything which is stated in it to the best of his information and belief.

(2) In this paragraph—

'document of record' means a document constituting or forming part of a record compiled by the authority concerned;

'responsible person' means a person occupying a responsible position in relation to the operation of the computer;

'statement' includes any representation of fact, whether made in words or otherwise."

(5) In paragraph 15 (joint and several liability), in sub-paragraph (3), for the words "it appears to the authority concerned that no (or insufficient) goods of that person can be found" there shall be substituted the words "the person making the distress reports to the authority that he was unable (for whatever reason) to find any or sufficient goods of the chargeable person".")

Read a Second time.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, amendment (a) in line 38, at end insert

'who can be made available to the court to testify to the proper and secure operation of the computer, and the accuracy of the record'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 31, 37 and 55 to 57.

Mr. Cohen: The amendment concerns personal privacy, which the Government are guilty of invading. My amendment would ensure that a responsible person would have to be made available to the court to testify to the proper and secure operation of the computer and the accuracy of the record before computer evidence for the council tax could be used in court. That would ensure that evidence from council tax computers was admissible in court only if rules similar to those adopted under sections 68 and 69 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 also applied.

If, at the end of the legal process, the Government intend to imprison poll tax or council tax payers who cannot pay their debts, the evidence that sends them to prison must stand up to cross-examination in court. As a prison sentence might be involved, one would expect the rules of evidence to be analogous to those used by the police when they present evidence that ultimately sends a criminal to prison. That particularly applies to a number of those poll tax payers caught by the 20 per cent. rule who have been sent to prison.

Section 68 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act states that any documentary evidence must be presented in court, supported wherever possible first-hand by a witness. The same should apply here. Section 69 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act states:

"a statement in a document produced by a computer shall not be admissible as evidence of any fact stated therein unless it is shown—

(a) that there are no reasonable grounds for believing that the statement is inaccurate because of improper use of the computer;

(b) that at all material times the computer was operating properly, or if not, that any respect in which it was not operating properly or was out of operation was not such as to affect the production of the document or the accuracy of its contents."

Various sections of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act require a witness to be a responsible person who can be cross-examined and sign a certificate that states that in his knowledge the operating conditions of the computer were those outlined in section 69 during the production of the documentary evidence.

If that is appropriate for the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, which sets out the process used to send other people to prison, it should be appropriate in relation to the council tax and that is the fundamental point of my amendment which should be addressed by the Government.

Amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 41 also refers to the need to safeguard privacy which is even more relevant under the council tax than the poll tax.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman will realise that, first, it has not been selected and, secondly, it is out of their Lordships' hands.

Mr. Cohen: I appreciate that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am slightly confused because I have an amendment (a) to both Lords amendment No. 30 and Lords amendment No. 41 and I was not sure which had been selected.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We are dealing with Lords amendment No. 30.

Mr. Cohen: I hope that the Minister will respond to the point I made. The rules under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act should also apply here if, at the end of the day, people are to be sent to prison for civil debt, which is something that I oppose.

5.45 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I shall be brief, because I have made my points earlier. We are debating the transitional enforcement provisions and the admissibility of evidence. I ask the Minister to reply to the following three points. First, may we have a clear statement on the question of retrospection? According to the letters that I quoted earlier from the Department of the Environment and the Home Office, the taking of cases for judicial review has been almost couched in terms of advice to courts that there would be no problem in proceeding and that judicial reviews could not take place more than three months——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I make it clear that we are dealing with amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 30. Perhaps when we have disposed of that we can ask the Minister to move Lords amendment No. 30. I am advised that it will be in order for us to discuss them together.

Mr. Nellist: My understanding is that, while the judicial review usually takes place within three months of the question in the lower courts that needs to be examined occurring, it is at the discretion of the higher court. What is the Government's position on that?

Secondly, this group of amendments, particularly No. 30, speaks of regulations being brought in. I understand that, once the Act receives Royal Assent, which I understand is scheduled for tomorrow, the regulations regarding evidence will be tabled and those regarding bailiffs will follow the Lord Chancellor's review. Some time ago I asked whether those regulations had been drafted, and I was told that they had not. Are they ready now, and will they be tabled tomorrow? The Minister should answer that.

Finally, admissibility of evidence in the cases with which I have been involved with the Coventry magistrates, the city council and the hearing in February at the High Court, revolved around the use of computer evidence and the liability order stage. What about the burden of proof and the use of computers for the posting of demands and notices? That is also hearsay evidence as far as the Civil Evidence Act of 1968 is concerned. Is that contained within the amendments and the regulations to be published or is it, as I understand local authority associations have said, a further area which is not covered by the regulations? If so, as I said earlier, we should have had more time to discuss this, because the amendments are defective.

Mr. Blunkett: I sincerely hope that this will be the last formal speech that I make from the Opposition Front

[Mr. Blunkett]

Bench for the foreseeable future. It is a great shame that it has to be on the mess that we face at the moment in terms of non-collection.

I well understand the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) in moving his amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 30. All of us will be mindful of the need to avoid mistakes, as has been referred to this evening, which would cause distress to families where payment had been made or liability did not exist.

However, what we face is the result of what amounts to four years of absolute fiasco. From the passing of the poll tax legislation for England and Wales and some time earlier for Scotland, we have faced one administrative and political nightmare after another, a degree of incompetence never previously foreseen or experienced in Britain.

The position that we face on the inadmissibility of computer records and the correcting of the position is another illustration of that. It would never have occurred and this matter would not be before us if it were not for the implementation of the poll tax with the misery and political and administrative difficulties that that has caused and the considerable legal problems, which have resulted in the discrediting of our legal system to which the poll tax has contributed.

I do not dispute the number of summonses; I do not need to double-count. If they total more than 11 million, it is a fiasco in any terms, and creates a syndrome whereby non-payment or resistance to payment will be with us for some time. Every effort must be made to avoid that happening. I do not suggest that the poll tax is something which the public should have readily warmed to or accepted, but the problem of raising money to spend on essential services is something of which everyone should have cognisance.

Disastrous difficulties have confronted local authorities in terms of local government credibility and the proper delivery of services. The sum outstanding of £1·5 billion has implications for the country's wider economy, the national debt, inflation—in terms of the impact on borrowing—increased future local authority expenditure because of that borrowing, and the regrettable imposition of additional charges to cover the expenditure necessary to maintain local authority services while the poll tax is collected. Those are the crucial issues that we must consider tonight.

Also at issue is the Government's culpability in failing to heed early enough the warnings that they were given and to take action—not against those people who had paid their poll tax and were pursued, or who were not in any way liable but were requested to pay, but those who were genuinely liable. Many of them could afford to meet that liability but chose not to do so, and passed on their bills to someone else.

Last July, Camden council quite properly brought to the attention of the Department of the Environment the inadmissibility of computer records and the dangers that created for the cases that it was pursuing. The Government refused to heed that council's warning, and to take notice of the Rating and Valuation Association conference debate last October. The Government refused to heed also the warnings given last November and December by local authority association technical working groups on the proposed so-called council tax. The Government refused even to heed the warnings sounded by the court cases that were heard in the new year.

Local authority officers raised the issue again in January, but it was not until 23 January that the Prime Minister's office made it known that action would be taken "shortly". A quarter of an hour of debate remains to consider the Bill, so more than six weeks seems a little longer than "shortly". The Government must unravel the mess that confronts local authorities, which they failed to assist in their efforts to collect the tax and to avoid the imposition of additional charges as a consequence of non-collection.

We can only presume that the Government deliberately took six weeks to introduce this measure—never mind the previous six months. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said earlier, one can only conclude that they believed that there was more political mileage in the accumulation of outstanding poll tax and failure to collect than in taking immediate action—hence the response by the Secretary of State for the Environment to my hon. Friend's proposal more than five weeks ago that both sides of the House should co-operate in passing a one-day Bill to enact the necessary amendments.

Instead, on 30 January, the Secretary of State suggested that the "antics" of the Labour party in delaying the final stages of the Education (Schools) Bill were responsible for the Government's failure to act at that time. Goodness knows what the Secretary of State thinks of the "antics" in another place earlier this week in respect of that deeply flawed and unacceptable legislation. His pronouncement was nonsense and a deplorable excuse.

Consequently, the public will receive higher poll tax bills. My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) pointed out that councils will incur enormous legal costs in addition to those that they have already suffered. Local authorities of every political persuasion will be confronted with the difficulty of picking up the pieces.

The latest statistics show that Labour authorities have brought court actions against 29·47 per cent. of those liable for poll tax, whereas the figure for Conservative authorities is 22·76 per cent. No one wants to see that happen again, and I give those statistics only to show the enormous lengths to which local authorities have gone to collect poll tax.

Haringey, which is reducing its poll tax, issued 149,000 liability orders. The figure for Camden is 110,000. An equally desperate situation exists in Kensington and Chelsea and in Barnet. The Conservative-controlled council in Barnet hoped to pursue 20,000 liability orders in the current calendar year, but has not managed to take action on even one, because of the computer records disaster.

Who is liable for that situation? Who devised the poll tax? Who spent £14 billion introducing it—including the 2·5 per cent. increase in value added tax? Who would not listen to the Opposition's warnings of what would happen, and of the cries that would come from those who could not pay the tax? Who would not heed the warnings given about its uncollectability? My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham reminded the House of the Prime Minister's words about the "virtual uncollectability" of the poll tax. Who warned the Government that if they continued to impose the poll tax for another year, collection problems would grow much worse? It was Opposition Members.

We gave the Government warning after warning. We made request after request for the Government to take action. We pointed out that non-collection would arise and that those who could not afford to pay would experience pain and be the victims of the poll tax.

We are in the last throes of a Session of which the Conservative party should be deeply ashamed. The Government ought to apologise tonight to all those who paid their poll tax but had unwarranted claims made against them, and to those who, through no fault of their own, have had to pick up the bill for non-collection. We deplore that situation. Those responsible for it are the Conservative Members seated opposite, and those who are not present in the Chamber but who are prepared to go through the Lobby with Ministers on the nod.

The way in which the computer records issue has been handled may be just another example of the Government's complete indifference to the way in which the poll tax has impinged on the lives of ordinary men and women throughout the country. Alternatively, it may represent a deliberate decision to use the last dying cough of the poll tax—before we take office and act, first, to ameliorate the present position and then to abolish it—to gain what it is possible to gain: to acquire a kind of twisted political kudos by trying to blame local authorities for a problem that is of the Government's own making. Local authorities should not be expected to carry records for which they did not ask; the Government have brought about a fiasco.

6 pm

We have requested that the 20 per cent. contribution be abolished to help the process of collection and that immediate action be taken on computer records. We have supported the desire of local authorities for an advertising campaign to ensure that the maximum amount can be collected, in order to minimise borrowing and the misery that it has inflicted. None of our requests has been heeded. It has taken weeks for an amendment to be tabled in the House of Lords—and, because of the delay, court action cannot be organised for many more weeks: the current backlog means that it will be held up until April, May or even later.

The Government should be ashamed of themselves; and the British public will know where to put the blame on 9 April.

Mr. Portillo: As the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) mentioned, we have served together for some time; even so, the sheer humbug of the Labour party still takes my breath away.

The problem of computer evidence existed in the same form under the rates, but we did not know about it in those days. The problem has now come to the fore because non-payers—people who are determined to bust the laws of our country—have tried every ploy in the courts in an attempt to break the community charge law, and to defy legislation passed by Parliament. Labour Members of Parliament and Labour councillors who refused to pay the community charge, and urged their constituents not to pay it, played an important part in the attempt to create a culture of non-payment. That was a disgraceful campaign by legislators who asked others not to obey laws passed by the House of Commons.

The hon. Member for Brightside, deeply embarrassed —rightly—by his party's dreadful record of complicity in the attempt to undermine Acts passed by Parliament, now hopes somehow to claim some virtue on the ground of being an advocate of payment. He can claim no such virtue. His party is deeply stained by its efforts to undermine the works of the House, and deeply stained with the sin of non-payment. Indeed, it is worse than that: Labour has led people up and down the country to follow the example that it set, and to build up massive debts. Those people must redeem their debts, for there will be no amnesty; they will be pursued for a maximum of six years.

Meanwhile, Labour Members have quit the scene. They have paid their community charge out of the fat salaries they receive, and they have dumped their constituents: they have left them in the lurch. Theirs is a disgraceful record, and nothing said by the hon. Member for Brightside can begin to mask what has occurred. The Labour party is deeply implicated in the creation of a culture of non-payment.

The hon. Gentleman said that he had been prepared to offer the Government an opportunity to present a "quick Bill". Not only did Labour's record lead us to doubt its sincerity; that very evening, Labour Members were involved in disrupting Government business. That was a bogus offer, which could not be taken seriously.

The amendments—apart from Lords amendment No. 57—relate to the process of enforcing the community charge, the non-domestic rate and in future the council tax, and in particular to enforcement by distress and committal. During the passage of the Bill in another place, a number of concerns were expressed about the activities of bailiffs and the amendments were brought forward in response to those concerns. Before describing the amendments, I should draw attention to the recent announcement by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor that he is conducting a review of civil enforcement agents, including bailiffs. I am sure that the House will welcome that decision.

In addition to the review, the Government felt that they should take two further steps on the community charge, non-domestic rate and council tax. The amendments propose two regulation-making powers. First, the Secretary of State would be able to prescribe the goods that a bailiff should not be able to distrain. The provision is intended to bring greater clarity to the work of bailiffs, and to ensure that items essential to the charge payer for his domestic and work use are protected from distraint. We propose to consult on the items that should be included in the list, and we are therefore not ready to make the regulations.

Secondly, we propose a regulation-making power that will enable the Secretary of State to prescribe by description the persons whom local authorities may employ in community charge, non-domestic rate and council tax enforcement work, in addition to their own staff. We do not intend to use that power until the outcome of the Lord Chancellor's review is known—and only then, if we think it appropriate, in the light of full consultation. Again, the regulations are not imminent.

The second part of Lords amendments No. 30, and Lords amendment No. 56, also relate to the activities of bailiffs. It has been argued that there is some ambiguity in the present law as it relates to the position where a bailiff seeking to levy distress fails to gain access to a property and the local authority wishes to institute committal proceedings. The amendment makes it clear that where a bailiff—for whatever reason, including failure to gain access—finds no or insufficient goods on which to levy

[Mr. Portillo]

distress, the authority may institute committal proceedings. Lords amendments Nos. 31 and 37 ensure that Lords amendments Nos. 55 and 56 will take effect immediately on Royal Assent.

Mr. Nellist: Surely the Minister realises that the committal procedure was originally intended not as a punishment, but to force people to pay up. How can he say that, if the bailiffs have not found sufficient goods for a debt to be met, an authority should proceed immediately to committal?

Mr. Portillo: I did not say that that should take place immediately. It is not for me to say. What I do say is that the fact that a bailiff has been denied entry to a property should not then be used as a block to the next stage—if appropriate—of proceedings to committal. I can make no decision about how those proceedings should be conducted; that is for local authorities and courts to decide.

The third part of Lords amendment No. 30, and Lords amendment No. 57, deal with the admissibility of computer evidence in community charge, non-domestic rates and council tax cases. As the House will be aware, some recent court decisions have thrown doubt on the ability of local authorities to present computer evidence of accounts in applying for liability orders against community charge defaulters. That uncertainty could not be allowed to continue, and, it is essential that local authorities should be able to present evidence of this type if the process of obtaining liability orders is to be manageable both for authorities and for the courts. The purpose of the amendments is to put the position beyond doubt as regards the community charge, the non-domestic rate and, in future, the council tax.

The amendments provide for the Secretary of State to make regulations to do, in essence, two things. First, the regulations will make computer evidence admissible in relevant community charge, non-domestic rate and council tax hearings in the magistrates courts. The regulations that we propose to make as soon as the Bill receives Royal Assent will cover hearings on the issue of liability orders, complaints about the levying of distress and committal to prison. Secondly, in presenting computer evidence, the local authority will be required to provide a certificate signed by a person responsible—for instance, the computer manager—stating that the computer that produced the documents in question was in proper working order to carry out the required task.

The computer evidence provisions are designed to make computer-generated documents admissible as evidence. With the documents, before it, it is for the court to weigh the evidence against any provided by the charge payer, and to decide whether it is satisfied that a charge has become payable and has not been paid.

I emphasise to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) that it is still for the court to decide on the issue before it. It is still for the court to weigh the computer and other evidence against evidence that may be presented by a defendant and to decide whether the community charge is payable or whether it has been paid.

Amendment (a) would make that provision unworkable. It would require the officer who had signed a certificate to appear in court that on every occasion. I do not believe that that is necessary, but I stress that it is for the court to weigh the evidence.

The hon. Member for Leyton will recognise that, generally, authorities will wish to be represented in court, albeit not necessarily by the officer who signed the certificate.

Mr. Cohen: The essential point that I made in my brief speech was that the rules of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 should apply to the collection of debt. Why is the Minister saying that that basic standard should not apply? Why should the rules be more lax for the poll tax and the future council tax than for other criminal cases?

Mr. Portillo: I have been at pains to explain to the hon. Gentleman that the certificate says that the computer was in good working order and therefore attaches to computer-generated evidence. It is still for the court to weigh whether that evidence is sufficient compared with evidence that may be advanced by a defendant to prove that the community charge was payable but has not been paid. In considering which evidence outweighs the other, the court may wish to question a representative from the authority, but I believe that it should not necessarily be the officer who signs the certificate.

It being two hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion relating to Local Government Finance Bill (Allocation of time), MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question already proposed from the Chair, pursuant to Order this day.*

Question, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made, put and negatived.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 68, 73 and 77 agreed to.—[Special Entry.]

Remaining Lords amendments agreed to.

Transport and Works Bill

As amended, (in the Standing Committee), further considered.

Schedule 3

AMENDMENT OF HARBOURS ACT 1964

6.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I beg to move amendment No. 74, in page 39, line 3, at end insert—

'(6) In subsection (5), for the words "large-scale map" there shall be substituted the words "map of a scale not less than 1:2500".

(7) After subsection (5) there shall be inserted—

"(5A) Where a harbour revision order includes provision for extinguishing or diverting a public right of way over a footpath or bridleway, there must be annexed to the order a map of a scale not less than 1:2500 on which the path or way concerned, and in the case of a diversion the new path or way, are plainly delineated.".'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to consider Government amendments Nos. 82 and Nos. 76 to 80.

Mr. McLoughlin: The amendments result from our debates in Committee on footpaths and bridleways in harbour areas and from representations made by organisations on behalf of footpath users, especially by the Ramblers Association.

The affect of the amendments is to enable a harbour authority to use orders under the Harbours Act 1964 to stop up and divert a footpath subject to the constraints that normally apply to developers in the Highways Act 1980 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The one thing that we have not provided for in the Bill is consultation with bodies representing the interests of footpath users. We have agreed with the Ramblers Association that, on the comparatively rare occasions when footpaths are affected, we should ensure that it is consulted by administrative means. That assurance will be generally welcomed by all Members of the House and by the Ramblers Association.

The specific issues that the amendments address are, first, the circumstances under which a harbour authority can use the powers under the Harbours Act for stopping up or diverting a public path; secondly, the criteria to be used by the Minister making such an order; and, thirdly, the procedural requirements for the notification and advertisement of any such proposal.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): The amendments are welcome. I understand that there has been much consultation between the Department and the Ramblers Association. I should like to record our appreciation of the changes that have been made.

Will the Minister be prepared to use his administrative powers to ensure that anybody likely to use paths around harbours and the areas covered is notified directly by an applicant for an order? We have made much progress and a notice will now make it clear which footpaths will be changed, but it would be helpful if the Minister would assure us that, under amendment No. 78, he will ensure that an applicant directly notifies user groups of changes to footpaths.

Mr. McLoughlin: With the leave of the House, may I say that that is certainly our intention, and we hope to abide by that spirit.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 82, in page 39, line 10, at end insert—

'(4) In subsection (7), for the words "large-scale map" there shall be substituted the words "map of a scale not less than 1:2500".

(5) After subsection (7) there shall be inserted—

"(7A) Where a harbour empowerment order includes provision for extinguishing or diverting a public right of way over a footpath or bridleway, there must be annexed to the order a map of a scale not less than 1:2500 on which the path or way concerned, and in the case of a diversion the new path or way, are plainly delineated."

2A. In section 17 (procedure for making harbour revision and empowerment orders) after subsection (2) there shall be inserted—

"(2A) Neither the Secretary of State nor the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food shall make a harbour revision or empowerment order which provides for extinguishing a public right of way over a footpath or bridleway unless he is satisfied—

(a) that an alternative right of way has been or will be provided, or

(b) that the provision of an alternative right of way is not required.

(2B) Neither the Secretary of State nor the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food shall make a harbour revision or empowerment order which provides for diverting a public right of way over a footpath or bridleway unless he is satisfied that the path or way will not be substantially less convenient to the public in consequence of the diversion."

2B. In section 18 (harbour reorganisation schemes) in subsection (3), for the words "large-scale map" there shall be substituted the words "map of a scale not less than 1:2500".'.

No. 76, in page 39, line 25, at end insert—

'3A.—(1) Section 57 (interpretation) shall be amended as follows.

(2) After the definition of "the Boards" there shall be inserted—

" "bridleway", in relation to England and Wales, has the same meaning as in the Highways Act 1980 and, in relation to Scotland, has the same meaning as in Part III of the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967;".

(3) After the definition of "fishery harbour" there shall be inserted—

" "footpath", in relation to England and Wales, has the same meaning as in the Highways Act 1980 and, in relation to Scotland, has the same meaning as in the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984;".'.

No. 77, in page 39, line 33, leave out from 'bridleways' to the end of line 41 and insert

'for the purposes of works described in the order or works ancillary to such works'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): I beg to move amendment No. 98, in page 40, line 18, at end insert—

'(6) After paragraph 16 there shall be inserted—

"16A. Imposing or conferring on the authority duties or powers (including powers to make byelaws) for the conservation of the natural beauty of all or any part of the harbour or of any of the fauna, flora or geological or physiographical features in the harbour and all other natural features.".'.

[Mr. Ronnie Fearn]

The amendment adds to the objects for whose achievement harbour revision orders may be made under schedule 2 of the Harbours Act 1964.

It is ultra vires for a Minister to insert, for environmental reasons alone, a direction in a harbour order. In other words, the Minister cannot insert any form of protection for environmental features in a harbour because the reasons for which harbours orders can be made do not include such matters.

The amendment attempts to insert such provisions, not least for harbour revision orders. It attempts to amend schedule 2 of the Harbours Order 1964. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds does not believe that the Minister currently has the power of consideration of the environmental assessment to amend the draft order. The Minister should have that power, especially as the term "harbours" will encompass areas of outstanding natural beauty and great diversity of animal and plant life. I sincerely hope that the Minister will accept the amendment —I think that he might.

Ms. Walley: We have pursued the issue of conservation duties and have expressed our concern about wildlife and fauna all along. We certainly hope that the amendment will be accepted.

I have here copies of correspondence between me and the Minister and I shall read out a paragraph from one of his letters to me, because it might be helpful:

> "You also asked for an assurance that the Secretary of State would be able to refuse a harbour revision order on nature conservation grounds. I am happy to give that assurance. It would be perfectly proper for the Secretary of State to decide that the adverse environmental effects of a harbour works were such that the order should not be approved."

Although that reply goes some way towards dealing with issues covered in the amendment, assurances from Secretaries of State and Ministers are not the same as a duty written into the Bill. We share that concern with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

I understand that there is an analogy with other legislation currently under consideration—I am thinking of the Sea Fisheries (Wildlife Conservation) Bill. If that Bill were to reach the statute book, it would impose a duty on various bodies

> "to have regard to the conservation of marine flora and fauna"

during the discharge of their functions. If the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food can incorporate such a duty into legislation being considered elsewhere, why at this stage have we only assurances, not a duty on the face of the Bill? I hope that the Minister will be able to accept one more concession.

Mr. McLoughlin: The amendment is a small but useful provision which makes explicit the possibility of including conservation matters in harbour revision orders as in local Acts. I therefore recommend that the House supports it.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 78 in page 40, line 23, at end insert—

'(2A) In paragraph 3, after sub-paragraph (b) there shall be inserted—

"(ba) if provision is proposed to be included in the order extinguishing or diverting a public right of way over a footpath or bridleway, the applicant shall—

(i) serve on every local authority for the area in which the path or way is situated a notice stating the effect of the provision, naming a place where a copy of the draft of the proposed order (and of any relevant map accompanying the application for the order) may be seen at all reasonable hours and stating that, if the local authority desire to make to the Secretary of State objection to the inclusion of the provision in the order, they should do so in writing (stating the grounds of their objection) before the expiration of the period of forty-two days from the date on which the notice is served on them;

(ii) cause a copy of the notice to be displayed in a prominent position at the ends of so much of any path or way as would by virtue of the order cease to be subject to a public right of way;

and for the purposes of this sub-paragraph, 'local authority' means, in England and Wales, a county council, a district council, a London borough council, the Common Council of the City of London, the Council of the Isles of Scilly, a parish or community council and a parish meeting of a parish not having a separate parish council and, in Scotland, a regional, islands or district council;".'.

No. 79, in page 40, line 48, at end insert—

'(7) In paragraph 14(3), for the words "(b) and (c)" there shall be substituted the words "(b) to (c)".'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Clause 60

CERTAIN ENACTMENTS TO CEASE TO HAVE EFFECT

Amendments made: No. 47, in page 29, line 29, leave out '40' and insert '24'.

No. 48, in page 29, line 30, at end insert—

'in section 25, the words from the beginning to "surface of the road" (except as incorporated in, or otherwise applied by, any Act of Parliament or Provisional Order),

in section 25, the words "and shall not be opened" onwards,

sections 26 to [illegible] (except as incorporated in, or otherwise applied by, any Act of Parliament or Provisional Order),'.

No. 88, in page 29, line 32, leave out '64' and insert '47'.

No. 89, in page 29, line 33, at end insert—

'section 48,

sections 49 to 64 (except as incorporated in, or otherwise applied by, any Act of Parliament or Provisional Order),'. —*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Clause 62

INTERPRETATION

Amendment made: No. 96, in page 30, line 31, after 'Act', insert

', except where the context otherwise requires'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Schedule 4

REPEALS

Amendments made: No. 49, in page 41, line 16, column 3, leave out '40' and insert '24'.

No. 50, in page 41, line 20, column 3, at end insert—

		'In section 25, the words from the beginning to "surface of the road" (except as incorporated in, or otherwise applied by, any Act of Parliament or Provisional Order).
		In section 25, the words "and shall not be opened" onwards.
		Sections 26 to 40 (except as incorporated in, or otherwise applied by, any Act of Parliament or Provisional Order).'.

No. 90, in page 41, line 22, column 3, leave out '64' and insert '47'.

No. 91, in page 41, line 26, column 3, at end insert—

		'Section 48. Sections 49 to 64 (except as incorporated in, or otherwise applied by, any Act of Parliament or Provisional Order).'.

No. 92, in page 41, line 50, at end insert—

'52 & 53 Vict. c.14.	The Town Police Clauses Act 1889.	In section 3, the words from "duly licensed" to "Act of Parliament.".'.

No. 93, page 42, line 23, column 3, at end insert—

		'In section 13(1)— the definition of "railway of the nature of a tramway"; the definition of "tramcar"; the words "and references to" to "Road Traffic Act 1960".'.

No. 94, in page 42, line 25, at end insert—

'8 & 9 Eliz. 2 c. 16.	The Road Traffic Act 1960.	In Schedule 17, the entry relating to the Transport Charges &c. (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1954.'.

No. 97, in page 43, line 10, column 3, attend insert—

		'Section 124 (except as it applies in Scotland).'.

No. 51, in page 43, line 16, at end insert—

'1975 c. 53.	The Public Service Vehicles (Arrest of Offenders) Act 1975.	The whole Act, so far as unrepealed.'.

No. 52, in page 43, line 31, at end insert—

'1980 c. 66.	The Highways Act 1980.	In section 36(2), at the end of paragraph (c), the word "and".'.

No. 80, in page 44, line 26, column 3, at end insert—

		'In section 57(1), the definition of "large-scale".'.

No. 53, in title, line 2, leave out ', operation or use' and insert 'or operation'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, and Prince of Wales's Consent, signified.]

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

6.26 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The speed with which the Bill has just proceeded through the House shows how foolish the Conservative Whips were in failing to move the business motion when the Bill was last under consideration. The only purpose is to speed it through.

We support the Bill. It was improved in Committee, and I am pleased that the Minister has accepted a number of amendments tabled by the Opposition to ensure that in some instances—although not in a satisfactory number—the order-making powers come back to the House through the negative procedure. I am delighted that the Minister saw the good sense in that and that the Bill has been so improved.

The Bill was also improved in Committee as a result of ensuring that the powers to obtain light railway orders in Scotland are not made more complicated as was originally the case. The Minister accepted representations which ensured that light railway-making provisions are the same in England, Wales and Scotland.

The Bill also ensures to some degree—although not entirely satisfactorily—that the waterways provisions are modified. Consultations were undertaken, again as a result of proper consideration in Committee. The Committee proceedings on the Bill were a model of how the Opposition can ensure that there is proper and adequate scrutiny and can produce improvements.

The examination of the Bill has been worth while. It is a relatively minor Bill but it contains a number of important provisions because it replaces the method used previously—the private Bill procedure—which was often lengthy, cumbersome and unfairly expensive for British Rail.

It was an historical quirk that railways were authorised by private Acts of Parliament promoted in the House by outside bodies. All the railways across the country have been so promoted, with the exception of those promoted through orders under the Light Railway Acts which are now repealed by the Bill. However, the vast bulk of railways were constructed under private Bills. The Bill will streamline matters, and rightly so.

We must be cautious about handing powers to Ministers. That was the theme of many of my contributions in Committee and on Second Reading, and it is a theme now. We must be cautious, because a huge

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

number of powers are handed to Ministers but there is very little opportunity for them to be debated on the Floor of the House. We are reaching the stage when we need to re-examine the accountability of Ministers to the House for the subordinate legislation that they have the power to produce.

The Bill simplifies matters and speeds things up. In a complicated society we need to give Ministers such powers —there is no quibble about that—but the question is how, when controversy arises, it can be focused, on the Floor of the House if necessary. If we as a House provide the Minister with powers not subject to any further parliamentary procedure, that opportunity will be denied to future Members of Parliament. That is wrong. That is why I regret that the powers in clauses 1 and 3 are still not subject to the negative procedure instruments that I proposed

However, the Minister can rest assured that he and his successors—he will have a successor very soon—will be subject to careful scrutiny. Of course, hon. Members now sitting on the Opposition Benches will be sitting on the Government side of the House later next month——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): No.

Mr. Cryer: I shall continue, despite rude interruptions from the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), who is such a bane that I remember the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) criticising her severely for shouting out so often. That is not something that I do myself, so I hope that the hon. Lady will not keep up her tirade.

The Minister and his successors should be subject to the scrutiny of the House, and I hope that they will be, whether or not they are specifically required to bring an instrument before the House.

I should like the first occasion on which the Bill is used to be a link between the two stations in Bradford. I once introduced an Adjournment debate on the subject, but at the time the then local authority did not seem to have much enthusiasm for such a link. However, since then, land that was apportioned and planned for further retail development in the old Bradford Forster square station has become fallow. The retail development has fallen through, as a result of the enormous, deep and long-lasting recession created by the Government's economic policies.

It would be helpful if the Bill could be used to provide a link between the Bradford interchange and Forster square station. Such a plan has been suggested in Bradford for at least 100 years. It would enable through trains to be operated, rather than there being two termini, with branch lines to Bradford. The present situation causes all sorts of operating difficulties. I imagine that that is exactly the sort of project that could be carried out effectively, cheaply and efficiently under the Bill.

There will be no need for the complicated business of promoting a private Bill, as there would have been under the old system. Such a scheme would hitherto have come under one of the general British Railways Bills which tidied up a number of projects promoted by BR—a siding here, a loop line there, a connecting junction at the other end of the country, and so on. That was all perfectly legitimate, but it was expensive for British Rail.

The project that I have mentioned would be of enormous benefit to the people of Bradford, and it would be the ideal subject for a city grant. A few million pounds would help to create jobs and enable a viaduct to be built, joining the two stations by going round the newly built court house—incidentally, that cost £1 million per court; it was an expensive venture. That would provide through trains for the first time in the history of Bradford, and it would help develop inter-city connections and the railway network in and around Bradford. Clearly, that would be a beneficial effect of the Bill.

The Bill represents an improvement. It places British Rail in a position more squarely comparable with the procedures and costs of promoting road improvements via motorways, bypasses and so on. That is only fair. If there is to be a better deal for railways, if we are serious about moving traffic from roads on to railways, British Rail should not be handicapped, compared with motorways. Road improvements should not have the advantage. The Bill changes things a little in British Rail's favour, while retaining that important degree of accountability.

I want to see British Rail develop in future, and provide a better service. I hope that it will be a cheaper service, so that more people use it, and I hope that this relatively minor Bill will help to reduce the burden of congestion and pollution on the roads.

I believe that it will take a Labour Government to put some real drive behind the policy of better rail facilities, rail use and rail development—in contrast to the lamentable policies that have been pursued by the Government. None the less, because the Bill represents a minor improvement in facilities, I shall vote for it if there is a Division tonight—especially bearing in mind the number of Opposition improvements that have been incorporated in the Bill.

In spite of my reservations about going through the Lobby to vote for a Government Bill, I want to demonstrate that when we see an opportunity, we take it —such opportunities have been very few, I might say to my deputy Chief Whip, my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon). These have been fallow years; we have had a desert of 13 years of Tory rule, and there has been little that we could support. But I think that my hon. Friend will agree that this is a legitimate occasion to vote for a Government Bill, especially when we bear in mind the part that he played in Committee, helping to organise the manifold improvements in the measure. Voting for the Bill will really be voting for the numerous Labour improvements to it—*[Interruption.]* In the midst of those turbulent and mischievous comments——

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Will my hon. Friend assure the House that he will support the Government after the general election, too?

Mr. Cryer: I must tell my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) that, when I was on the Back Benches between 1974 and 1976, the then Government Chief Whip often used to stand in the entrance to the Lobby and ask me whether I was voting Labour again tonight. But I must also point out to anyone who might be in doubt that, as I voted more often than most hon. Members, I voted more often than most for the Labour Government as well. After the next general election, it will be my pleasure to vote more often than most for the next Labour Government.

6.37 pm

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): What a pity that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was drawn back into reminiscences of the previous period of Labour Government, during which he was a Minister. At one moment he waxed eloquent, with all his optimistic and unrealistic thoughts about there being another Labour Government. He even said that such a Government would put more money into railways, although he must remember the times when he went into the Lobby to support a Labour Government who cut investments in the railways.

However, I do not wish to remind the hon. Gentleman of such sad circumstances——

Mr. Snape: We have seen the light.

Mr. Moate: The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) says that the Labour party has seen the light. Well, hope springs eternal, and the hon. Member for Bradford, South was diverted into flights of fantasy. It was a pity, because until then I agreed with everything he said —even his strictures about what the Government Whips did the other evening. They usually behave with great sensitivity and perfect judgment, but on that occasion they misunderstood the bipartisan nature of the proposals and the great investment made by hon. Members from both sides of the House in improving the Bill.

In welcoming the Bill's Third Reading, I should like to place on record our thanks to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central (Mr. Walker), who was in the Chair until a moment ago, for the tremendous effort that went into the reform of the private Bill procedure. The Bill is very much a reflection of that. We should not be here today had you and your colleagues not made considerable efforts to ensure that the matter was examined.

I should like to record, too, our thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Sir P. McNair-Wilson), who chaired the Select Committee. A number of us served on that Committee which first sat almost five years ago. It has taken five years to get where we are today.

I also record our tribute to the co-operation that we have received from hon. Members of all parties who have ensured that the Bill has been thoroughly scrutinised. That is as it should be. I disagreed with the hon. Member for Bradford, South when he said that the Bill was a minor piece of legislation. It is of immense significance. A system that has grown up over almost 150 years or perhaps even longer is to be changed by the Bill. It is of tremendous importance and will be of great convenience to Parliament. It will reduce the number of private Bills by 50 per cent. and it may reduce the time taken on private Bills by 75 per cent.

I venture to suggest that the time saving would not have been enough of an argument to persuade the House to accept the proposal if there were not other powerful arguments. One is the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Bradford, South. I believe that the Bill will help genuine promoters and will help the construction of railways. That is as it should be. We are also introducing a system that is fairer to petitioners and objectors. Fundamentally, we are making it easier for local objectors to go to local inquiries and to put their case more effectively and more efficiently. That sense of fairness has driven hon. Members to help to get the Bill on to the statute book.

The Bill is tremendously important. I feel proud, as other hon. Members do, to have taken part in the changes which will ensure that we have a much better and fairer system for dealing with public works. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister who has taken the Bill through with great charm and skill. I also pay tribute to Opposition Members who have been so constructive. I also give rare praise—I say "rare" because it does not happen often—to the civil servants and staff who have created a clever Bill which deals with complex matters. They have engaged in an exercise in open government by being prepared to listen to representations in a way that is not often achieved in our legislative process.

I hope that the legislation will reach the statute book by getting through before the election. Just as importantly, that would ensure that we have all the rules in place so that promoters will know this autumn that they can go through the new procedure and will be in no doubt that they will not have to use the old private Bill procedure instead. I hope that the Bill will receive its Third Reading and that this important piece of legislation will reach the statute book.

6.42pm

Mr. Fearn: On the whole, I welcome the Bill which could provide a mechanism through which to build, maintain and operate the public transport system that this country so desperately needs. There are one or two concerns, which came out time and again in Committee, about the power that will be wielded by the Secretary of State. Of special note to me was the fact that "matters of national significance" were not explained. We still do not know the criteria that define such matters. Perhaps that will be taken up in the other place.

I admit to some satisfaction that my concerns about the procedural matters in clause 9, as expressed in my admendment in Committee, have been met halfway by the Government, in tabling amendment No. 85, which was agreed. The conservation bodies must now decide whether they want to pursue the matter further in the other place.

I am especially disappointed that hon. Members who would like the permissible levels of alcohol for drivers to be reduced were unsuccessful in all the attempts to lower the permissible level for train drivers and related personnel. We were cheated out of the amendments tabled on the subject; they were never debated. The issue is important in ensuring the safety of the travelling public and I am sure that their Lordships will have something to say on the matter. I wish the Bill well on its way, especially as I succeeded with amendment No. 98 this evening.

6.44 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) mentions the amendments that were not considered on Report. I do not comment on the selection of amendments, which would be improper.

Anyone who reads the debate in Committee and who read the report of the Second Reading debate will expect the Government to use the powers and regulations to drop the drink limit for train drivers.

It is unacceptable that a professional driver of a train, of a bus, of a coach or of a taxi should be able to take a

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

bottle of wine, to pour away one glass, to drink the other five and, if the driver were of a reasonable size, be below the criminal limit for driving a train or any other form of transport available to the fare-paying public.

People may argue that it is difficult to have rules for train drivers which are different from the rules for the drivers of trolley buses. What happens if a tram hits a trolley bus? Can one driver be prosecuted at one level and the other driver at another? There are answers to that.

Some may ask why a train driver, a coach driver or a cab driver should be prosecuted at a level that would be all right for an amateur driver. The answer is that people who are paid to exercise their profession should accept levels for crime and for health and safety at work regulations which are different.

The Minister for Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I know how strongly my hon. Friend feels on the matter. Many people drive professionally for their living, such as salesmen. They professionally use the roads as a means of earning their living. My hon. Friend must explain how we could expand the legislation. There is the possibility of inconsistency, which worries us.

Mr. Bottomley: I have no problem at all with inconsistency. We should start with professional paid drivers who are carrying passengers, as trains, trams, trolley buses, coaches and cabs do. We have a definable group. We could then discuss whether heavy goods vehicle drivers are in a similar position because of the weight that they carry. Our misjudgments when we are affected by alcohol have greater consequences then.

The question where the dividing line should come is different from the question of whether in primary legislation we set a limit at which a professional driver is up to five times more likely to be involved in a crash or collision, or to make a mistake. I will not speak at length because the matter would have been more suitable for debate on Report.

There is no justification for the present limit in the Bill. The House of Lords may not change it.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consult colleagues in the Department of Employment and to talk with the Health and Safety Commission which has the advantage of being a tripartite body. I ask him to see whether they will set up a steering group, including trade unionists, employers and representatives of the fare-paying public, and to have urgent consultation to see whether such a group will suggest a way in which to reduce the limit for public service professional drivers. If we did that, we should be able to use the powers in the Bill and to see which other powers should be used.

My hon. Friend may say that we are here to talk only about the criminal law and that, under health and safety at work legislation, employers should be able to impose lower limits. I accept that.

I declare that most train drivers would not dream of taking alcohol before driving. One reason why trains are so safe is the professionalism of the staff on the railways, which have a long and worthwhile tradition.

It is worth reminding ourselves that, even if the number of deaths on the roads comes to a record low for the year, about 4,500 people will still die. If that traffic was on the railways, the number would be only 150. That gives the scale of the change in safety.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I will tempt my hon. Friend. Does he agree that, if we wanted simultaneously to reduce deaths on the roads and to make British Rail the most profitable operation in the world, all we should have to do would be to introduce a one-clause Bill to apply the rules for safety and signalling on the roads which we apply on the railways? Is it not because we expect, as my hon. Friend has said, so much higher standards on the railways that we are willing to cast away human lives and to maim hundreds of thousands of people by being so lax about what happens on our roads?

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend makes a point in support of the argument which is shared across the House. The amendment, which was not selected on Report, had all-party support. My hon. Friend's point is that there is a good argument for having a lower limit for professional drivers. That is why trains have higher safety standards.

I remember the six people who died and the more than 100 who were injured at Eltham Well Hall about 19 years ago in a crash in which the train driver was well above the limit in the Bill. I do not pretend that a significant number of train drivers take alcohol before driving, and the same applies to the drivers of coaches and cabs. The public deserve an assurance that the criminal law is there to protect them. The Health and Safety Commission could organise consultations in which the unions and other representatives of those involved in such work could come together and give their views. I suspect that their views would be the same as mine, but it is for them to speak for themselves.

Mr. Snape: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the topic was debated extensively in Committee? Reference was made to the accident at Eltham Well Hall. Does he accept that the behaviour of the driver was so uniquely appalling on that occasion that, even if the limit had been set at the lower level that the hon. Gentleman proposes, that behaviour would have been exactly the same and that it was also the result of some supervisory errors? The hon. Gentleman accepts that such behaviour is a rare occurrence.

The Committee felt that it would be invidious for public service vehicle, train or metro drivers—that is the only group to which the Bill refers—to be breathalysed and arrested even though he or she had a lower level of alcohol than a bus driver perhaps involved in exactly the same accident. We want a lower limit for everyone.

Mr. Bottomley: That is helpful. It is good guidance for my hon. Friend the Minister. I do not ask him for a detailed response because I suspect that it would not be different from the response that he gave to the Committee. I agree with the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) that the professional limit should be the same, whether one is on rails or on tyres.

I wish to make a few remarks on the other provisions of the Bill. It is important to ensure that, under the new procedure, the promoters of private legislation for both roads and railways reach the same standard that the Government ought to achieve more often on roads.

I draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister to the unsatisfactory decisions behind the answers that I received today about Oxleas wood. I hope that private legislation on roads will not disregard a 400 m cut-and-cover tunnel, which would make a great deal of difference to those historic woods.

I ask the Government to reconsider the decision that they appear to have made to disregard the inspector's report. It seems important that, when an inspector is convinced after a long inquiry, the Government should also be convinced.

6.51 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) has reminded us of the tragedy that took place in his constituency. The whole House will agree that an anomaly is being introduced into the law of this country. It is that the driver of a train or public service vehicle carrying up to 1,000 passengers is subject under the criminal law to only the same law that applies to a person driving alone on the road. I do not understand, and I did not understand in Committee, why the Government could not have said that the limit for drivers of public service vehicles was nil. I do not see who could possibly object to that.

Mr. Snape: Then let me record my objections. My hon. Friend knows full well that a zero limit is unenforceable and impractical.

Mr. Spearing: Perhaps zero in precise scientific terms, which is the limit to which my hon. Friend refers, is impractical. But my hon. Friend knows the general drift of what everyone would wish in practical terms. I do not want to go back into a Committee debate but the point illustrates—with learned Clerks and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at hand—what appeared a rather unusual selection.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman has put into words what I would not dare to say. I make it plain that the amendment that was not called and which was supported by the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn), who speaks for the Liberal Democrats, and the Labour Chairman of the Transport Select Committee, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall), would have set a limit one quarter of that which applies to drivers on the road. That is virtually indistinguishable from a zero limit. It allows for the practicalities to which the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) referred. It is virtually a zero limit.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for pointing that out. But we are dealing with part I of the Bill. Although in some respects part II is consequential to part I, I suggest that it is a series of provisions which are not necessarily all contingent on part I.

With another constituency example, the hon. Member for Eltham has shown us the dangers of transmitting powers to Whitehall and to one Secretary of State. The Secretary of State can turn down the recommendation of a long, thorough public inquiry. The inspector's report —in this case on Oxleas wood—can be disregarded virtually in the twinkling of an eye. Under that provision, unless the matter is of national significance, an inquiry can be disregarded. Important as Oxleas wood is for London, it cannot be regarded as other than a precedent. However, it shows the dangers inherent in the Bill.

You will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or my colleagues will, that throughout the Committee stage and subsequently, I have expressed doubts about the method that has been adopted to get round the difficulty illustrated by Oxleas wood. The method is to hand to Whitehall powers which were formerly in the hands of Members of Parliament and thereby the representatives of the public. Previously, such matters were not simply left to the Government's discretion.

Any Member of this Parliament or the next Parliament, and in particular of the next, who complains about loss of power of the House must examine what happened in respect of the Bill. Of course there were difficulties. Many of the private Bills that came before the House on Second Reading and in Committee should never have been private Bills. Many were contentious Bills which involved matters of public policy and would perhaps have been better dealt with as either hybrid or public Bills. With due respect to the Select Committee's thoroughness, it did not sufficiently look into possible ways of eliminating such Bills as private legislation from the Floor of the House.

As we all know, the result of the private Bill procedure was often that individual Members of Parliament who had good cases, often backed up by their hon. Friends, either saw to it either that there was a logjam to delay the progress of Bills coming up behind another measure or used the threat of time when speaking on private Members' legislation as a lever for something else. That brought the private Bill procedure into disrepute.

In addition to that, there were genuine anxieties about private Bills, which I shared. A constituent of mine was told that, to progress a petition on the London Underground (Jubilee) Bill, he would have to expend £70,000. That is an enormous and ridiculous figure, but I saw it in writing. People in wigs and gowns take up the time of Members of Parliament in front of expensive counsel. That was criticised in respect of certain matters, including, for example, the Dartford crossing. That should never have happened, but the question that was not asked and certainly was not answered was how those abuses and difficulties could have been avoided without handing over so much power to an individual Secretary of State and, in effect, officials who have to do a great deal of work.

Make no mistake, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Bill will erect inside Whitehall a new bureaucracy in the Department of Transport. I have no doubt that the Department is preparing it all now. Unlike the Department of the Environment, the Department of Transport has not been primarily involved in public inquiries before.

We all agree that the local inquiry on planning matters has many advantages, but no one has asked whether we should not say that no private Bill can be deposited before the necessary equivalent planning permissions have been acquired through the planning process. If that had required a change of statute to extend the time available, we could have done it in respect of matters on which private Bills were necessary. That was not sufficiently investigated. If we had done that, we would have created a new template and a new gateway into the private Bill procedure, but it would have meant that there was thorough local consideration prior to receipt of a Bill in the House.

All the issues which understandably might deter petitioners could be dealt with at a more local level, but there would also be a secondary and more important

[Mr. Spearing]

effect. It would mean that details of the required legislation could be discussed and conciliation could take place before the Bill was drafted. In practice, someone takes a chance, produces a Bill which other people think outrageous, and there is a long-drawn-out struggle.

I do not know whether you recall the Ginns and Gutteridge Leicester (Crematorium) Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which was debated for either six or 12 hours in the House on Second Reading. I shall tell hon. Members about that Bill if they do not remember it. It authorised a private company to establish a crematorium in the basement of undertaker's premises in the middle of a midlands city. That should never have come to the House as a private Bill, but it took up a lot of our time and added to the disrepute into which this type of private procedure has brought itself. Had planning permission been required before the Bill was submitted I do not believe that such permission would have even been sought, because under existing general law relating to crematoriums such an application would have been prohibited.

Mr. Moate: In fact the Ginns and Gutteridge application went before the Leicester planning authority and was approved. It should not have come here; the hon. Gentleman is right. If someone wished to dispute it, it should have been revoked in the usual way. He is right in principle, but wrong in detail.

Mr. Spearing: I am always open to correction and I am grateful for that intervention, but I am glad that the hon. Gentleman agrees that it does not destroy the principle that I was enunciating. I shall not comment on the Leicester planning inquiry into the matter.

Let us hasten on. Many of the problems that we were concerned with in Committee would have been solved if those possibilities had been considered. By granting those powers to the Secretary of State of the day, we are probably storing up a great deal of trouble for ourselves.

Clause 5(3) (a) contains the extraordinary provision that an order may

> "apply, modify or exclude any provision of an Act of Parliament (or of an instrument made under an Act of Parliament) which relates to any matter as to which an order could be made under section 1 or, as the case may be, 3"

Note the word "relates" in the Bill, rather than "necessary for the completion of". Those are enormous powers and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has reminded us, as the Bill stands, unless the matter is of national significance an order will not even be subject to the negative procedure.

Mr. Cryer: I think that my hon. Friend would accept that that is some qualification. I am delighted that he is as concerned as I am about the powers in delegated legislation. The so-called Education Reform Act 1988 contains much wider powers. For instance, there are 18 occasions when the Secretary of State can repeal, modify or amend, as he chooses, primary legislation. Although my hon. Friend is concerned about this Bill, the powers are qualified. In what I might dare to term more major pieces of legislation, the powers have not been so narrowly defined.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out what might be regarded by some people as a precedent. He almost underlines my argument, because I do not think that those powers are necessarily proper in the field of education. However, I suggest that the powers of someone in an education institution or within education are not comparable to the creation of such things as the channel tunnel fast link.

As the Committee agreed, during the next Session of the next Parliament the Secretary of State may well be able to approve the channel tunnel fast link from King's Cross to somewhere in the north downs after an hour and a half's debate—it might be longer but it need not be. That cannot be changed once it is put there, or not without enormous difficulty.

Secondly, there is a great deal of difference between authorising works by planning permission and authorising powers. Powers and works are not the same thing. The powers and obligations of a promoter or someone running a transport system are fundamentally distinct. We are giving powers to undertakers of transport organisations to do all sorts of things, including the creation of byelaws and of their own police forces, in schedule 1 of the Bill.

No, we are handing too much to the Government, to any Government and to any Secretary of State in this Bill. I am sorry that alternative measures were not considered more thoroughly by the Select Committee.

When you put the Question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if a single voice says no, I am sure that you will collect the voices in your particular manner. I shall not divide the House, but I want to put it on the record that I disapprove of the Bill. Its complications and the powers that we give to the executive are too great and time will show that I am correct. I hope that I am wrong, but in view of the way in which the Minister has dealt with the inland waterways —he did not even inform the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council—we do not have a happy precedent for the way in which Secretaries of State may use the powers enshrined in the Bill.

7.5 pm

Mr. Adley: This is a constructive, unglamorous, uncontroversial and doubtless untelevised piece of legislation, which typifies in its own way many of the things that are wrong with the way in which the media operate. All they ever show is Parliament in aggravated dispute across the Floor of the House two or three times a week, which makes good television. The media rarely show the way in which many of us try to improve and to change legislation with agreement across the Floor of the House, with fundamentally no problem, no hassle and no aggravation.

I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for the way that he listened to our representations when I approached him with a colleague from the Opposition, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). We had the full panoply of the Minister's civil servants alongside us and made two recommendations to change the Bill. The Minister proposed the relevant Government amendments in Committee, and it is important to put that on the record.

I hope that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) will not mind my saying that I took advantage of the opportunity to speak on Second Reading and managed to escape from the Committee. When I saw him and the hon. Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett)—to name but three members of the Committee—I thought that my private discussions with the Chairman of the Select Committee on Selection had been thoroughly worth while. Nothing this evening has caused me to change that view.

Mr. Snape: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman will use his influence on my behalf.

Mr. Adley: I believe that the hon. Gentleman is sponsored by the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, ASLEF. Perhaps he will correct me if I am wrong.

Mr. Snape: By the National Union of Railwaymen.

Mr. Adley: I am hoping to become a Conservative Member who is made an honorary member of ASLEF. I put on record one of my few unfulfilled political ambitions. Then I am sure that, in spite of the fact that we might be affilitated to different trade unions, we shall work together, as we always have done, to promote what we see as the railway interest. I hope that that answers the hon. Gentleman.

Having listened to the comments of the hon. Member for Bradford, South, I cannot help but be struck by the difference between the Labour party's propaganda and the reality. No one would accuse me of not taking an interest in the welfare of railways, and supporting the retention of lines and so forth. However the reality is that this legislation has come from a Conservative Government. In contradistinction, one of their Labour predecessors closed the Waverley route and the Somerset and Dorset line, under the tutelage of the noble Lady, Lady Castle—I am not sure what Barbara Castle is called now, but I think that that is what she should be called legally. She was Minister of Transport when those lines were closed.

When my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) was Secretary of State for Transport, he achieved something that has never been given its proper recognition—the retention of the Settle to Carlisle railway line. That represented a huge change in policy and reversed a generation of rural railway line closures. They were closed because, judged on purely commercial criteria, they appeared incapable of sustaining themselves. It is worth recording that achievement, which, although it had a minor effect on the main railway lines of British Rail, was an important one.

At some stage after the Conservative Government have been re-elected, as they will be shortly, I hope that we will consider the problem of so-called redundant track. We now properly boast about the number of stations that have been reopened and the number of lines that have been restored to passenger service. That happened only as a result of sheer chance because those lines were not closed and the track-beds sold off. The hon. Member for Newham, South mentioned the docklands light railway. He will know that that railway would never have been built had it not been for the sheer chance that the so-called redundant track on which much of it runs was not sold off. It was lucky that British Rail did not succeed in following the strictures of successive Governments, who wanted it to sell off such redundant track.

We must recognise that there is some redundant land in British Rail's ownership, but fashions, transport policy and circumstances change. However, if we sell off track, we prevent options for change, if I can use a current military-related phrase, being acted upon.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) spoke about drinking while driving a train and about the need for consultation with the trade unions about that problem. When the Government are re-elected, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will recognise that there have been substantial personnel changes within the trade union movement. That welcome change is almost entirely due to the legislation which the Government introduced and which was fought tooth and nail by the Labour party. That legislation has meant that, for the first time, the election of the deputy general secretary of ASLEF is subject to the general vote of that union's membership.

It is about time our party made more of an effort to bring trade union representatives back into the discussion process, especially as those in positions of authority have been elected by a genuine process of secret ballots and votes. There is much to discuss about the future shape of the railways, and the fact that there have been no direct links between trade union leaders and Ministers is a waste of talent, experience and ability.

Many of those in the unions have given a lifetime of service to the railways. They believe in them. They have a great deal more experience and knowledge about what might be done to improve services than some of the administrators who have been employed in the past few years. I know that those remarks are out of order, but I hope that we can look forward to further debates on railway policy in the not too distant future.

7.13 pm

Ms. Walley: Given what the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) said, it is clear that he is making a claim for honorary presidency, or whatever, of ASLEF.

Mr. Adley: Membership, not presidency.

Ms. Walley: In Committee, I suggested that we needed two days for the Report stage, but everyone looked at me as though I was not serious. However, the fact that it has taken two days, for whatever reasons, shows how much could be said about the Bill.

I do not want to delay the passage of the Bill unduly, but it is important to consider the way in which it has changed. When it was introduced, the Opposition accepted it in principle, but we believed that many changes had to be made to it. Our Whips were wise in their selection for the Committee, because my hon. Friends, together with the Minister, who has been amenable to many of our amendments, have caused the Bill to be altered.

We have tried to be constructive and positive to bring the Bill into the 20th century. In that way our procedures will match the need for changed transport infrastructures. I wish that the Government had the same approach to all other business in the House. Much of our business is conducted in an archaic manner. Many of our practices need to be brought into line with the 20th century—not least in relation to women Members of Parliament. I accept that some progress has been made in that regard, but I know that I am now straying miles from my brief.

Change was important because neither the Department of Transport nor the Department of the Environment understood why it was important that the commercial waterways should meet transport needs. The hon. Member for Christchurch spoke about the need for co-operation and consultation with the trade union movement, but he is

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13 years too late. When the Bill was first presented to us, it was not even possible for the Government to have proper consultation with their own statutory bodies. I am grateful that we have had the opportunity to discuss, post haste, the various concerns that have been expressed. We have received many letters from those who care about our canals and inland waterways, and I welcome the changes that have been made to the Bill.

I pay tribute to the work of the rights of way review committee. I appreciate that the changes made to the Bill are not the result of discussions that lasted a few months only—many people behind the scenes have contributed to the changes, which had a long gestation period.

The Minister has promised that adequate consultation will take place. After the election, whether it is on 2 or 9 April, we shall honour that commitment to consultation. It is important to ensure that the necessary regulations are put in place.

We have repeatedly expressed our concerns about environmental assessments. It is still necessary to consider those procedures with a fine-tooth comb. Although some amendments have been accepted tonight, we still need to include proper environmental assessment procedures in the Bill. The speech of hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) proved that that was necessary.

We have sought to ensure that those who have the right to make objections retain the opportunity to do so. That must be counterbalanced by the introduction of necessary timetables, so that, when the order-making procedure is triggered, those who have an interest know when that procedure is due to complete.

We welcome the safety improvements that have been made in respect of railways. The issue of alcohol safety limits will not go away. We feel strongly that those limits should apply across the board. We should have proper consultation about that soon as it is in the interests of public safety.

It might be helpful if the Minister could tell us whether the Bill will receive its Royal Assent before the general election. I accept that that is out of his control, but we are now in a race against time. We have always supported the Bill in principle, and I believe that we have helped to make it a more constructive one.

Mr. McLoughlin: Tonight will go down in history, and we shall often look back to the *Official Report* of this debate, because the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) admitted that he was about to cross the Floor and join the Conservative party. He said that he would be looking forward to sitting on this side of the House after the general election. The only way that he will do that is if he changes parties, and that will depend on him holding his seat—his majority is not all that good. I had to say that, because hon. Members have expressed their views about what may or may not happen in the forthcoming election.

Everybody has accepted that this is an important Bill that makes some important changes to the way in which the railway system is developed. I thank all hon. Members who served on the Committee, which explored the Bill thoroughly. We debated many amendments, some of which had been tabled by the Government because we were prepared to listen. Some of the debates were long. It will not surprise many to hear that we always failed to convince the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), no matter how far we took the changes we were prepared to make. I am sorry that we failed to convince him, but on this issue he is a lone voice because most members of the Committee wanted to see progress.

By removing the locus standi, the Bill will expand people's rights because that will enable them to make representations direct to the public inquiry, which is the preferable way to do these things. Normally, the other place is regarded as a revising Chamber, but we can rightly claim that we have already done a good job on the Bill, and not many issues will need revising. Most of the changes to the Bill that were requested have been made. I take it that that is the general view of all hon. Members who would like to see the Bill make progress.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) asked about alcohol limits. I know that he welcomes the general thrust of the Bill to cover these issues, because there has been the loophole that people could not be tested for alcohol levels. This was particularly drawn to our attention after the Cannon Street crash, when the coroner wanted the Government to take action. I agree with my hon. Friend that the best rule is for no one to work on the transport system when under the influence of drink. A zero limit is already required in the operators' rule book.

We do not believe that that could provide the basis for a criminal offence. We considered the options carefully and felt that there was an overriding case for consistency with the criminal sanctions in the road traffic legislation. It would be unjust to discriminate against the railwayman, and in the case of a tram the relevant personnel would be on the road. Differing limits would be unjustifiable in those circumstances.

My hon. Friend said that a number of professional people use the roads, including not just those in vehicles carrying the public, but those driving heavy goods vehicles which, as he rightly said, can be lethal weapons if the driver is over the alcohol limit. I know the keen interest with which my hon. Friend has pursued this matter on a number of occasions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: If my hon. Friend were to say that he will send the report of this debate to the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission, and see whether that is the right body to get the views of the unions and others involved, such as passengers, I should regard this part of the debate as satisfactory.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We consulted the commission when we started to draft the Bill, and it responded to the Government's consultation paper, welcoming the drink-drugs provisions which back up the operators' measures. I take my hon. Friend's point, and I am sure that the commission will look at this matter. It will also be possible under the Bill, as it is under the road traffic legislation, as he knows, to change those levels by affirmative order. I think that we have the right framework. If the case is made and it is decided at some future stage to change those limits, it will be easier to do so than it has been up to now.

I thank all hon. Members who served on the Committee and all the officials who served in preparing the Bill. As has been shown by the debate, the Bill is generally welcomed, and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Offshore Safety Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered. Order for Third Reading read.

7.25 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Eric Forth): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Although this is a short Bill, and essentially a technical one, it is nevertheless crucial to the new safety regime that is a follow-up to the important report by Lord Cullen after the Piper Alpha disaster. It should go without saying that the Government have always placed the greatest possible importance on implementing all the measures in the Bill as quickly as possible, and on implementing measures that go beyond the Bill. We said from the outset, and it has been generally recognised and accepted, that the Bill is only one part, although an important part, of the overall follow-up to Lord Cullen's report.

I should like to place on record my appreciation of the positive approach taken by all hon. Members at every stage of the Bill. This was reflected on Second Reading and in Committee. Although the Bill was not much amended in Committee, a number of important points were raised during our sittings and I tried to answer them not only then but in correspondence subsequently. I hope that I have satisfied the hon. Members who raised such points.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The Minister will recollect that in Committee I raised the question of Cullen's recommendation 57. He kept his word and wrote to me but it would be useful if, either now or in his reply, he were to confirm that the Government are doing everything possible about the difficulties of gas getting into rigs, and particularly into accommodation in the light of Fulmar, about which he knows.

Mr. Forth: When pressed by the hon. Gentleman, I gave him an interim reply. I put it that way because the stage that we have reached is that the operators have been asked about the specific and important point that the hon. Gentleman raised, which was a key safety concern arising from Cullen. We have had replies from all the operators, some of which did not arrive until recently. We are looking carefully through them to assess the extent to which the operators are making a proper response to the Cullen recommendations. The inspectors will now be asked, during their inspections, to follow up responses to see how far they are satisfactorily being implemented. Needless to say, they will want to look particularly at any responses that are less than satisfactory, if that turns out to be the case.

I should stress that, under existing regulations and requirements, the primary responsibility for this important work is that of the employers and operators, and that will be even more true as we produce regulations following on the Bill, as and when it becomes an Act. I think that I can give the hon. Gentleman an assurance, in part thanks to the point that he has raised, that the executive is aware of this matter and has it in hand.

I took the trouble just before the debate—I thought that the hon. Gentleman might raise this point again—to satisfy myself yet again that the matter is well in hand. I am satisfied that, as this stage, it is. As and when any further information emerges, I undertake that we will let the hon. Gentleman know of the progress so that we can keep the maximum pressure on the operators to fulfil their responsibilities following on the recommendations by Lord Cullen. I am happy to give the hon. Gentleman that assurance.

The Bill has reached this stage having been given relatively swift—by our standards—but proper scrutiny by the hon. Members who have shown interest in it. I hope and believe that the Bill has been the most correct and expeditious way of taking forward Lord Cullen's important recommendations. I am confident that, taken together, the measures in it—ranging from the new regulations that will now be put in place as speedily as possible to the increased penalties and many other activities related to the Bill but not necessarily contained in it—will provide a significantly higher quality of safety in offshore operations.

I hope that hon. Members will agree with that, and I thank all those who have taken part in every stage of the Bill for their positive and co-operative approach. I ask the House to give the Bill a Third Reading tonight.

7.31 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): May I, unusually, place on record my thanks to the Minister for the way in which he has handled the Bill? Although there has not been total unanimity on all aspects of it, the Bill has the Opposition's support. As the Minister said, the fact that the matter has been dealt with so quickly in all its parliamentary stages, both here and in another place, is testimony to the importance that the whole House places in the need for the Bill to be translated swiftly into law.

The Bill arose out of a tragedy—the death of the victims of the Piper Alpha fire. One of the sadder features of health and safety legislation is that it often comes in the wake of disaster. To that extent, it may be the only final tribute that we can pay to the families of those who gave their lives on that tragic night. That fact serves to underscore the importance of ensuring that the Bill is enacted as soon as possible.

One of the issues raised on Second Reading was the problem of the victimisation of people involved in health and safety matters. Many of my hon. Friends and I believe that those involved in health and safety become the victims of various forms of blacklisting, and some of them have not been allowed back on board the offshore rigs. The Secretary of State and the Minister drew the attention of the House to a private Bill that was making its way through another place.

I understand that the Offshore Safety (Protection against Victimisation) Bill will receive its Third Reading tomorrow in another place and, all being well—I assume that there will be no attempt to block the Bill by maverick activity on either side of the House—that it will come into force at the same time as the Bill that we are now discussing. It is important to protect those who seek to raise health and safety matters and to give them the feeling that they can do their job and raise matters of importance without fear of losing their jobs. I appreciate the Minister's actions in securing suitable amendments to the Bill to ensure that it can do what the House intends.

As we have already heard, the Bill is part of a more general process. A considerable amount needs to be done by way of secondary legislation and we look forward to the regulations being brought before the House so that we can examine them and ensure that they are adequate to

[Mr. Tony Lloyd]

implement all the Cullen recommendations. The Bill is a preparatory stage for that. It is important that the whole safety regime is introduced as soon as possible and that we have a guarantee that that will be done. To that extent, the passage of the Bill tonight will at least mean that the first part of the implementation of Cullen is well under way.

May I make a couple of points that concern some of my hon. Friends, especially those with constituents involved in the North sea works and those in the geographic proximity of those works? The first concerns the safety vessels. My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) is particularly interested in that matter and raised it in Committee. It is important that the Minister takes on board our concern that the safety vessels be brought under a health and safety regime that guarantees the safety of those working on them and ensures that they are also an integral part of the safety structure that surrounds the rigs.

Secondly, the Minister is well aware of the Opposition's view on penalties. Although we welcome the increased penalties for which the Bill provides, we are not entirely satisfied that the whole regime for penalties and the system of prosecution is adequate deterrence to those who flout health and safety at work, not just on offshore rigs but on land. We shall return to that issue on future occasions while we are on this side of the Chamber and, after the general election, when we are in a position to do something about it. We shall now expect the court to use those increased penalties to ensure that, where appropriate, those who are sadly not conscious of or are indifferent to the health and safety needs of their employees are deterred.

Although the Bill is small, it is none the less important. The short speeches that have been made tonight do not show that we view the matter with a lack of seriousness. We have had a thorough and useful debate in the Bill's early stages and it is now important that the Bill leaves this place and is translated into practice. Once again, I join the Minister in expressing my appreciation at how the House has handled the measure.

7.37 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am pleased that the Bill has come to the House for its remaining stages. A couple of weeks ago, I complained to the Leader of the House that he had not mentioned the Bill's remaining stages in his business statement that day, and I impressed on him the importance that many of my constituents place on the Bill. Constituents of mine were killed when that terrible tragedy overtook the Piper Alpha. My concern for the safety of the men out there on the vessels, rigs and platforms predates the Piper Alpha disaster.

The Minister has given me an assurance about the standby vessels by way of a letter dated 27 February. At the risk of causing more work for his officials, I should be grateful if he would send copies of his letter to all Members who served on the Standing Committee, because what he says is important to those of us with constituents on standby vessels. I am sorry to cause extra work, but I am sure that other Committee members would welcome a copy of that letter.

I have been deeply concerned for a long time about the inadequacy of the standby vessels. In Committee, I moved an amendment which the Minister said was, in essence, unnecessary because clause 1 covered the safety needs and requirements of the crews of those vessels.

I have never forgotten the evidence given to a fatal accident inquiry in Aberdeen 12 or 13 years ago. The inquiry was brought about by the death of the mate of a standby vessel who fell overboard. Despite the fact that he was wearing what was deemed to be suitable gear, his comrades, the crew of the standby vessel, took about 30 minutes to bring him back on board. The reason was the vessel's unsuitability and its near-total lack of manoeuvrability. It was an old side trawler with a high seaboard. The man was in his fifties and, unfortunately, died of hypothermia as he was in the water much too long to survive. I knew of the man and knew some of the vessel's crew. I well remember their deep distress at their failure to bring their colleague back on board while there was still a chance of resuscitating him.

I welcome the Minister's letter. The third paragraph states:

> "Standby vessels will also be covered by the proposed safety case regulations as these relate to emergency procedures, and these will be subject to audit by HSE Inspectors. HSE has recruited experts in marine safety to advise on these matters."

Lord Cullen commented on the unsuitability of many of the vessels in the fleet at the time. He severely criticised the lack of manoeuvrability of the Silver Pit, the crew of which behaved in an outstandingly heroic way in seeking to rescue the men from Piper Alpha. I think that I am correct in thinking that there is only one custom-built emergency standby vessel operating in the North sea.

What role will the HSE play in the design of such vessels? In the light of what the Minister said about marine safety experts, will the HSE be consulted on the design of such vessels, particularly with regard to their manoeuvrability and their ability to withstand severe weather conditions while remaining on station? I hope that the Minister can answer that question tonight as, according to his letter, the marine safety experts are to be engaged, presumably on a consultancy basis, by the HSE. It is important to get the design of those vessels right.

The penultimate paragraph of the Minister's letter talks of the intention of the Health and Safety to ensure

> "that the requirements of the code will be enforced rigorously and in accordance with its timetable."

I take that comment to mean that those unsuitable vessels will be phased out. As I said in Committee, some of them are already tied up. Some of them have already been scrapped, but there are still vessels in the North sea. God forbid that there should ever be another Piper Alpha tragedy, but we must ensure—especially those of us with constituents in the business—that, if a disaster overtakes a platform or a rig, the emergency services have the best resources and facilities to ensure the speedy discharge of the men from those platforms.

Presumably, the marine safety experts will seek to be satisfied of the vessels' safety by testing them to see whether they meet the requirements of the code of practice and are in accordance with the timetable. Will disciplined and reasonable tests be carried out on the vessels and crews when training? Emergency evacuation procedures must be a necessary requirement of a training procedure.

I promised not to speak for long, and the Minister has given me some assurances on the standby vessels. I view them as important elements in the safety resources given to the men working on the platforms and rigs. Those men must be satisfied that, if a terrible tragedy takes place, they have been given the means, through the legislation and the implementation of the Cullen report recommendations, to leave their platforms in a safe and reasonable manner. Standby vessels play an important role. Along with many of my hon. Friends, I shall continue to monitor the performance of those vessels and their crews as they go about their important safety work.

I welcome the Bill, and am glad that it has been brought to the Floor of the House so that it can receive Royal Assent. I believe that the legislation will bring some comfort to my constituents, a goodly number of whom are at work on those platforms and rigs on the continental shelf.

7.46 pm

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): As my hon. Friends have said, we welcome the Bill. It is the culmination of the legislative activity that became necessary as a direct consequence of the Piper Alpha tragedy. We have already seen its effects with the publication last week of the Health and Safety Executive consultative documents on safety cases. Progress cannot come quick enough for the Opposition. Some of the gaps in the legislation have already been mentioned by my hon. Friends. The Bill stems directly from the concern for safety that was exposed as a result of the Piper Alpha tragedy.

My interest in offshore safety goes back a wee bit further. I have never forgotten my first experience of offshore safety as a compensation lawyer in the north-east of Scotland. The first case that I had was that of an oil worker who worked on a drilling rig and was doused in acid solution. It was quite clear from the evidence and the witness statements that I took that the operators of the drilling rig had taken a calculation, and had weighed the cost of stopping drilling against the cost of the extra insurance premium. The victim had to wait 12 hours before anyone bothered to call a helicopter to take him back on shore to hospital. I am sure that many people have many such stories and experiences. That man was scarred for life as a direct result of failing to receive prompt and adequate treatment.

That incident occurred in the early days of the oil industry. The Piper Alpha disaster showed us that that attitude had not changed even by the late 1980s, as did the Ocean Odyssey disaster, which followed quickly on the heels of Piper Alpha. In the short space since the days of 1988, we have come a long way. I know from my contact with the oil industry that attitudes have changed dramatically, but we have a long way to go before the change filters through to the coal face.

There are still problems on drilling rigs as the discussions on Second Reading and in Committee showed when we spoke of issues such as victimisation and blacklisting. The Opposition expressed concern about proper protection for health and safety representatives and committee members. These matters need to be dealt with —and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) made clear, we intend to remedy them when we are on the Government Benches in a few weeks' time.

It is important to consider the gaps in the Bill, because they point to some of the problem areas in the North sea. There is a serious problem with penalties. In Committee, I made clear my particular concern arising directly out of the Piper Alpha disaster and its close scrutiny by the Crown Office in Edinburgh. There is a gap between the very serious common law offence of culpable homicide and the statutory offences under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974. The Bill does not fill that gap, and we have serious concerns about the middle ground.

We are still concerned about the problem of standby vessels, the supply of boats and the lack of a uniform approach. Just last week, I obtained the most up-to-date figures available from the Department of Transport on the ages of the boats. I am told that there are now 176 standby vessels in the North sea, 48 of which are 30 or more years old and 64 more than 25 years old. That is an indictment of the Government. There are still three vessels from the 1930s operating in the North sea—the Ewan, which was constructed in 1936; the Grampian Osprey, which was constructed in 1937; and the Cam Valiant, which was constructed in 1939.

The safety regime for the standby vessels should be part of the overall safety regime in the North sea and subject to the rigour of the scrutiny of the Health and Safety Executive and the regulations that apply to the remainder of the industry. While there is that deficiency, no amount of codes of guidance will fill the gap. That problem needs to be addressed.

There is a failure properly to deal with the role of industrial relations. We welcome the Minister's statement about the Bill currently in the other place, which we hope will manage to squeeze through the legislative programme before the general election. We have a strong view, which underpins the whole ethos of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, that industrial relations are an essential part of the safety system. We cannot have bad industrial relations and good safety—the two do not mix. We want that essential protection in place as part of the statutory regime. Certainly it is one area that needs major improvement.

That said, we welcome the Bill. We are all aware that important lessons have been learnt following the Piper Alpha tragedy. Those lessons are being applied not just in this country but throughout the world. We are well aware that we are a part of the focus of the remainder of the offshore oil industry. It is looking at us carefully and the Bill is an important step forward. I welcome it.

7.53 pm

Mr. Forth: Our brief debate has epitomised our proceedings throughout the different stages of the Bill. Anyone reading the record will get a sense of the common purpose that we have all shared in trying to ensure not only that something effective is done, but above all, to ensure that we get the Bill on the statute book—given the constraints that are either real or imaginary, depending on one's point of view. We do not want to take any risks with the Bill, and none has been taken.

As often before, a number of themes have run through the speeches this evening. The first theme, and I can deal with it readily, was the private Member's Bill originating in another place, which has now been amended and which will have its Third Reading tomorrow. All being well, it will come to this House soon thereafter. The Bill was mentioned by many hon. Members—not just Opposition Members, but my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), who has a long-standing interest in the matter. I believe that I can say that the Government have

[Mr. Forth]

been able gladly to respond to the points raised both in this House and in other ways, both by Opposition Members and by my hon. Friend.

We felt that there was an opportunity to take that Bill in the other place and amend it with the sponsor's agreement. We wish it well in this House. I am glad to give an undertaking that the Government will give the Bill a fair wind. It is a private Member's Bill and will therefore be subject to the vagaries of any such Bill. However, I envisage no reason why it should not find its way quickly through this House before there is any reason why the House would not be able to consider it at any great length. That is something in which we can all share satisfaction.

Several hon. Members mentioned the problem of standby vessels, if I can put it that way. It is a problem of which I am well aware. I said earlier during the passage of the Bill that it was a matter in which I had taken some interest, having realised that it was a vulnerable area in the issues surrounding Piper Alpha and the Cullen report. I think that I can reassure the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). We have the code, which we wanted to put in place rapidly so that we could deal with the problem of standby vessels. As I have said previously, we had to balance the need to have an effective code with the practical reality of getting an acceptable standard of vessel available to operate in the North sea in standby mode.

We have imposed a series of cut-off points, which will tighten the requirement gradually but fairly rapidly, to ensure that the vessels are satisfactory for their purpose. The regulations that will flow from this Bill—which we hope will soon be an Act—will put in statutory form the requirements that currently exist only in that code. I hope that Labour Members will accept that that is the most rapid feasible way to deal with the problem. We are keeping a close eye on it.

The Department of Transport surveyors are working closely with the HSE to oversee the upgrading of the vessels. As I said in Committee, there must be that co-operation. Part of the responsibility rightly lies with the Department of Transport. The HSE is developing its involvement and expertise in this matter, partly by bringing in the experts to whom I referred in my letter to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow. It will be part of that process, and very much in the interests of the operators, to ensure that those designing the vessels work closely with the HSE and others to ensure that the design of the vessels will enable them to meet the regulations that will by then be in place. They will give effect to the requirements following the Cullen report.

That is part of the process, and it would be odd if the operators, in specifying the vessels, did not want to make absolutely sure that any future vessels met the regulatory requirements in every detail. I am sure that we can say with confidence that that will be the case.

A number of hon. Members mentioned penalties. I am aware that in Committee there was a feeling that we were not going far enough in extending the penalties available. I did not, and still do not, share that view. One of the problems—the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) touched on it—is that the House can lay down penalties in many areas of the law, but the judiciary, in its different forms, may or may not choose to exercise them to the full. That problem frustrates us all from time to time in many different areas.

Even now, the average penalty imposed does not come anywhere near the maximum available, never mind those increases that will be available when the Bill becomes an Act. Therefore, I feel that I can say with confidence that the considerable increases in available penalties will be a great help. I shall go beyond that: the HSE and its inspectors always have available, for example, prohibition notices which, in effect, can impose a much greater penalty than the subsequent fine on an operator who is not adhering to the existing regulations. Beyond that, were a matter to be referred by a magistrates court, to the Crown court it would attract unlimited penalties. Therefore, I do not share the pessimism of Opposition Members about this. When the measures come into effect, they will prove most effective in dealing with the problems that have been identified.

Yet again, the House has shown itself to be united in its purpose in ensuring that this important Bill is on the statute book in time to be effective and to ensure that we deliver to those working in the most hazardous conditions of the North sea the maximum possible protection under the law. That has been our intention, and it remains the intention of the dedicated people in the Health and Safety Executive and the many others involved in ensuring and guaranteeing that maximum level of safety. I am glad to give whatever support I can to that. Again, I welcome the wide support given to the Bill by all hon. Members and I ask the House to give the Bill a Third Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed, with an amendment.

Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Clause 5

FUNCTIONS

8 pm

Mrs. Sylvia Heal (Mid-Staffordshire): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 4, line 30, at end insert—

> '(2A) In that subsection, at the end of paragraph (c) there shall be inserted—
> "(ca) advise the Secretary of State on arrangements for monitoring the provision of courses of further training for nurses, midwives or health visitors already registered;".'.

The amendment seeks to provide for an overview of the strategic planning of nursing education. Serious concern has been expressed by professional and trade union groups as well as by Opposition Members that the funding for nursing education is to be passed to the regional health authorities without adequate protection for its use and monitoring. We welcome the Government's agreement to ring-fence funds for nursing education, but we are still worried by a lack of long-term assurance on the issue.

The amendment will help the Secretary of State to ensure that the assurances given by the Minister in Committee closely to monitor post-registration as well as pre-registration budgets from the centre are met. In that way, the commitment will be given statutory force, which I am sure the Minister will welcome, so that Government intentions are not misunderstood or deviated from.

The national boards' role as validators of training courses and institutions would be enhanced as, under this amendment, they would be in a position to monitor nursing education developments and ensure that the Secretary of State is aware of any developments or discrepancies that need addressing.

In the absence of statutory ring fencing, which has been rejected by the Government, effective monitoring of nursing education spending by regional health authorities is vital to reassure the professions that their future education is financially secure and strategically planned. Although we do not doubt the professionalism of the national boards in their provision and administration, their outlook could be parochial rather than have the required objective and long-term vision that is crucial to nursing development.

I have had representations on the issue from nursing organisations and unions, as well as from individual nurses, and, like my hon. Friends, I share their concern about the security of long-term nursing education from health authority cuts. For many health authorities, it will be an easy option, when pressed for money for basic nursing and midwifery courses, to consider cutting essential courses such as family planning or neo-natal nursing courses.

It is vital that the number of places is monitored annually; the number of midwife teachers to provide such courses must also be monitored. Without adequate provision for post-basic education for midwives, the standard of midwifery care in Britain will obviously be affected. That will have a knock-on effect for mothers, babies and their families. Our midwifery service is considered to be the best in the world, and that is the way it must stay. We need to ensure that the conditions are right in order to protect our midwifery services. Unless there is an opportunity for midwives to develop their knowledge through post-registration courses, midwifery will become a less attractive career prospect for many women.

The report of the Select Committee on Health on maternity services, published today, is the result of evidence from professionals and consumers concerned in maternity care and, as such, is likely to receive widespread support. That report, which I welcome, emphasises in its recommendations the importance of women having greater choice in the type of maternity care that they receive, whether at home or in hospital, and says that the majority of them regard midwives as the group best placed to provide the continuity of care through pregnancy and childbirth. A weakened midwifery profession will not be in an optimum position to implement the recommendations. The report also refers to the importance of education in ensuring that the midwifery profession remains highly skilled.

As the Minister for Health pointed out in Committee, she did not think that her Department could adequately provide the necessary monitoring because it was too detached from the workplace. I do not share her doubts about the Department of Health's capacity to monitor effectively if it so desires. However, to cater for her nervousness about whether her Department is capable, the national boards are ideal agents of monitoring. They are in close contact with nursing education through their work of validation and will comprise practising nurses, midwives and health visitors who will have the necessary experience to be able successfully to monitor health authorities and their nursing education provision.

The Minister has already agreed that monitoring post-registration and pre-registration training is important and the amendment simply gives that belief an assurance of statutory force. I commend the amendment to the House.

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): The amendment is misconceived in seeking to involve the national boards in the arrangements for monitoring post-registration training. We debated this important Bill with a great deal of agreement, and I made it clear that it must be for the NHS, not the national boards, to do its own work force planning and ensure that training provision is adequate for its needs. The role of the boards is different. It will be their job to accredit institutions and to validate courses, to ensure that the standards of professional education of the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting are met and to collaborate with the UKCC in the provision of improved training methods.

I have also made it clear that we fully recognise the responsibility of the NHS to ensure that nurses, midwives and health visitors can maintain and develop their professional skills at post-registration level. In that context, I am, for example, looking forward to receiving the UKCC's PREPP—post-registration education and practice project—formal proposals and discussing with it the implications for the NHS. I have already had informal discussions with the chairman of the UKCC, Dame Audrey Emerton, and her team, and I hope that we can carry matters further forward.

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

We also recognise the responsibility of the NHS to ensure that sufficient nurses are trained in specific post-registration skills to enable the changing demands on the service to be met. The hon. Lady is aware of the many specialist areas in which it is fundamental for the delivery of health care to have nurses in sufficient numbers with those particular post-registration skills. I refer to the large groups of the district nurses, health visitors, community psychiatric nurses and to specialist areas such as burns, plastic surgery, renal surgery, paediatric intensive care, neo-natal intensive care, accident and emergency and theatre nursing.

There have been occasions when we have decided from the centre that it is necessary to ring-fence money particularly to ensure the development of a particular specialty. For example, a former Secretary of State ring-fenced £3 million particularly for the training of high-tech nurses because we are only too well aware that having a sufficient supply of properly qualified staff determines our ability to maintain momentum and provide high quality care. We are making special arrangements in that regard, and although the amendment is misguided in seeking to give responsibility to national boards, that is not to say that monitoring training is unimportant.

We told regional health authorities in England that post-registration education and training, which is designed to provide specific professional skills, should for the time being be funded from a separate and protected regional budget, managed in a similar way to that for pre-registration training. Budgets will be rolled forward from year to year in the ordinary way, and it will be open to regions to vary them in the light of changing work force demands. Any such variation should, however, be open and transparent.

We are ensuring also that both pre-registration and post-registration budgets are closely monitored. I said in Committee that we are still working on the precise mechanics, and we shall hold early discussions with the service. I want to be certain that the arrangements that we put in place are consistent with the new approach to planning and commissioning training for NHS non-medical staff generally that will be introduced on the basis of the principles set out in 1989, in working paper No. 10. Many health service staff will be equally concerned with those arrangements.

I remind the House that, although we made it clear that specific arrangements for post-registration training will be subject to review in the light of experience, current arrangements will continue as long as necessary. We have no plans for changing them in the foreseeable future.

The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mrs. Heal) referred to the Select Committee report on maternity services that was published today. As she knows, there has been a 23 per cent. increase in midwives since 1979, which is of great significance. The report reveals that the pendulum has swung back to recognition of that which the hon. Lady rightly identified as a major strength of our maternity services. It is hard to identify any other health service in the world in which the qualified midwife plays such a significant role. Midwives, like nurses and health visitors, have much to gain from the Bill.

It would be inappropriate to accept amendment No. 1 because, clearly, mechanisms are in hand. It is in the interests of us all—whether as Ministers, NHS managers, or members of the nursing profession—to ensure that training is properly monitored and developed.

Amendment negatived.

Mrs. Heal: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in Page 4, line 37, at end insert—

'(4A) After subsection (1) there shall be inserted—

"(1A) In approving an institution under subsection (1) above, National Boards shall pay special regard to the suitability of library facilities available to students of that institution.".'.

The amendment seeks to highlight the rapidly deteriorating library facilities for nurses engaged in pre-registration and post-registration training and the inability of library services to provide adequate facilities for Project 2000. In drawing attention to that worrying situation, I emphasise the specific need for library facilities to become a significant factor in the national boards' course validation process.

Project 2000 is an important development in nursing education, in providing a modern nursing profession prepared to meet the new challenges of future medicine and patient care. It has, however, resulted in students adopting different learning methods, as well as the implementation of a broader-based curriculum encompassing areas previously given less emphasis—such as ethics, philosophy, sociology, psychology and environment. Students also undertake much more academically based work involving increased use of library facilities.

Project 2000 threatens to be derailed because library provision has been virtually ignored. The switch to new training programmes revealed the haphazard approach taken by nursing schools and colleges to ensuring that their library facilities can meet the increased demand that those changes necessitate.

It is difficult and unproductive specifically to apportion blame, because nursing colleges are under pressure to supply library services that they are ill equipped to provide. The national boards make no requirement to ensure that a validated institution has the necessary back-up facilities. It is apparent that the knock-on effects of Project 2000 were not adequately appreciated and that the library base was already low.

8.15 pm

Library funding must be planned to take account of long-term needs. Last year, the Government made one-off, stop-gap payments to some libraries, but they were inadequate to ensure continuous high-level payments and did not meet the most serious problem facing libraries—that of providing qualified staff. There is no planned approach to library provision. Some libraries are excellent, well staffed and well stocked, but many are staffed and managed by clerks who are not appropriately trained in library administration.

The *Nursing Times* recently highlighted the problems of a patchy library service. It cited a survey of nursing and midwifery colleges in one region, where disparities between libraries show large differences in the ratio of pupils to staff and books. That magazine's informative feature on nursing libraries highlighted other evidence of a patchwork service that is struggling to cater for the needs of the profession.

Wrexham college of nursing is linked to Bangor university, which is 70 miles away, but its library facilities are inadequate. Students must travel to Bangor for books which involves a round trip of 140 miles. That is a ludicrous way to educate our nurses. The absence of on-site facilities for students is a huge waste of time and resources, and the existing arrangement places on individual students difficulties additional to those that they face in managing their studies and meeting their responsibilities and obligations.

Shropshire and Staffordshire college of nursing and midwifery in my own region is linked with Wolverhampton polytechnic, which takes students from Shrewsbury, Stafford, and Telford, who must travel 40, 25 and 12 miles respectively to obtain the books that they need. The success of Project 2000 is jeopardised by that situation, and it is important that libraries are a key factor in course validation.

If our nurses are to be trained to the high standards to which we are accustomed, Project 2000 courses must be able to offer the proper materials. Course curriculums are designed to expand and consolidate nurse training, but there is little point to them if students cannot have access to the material that they need to achieve the excellent standards that we take for granted.

Students' hard work is being thwarted by a lack of research and learning material. A leader in the *Nursing Times* of 12 February comments:

> "Libraries are a cornerstone of any education system and the need for good libraries has never been greater."

Amendment No. 2 acknowledges an obvious but often neglected fact, and provides the impetus for ensuring that libraries have the appropriate resources and materials to support their institutions' training courses. It aims at making sure that funding is not diverted from libraries at times of cuts, and that libraries complement courses rather than act as an optional extra.

The Royal College of Nursing states:

> "quality nursing requires quality libraries, supported by professional library staff, to ensure good patient care."

That is the ideal maxim by which we ought to assess our nursing education, and one which national boards should observe when validating courses. I commend the amendment to the House.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Although I have considerable sympathy with the concern reflected in the amendment, I hope that I can persuade the House that it is unnecessary. The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mrs. Heal) has raised some important points, and I shall ensure that the appropriate national boards are made aware of them—particularly the point about the college in Wales.

As I have said, the future role of the national boards will be to accredit institutions, to validate courses to ensure that the UKCC standards of professional education are met and to collaborate with the UKCC in the promotion of improved training methods. In the process of the boards' accreditation of institutions, those institutions are already expected to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the boards that they have a level of education resources sufficient to support their programme. That, of course, includes library resources, and takes into account the extent and range of publications and of librarian support for the students, particularly where multiple sites are being used. Obviously, when—as with project 2000—there is a link with institutions of higher education, the boards take into account the library facilities available in those institutions as well.

After all, £207 million has already been allocated to project 2000. I had the pleasure of visiting the college in Wolverhampton that serves the hon. Lady's constituency, for an inauguration. It is important for nurses, and student nurses, to be able to benefit both from the caring, hands-on work experience provided by the training, and from the classroom-based side, for which library facilities are needed.

As I undertand it, there has never been an occasion when a board has refused validation of a course because of unsuitable library facilities, although on occasion boards have made recommendations about the improvement of facilities. That shows not only the high standard that prevails, but the thoroughness with which the boards undertake their task. I have no doubt that, should they feel that the library facilities are not satisfactory, this is a step that the boards would not hesitate to take.

There has been considerable investment in recent years in the provision, maintenance and improvement of library facilities. For example, regional health authorities were allocated the substantial sum of £5 million in 1991-92, as part of project 2000 funding, specifically to enable them to meet the effects of pay and price increases, bursary increases and other locally identified needs related to the implementation of project 2000, such as—this was made explicit—library additions. As a follow-up exercise, the English national board is currently monitoring how much of this funding was spent on libraries. That is relevant to the hon. Lady's speech.

I mentioned in Committee last month the generous donation from the General Nursing Council Trust in this respect. The sum of £1,000 per college—£2,000 in the case of larger colleges—has been allocated by the trust, through the English national board, with the express purpose of improving library facilities. Last, but by no means least, the English national board has given £6[illegible]00 this financial year to four regions, to enable them to improve their library resources.

All that goes to show how seriously both we and the boards take the provision of library facilities. There is no question but that "special regard" will continue to be paid to them, as part of the process of approval of training institutions. They are, however, part of a much larger whole, and I think that it would be invidious and perhaps unnecessary to single out this one aspect in the way that the amendment suggests. The boards need to satisfy themselves not only that library facilities exist, but that there are adequate clinical placements and that the teaching is of a proper standard. They must deal with a range of other issues. They are faced with the same old difficulty: once one issue has been identified, others of equal validity may be called into question. As I have said, however, substantial investment has been made in library facilities.

I recognise the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire, and I shall ensure that the relevant national boards are aware of it. I hope, however, that, in the light of what I have said, the hon. Lady will not press the amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Order for Third Reading read.

8.24 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Hon. Members will recall that the main purpose of this important Bill—in brief—is to change the constitution and functions of the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting and the four national boards for nursing, midwifery and health visiting—the five statutory bodies set up under the Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act 1979.

The Bill changes the constitution of the central council from a body the majority of whose members are nominated by the national boards to one the majority of whose members are elected by the professions to which they are responsible. It also changes the constitution of the four national boards from one of elected to one of appointed bodies. At the same time, it takes away the role of the national boards in managing and financing the provision of nursing, midwifery and health visiting education and training.

In line with the principles of the NHS reforms, that function would be devolved to health authorities, except in Northern Ireland, where existing arrangements will continue to apply. It also centralises all professional-conduct investigations at the council, avoiding duplication of effort, rationalising an important function and removing some of the delays that prove so grievous for those involved.

Mr. O'Brien: On Second Reading, I drew attention to the problems that affect some state-registered nurses who wish to gain further qualifications under Project 2000, and are having great difficulty in obtaining co-operation and support from the training colleges. I refer in particular to St. James's training college in Leeds. Will the Minister explain why my constituents who want to train under Project 2000 are not receiving the co-operation to which they are entitled?

Mrs. Bottomley: I do not blame the hon. Gentleman for his difficulty in getting the precise terms right. On Second Reading, we had some discussion about the exact status of those involved. I think that the hon. Gentleman has now raised the case not of state-registered nurses, but of state-enrolled nurses who wish to move on to a Project 2000 course.

An enrolled nurse already has some qualifications. The way forward for such a nurse is to join a conversion course, which will move her on to full registered-nurse status. We discussed the point at length in Committee, and I feel that it has considerable validity. I can give the hon. Gentleman the encouraging news that the number of conversion courses increased from six in 1985 to 225 in March 1991.

It was a condition of the establishment of a project 2000 course that the needs of enrolled nurses should be recognised. We feel, however, that the right approach for someone who is already an enrolled nurse is not to go back to the beginning and embark on a Project 2000 course—which would represent considerable duplication—but to consider a conversion course. In some circumstances, a Project 2000 course has accepted an enrolled nurse, but we would not advocate it.

I know that nurses will welcome the Bill. It follows a series of measures that the Government have introduced to improve nurses' circumstances. The establishment of the review body in 1983 was an important step forward, and the implementation of its recommendations in all its reports this year means that all nurses will gain a 5·8 per cent. pay uplift. A new grading structure has been established so that a long-term career in nursing is more rewarding. The working week has been reduced from 40 to 37·5 hours without loss of pay. In addition, Project 2000 has been introduced—a subject with which my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) may wish to deal.

That series of important measures recognises and improves the status of nursing and makes it a more rewarding career. That is evidenced by the fact that the length of time spent in nursing, as I told the House on Second Reading, has now doubled. A nurse used to spend an average of seven years in the service, but now spends 14 years. The Bill, which reorganises training and registration, will be a further development for nurses.

The Bill has been discussed extensively and it is fair to say that the speed with which it has passed through its stages shows the good will that all sides feel for it, and the general recognition of the value of its sensible and worthwhile proposals. We had an enjoyable Committee stage, which is not always the case, and there was considerable agreement on a number of subjects.

We have consulted the statutory bodies at all stages and have not only listened to everything that the nursing, midwifery and health visiting professions have said to us but have acted, in so far as it has been possible, in full accordance with their wishes. We had an extensive debate in Committee on the role and functions of the reconstituted central council and national boards and, in particular, on the professions' expectations of them.

It may be helpful to refer briefly to the report of the Select Committee on Health on maternity services, especially to its implications for the regulation and training of midwives. We shall carefully study the Committee's recommendations about midwifery education and will deal with them in our formal response, but I am sure that the statutory bodies will take careful note of what the Committee has said.

I reiterate the Government's commitment to maintaining the unique and separate nature of the midwifery profession. Midwifery shares, and will continue to share, a common regulatory structure with nursing and health visiting, but its special position will continue to be recognised within that structure, as it has been since 1902. At UKCC level, the powers and responsibilities of the midwifery committee will remain as they are now.

In earlier debates, we discussed the wish of some midwives to change the relationship between the council and midwifery committee by widening the scope of matters on which the council is required to consult the committee and by making it more difficult for the council to reject any of the committee's recommendations. But it is our firm conviction, shared by the statutory bodies, that the current position, whereby the council is required to consult its midwifery committee on midwifery matters, does not restrict its powers and works well. As I said in Committee, I very much hope that future relations between the council and committee will continue to be based, as they have been, on full consultation and constructive dialogue rather than statutory prescription.

We have given a commitment that membership of each national board will include, either as an executive or non-executive member, a registered nurse, a registered health visitor and a practising midwife. We have also formally acknowledged that the boards will need to continue to have special concern for midwifery. That is why we moved an amendment in another place to incorporate the wording of what is now clause 5(5), which requires the boards, in discharging their functions, to take account of differences in considerations applying to the different professions.

I understand that the English national board has recently reaffirmed its commitment to the principle that midwifery education and practice should be determined, validated and monitored by the midwifery profession. That will offer considerable reassurance to those who have been slightly concerned about difficulties that have emerged in recent months. I have no reason to believe that the reconstituted statutory bodies will wish to depart from that principle, although it will be for them to devise detailed arrangements for putting that into practice.

Concern has been expressed about the need for some form of health consumer representation on the reconstituted central council—a point that was made well by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst on Second Reading and subsequently in Committee. We accept that it is clearly more important than ever that the wider public interest in the regulation of the professions should be adequately reflected in the appointed membership. In Committee, I took pains to assure the professions that, in considering his appointments to the central council, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would wish to take account of the need to reflect the interests of health service consumers and would take wide soundings about the appropriate individuals who could make that special contribution to the council.

I have already mentioned the Government's position on the funding of nursing and midwifery education and training, especially post-qualification education and training. We are committed to ensuring that adequate resources are made available for nursing, midwifery and health visiting education and training. We estimate that about £880 million will be spent on such training this year.

In our view, two main principles should underlie arrangements for organising and financing education and training. First, decisions governing the supply of nurses, midwives and health visitors should be taken as close as possible to the point of service delivery to ensure that decisions are responsive to local needs and to the changing requirements of employers. Central top slicing of a significant proportion of the funds for nursing and midwifery education, as happens now, is inconsistent with that principle. Secondly, the Government have a duty to ensure that, overall, mechanisms are in place to ensure an adequate supply of properly trained nurses, midwives and health visitors to meet the health needs of the nation for today and tomorrow.

Against that background, we intend that the regional health authorities, in consultation with employers, should have the main responsibility for identifying the demand for qualified nurses and midwives, for deciding the number of students who need to be recruited and trained and for funding pre-registration nursing and midwifery training. To enable that to happen, clause 5(2) removes the existing duty of the national boards to provide or arrange for others to provide education and training, so permitting the transfer of funding for the education and training of nurses from the national boards to health authorities and health boards.

We believe that this short Bill is vital to the future of the nursing, midwifery and health visiting professions. The reconstitution of the profession's statutory bodies will result in increased efficiency and effectiveness in the administration of those bodies and more direct accountability to the professions that they represent. I have no doubt that future historians of the professions will see the Bill as a major milestone in that history.

8.38 pm

Mrs. Heal: Once again, I welcome the Bill on behalf of Labour Members. We believe that it is an important and necessary development for the nursing profession. It modernises and updates the Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act 1979 and streamlines the functions and structures of the UKCC and the national boards, which the 1979 Act left somewhat confused.

We have been disappointed by the Government's inflexibility over some of the Bill's inadequacies. The Bill has enjoyed rare consensus for a health measure, and we had hoped that the Government would be willing to entertain some amendments that, we feel, would have greatly improved it.

In preparing to debate the Bill, I have been in contact with the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Midwives, the Confederation of Health Service Employees, the National Union of Public Employees and the Health Visitors Association. They have been very helpful in discussing the content and implications of the Bill and must be commended for the professional and practical ways in which they have represented their members and sought to achieve the best possible legislation for the nursing professions.

As I said, there are still major concerns. I draw the House's attention to the worrying decline in the number of students seconded to health visiting courses in the past 15 years. In 1975-76, there were 1,086, but that figure declined in 1989-90 to 847. More recent figures for 1990-91 are not yet available, but the United Kingdom Standing Conference of Health Visiting Lecturers has reported a further drop of 100 students, to approximately 750.

That is a very worrying trend, which does not appear to be the result of a lack of suitable applicants. In fact, many candidates are now forced to search nationwide for secondment. It seems that there is insufficient funding for secondments, which has led to a drastic reduction in available opportunities for students. That is even more worrying, as it appears that funds supposedly ring-fenced for nursing education are not being used.

There is confusion about where the funds are since they were transferred from the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council under working paper 10 to maintain health visitor and district nursing training levels. It appears that many district health authorities are unclear about where and whether money is available for these courses. I call on the Government to take immediate action to investigate and then to act.

There is known to be a shortage of qualified health visitors in the north-west and some health authorities such as Oldham, Trafford and Rochdale have vacancies that they cannot easily fill. We were assured that that could not happen with ring-fenced funds, but it is happening now. That is why we tabled amendments in Committee to give statutory backing to ring fencing. We feared that, without the protection of statute, funds might be mistargeted or

[Mrs. Heal]

misused. The Government have refused to accept that, but they must take action to ensure that the undertakings that they give are observed.

It is important for the future development of nursing and for the morale of nurses that the people involved see practical evidence that their future is protected. Health visitors see that training courses for their professions have been drastically reduced, and one must question the Government and seek an adequate explanation.

In 1989-90, Teesside had 12 places but now has no course. Reading had 32 places and now has 20. Liverpool had 24 places but now has none. These are cuts in training and provision. Thirty per cent. of health visitors are over the age of 50 and, although there is a stable turnover of staff at present, one can easily envisage a sudden drop in availability of experienced and trained health visitors in the next few years.

Health visitors and other community care nursing professions play a vital role in the promotion of good health and the prevention of ill health. Their efforts are crucial to the success and development of a public health policy. Labour is committed to improving the health of the nation, and a Labour Government would launch a national health initiative to promote a healthy Britain. Such a strategy will cut through departmental boundaries and encompass every Department in promoting better life styles and social conditions for the maintenance of good health for all. Tackling poverty and inequalities will be vital steps, sadly ever more necessary today following 13 years of social neglect by the Government.

The nursing professions will play a vital role in educating, monitoring and preventing ill health among the people of Britain. They can do that only if they are given the opportunity and facilities to train and educate for the new challenges of the next decade and beyond. The Bill has been designed to do exactly that. Labour believes that certain aspects and statutory guarantees would have been more effective in achieving the stated aims of the Bill, but we do not wish to delay its progress on to the statute book.

We shall watch closely to ensure that the Government's pledges and assurances that we have sought on behalf of nurses and patients are honoured, and we shall watch with interest and shall support the opportunities for nursing that we hope the Bill will create.

8.45 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I am sure that the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mrs. Heal) cannot have overlooked the fact that the Government introduced their own health of the nation campaign some time ago and that it is successfully under way. However, I have no wish to inject a party-political note into the debate; that is the last thing I want to do. I do not wish to detain the House and speak only because the Minister for Health tempted me to do so by referring to me.

The Minister referred especially to the Medicinal Products: Prescription by Nurses etc. Bill which has passed through all its stages in this House and had a Second Reading in another place on Friday. I hope that it will reach the statute book before we must all flee these buildings.

The Minister also referred to the publication today of the report on maternity services by the Select Committee on Health of which I am a member. I am sure that she will agree that it will prove to be a milestone in the history of maternity services. It refers frequently to the admirable work of midwives and, in particular, advocates that they be given a higher professional status. It is an extremely detailed report and I shall avoid the temptation to go into it because, fortunately, it has already been extensively reported in the media.

The Bill is the third measure today that has received all-party support and is well on its way to the statute book. This is perhaps a useful opportunity to point out to the nursing professions the enormous respect in which they are held and the great support that they have not only in the House but in the country from all political parties, at a time when the divisions between the parties will be highlighted. Perhaps it is just as well for the public to realise that, whatever words are exchanged in the next few weeks, it is possible for hon. Members to find some issues —such as those that I have mentioned—on which we are united and able to work together for the common good.

Although I suspect that health will be only one of the issues that will be well to the fore in the coming election, I hope that people in the health professions will realise that, whatever our political party, they have our full support and our admiration.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with an amendment.

Disability Living Allowance

8.47 pm

The Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): I beg to move,

That the draft Social Security (Disability Living Allowance) Amendment Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 25th February, be approved.

The House will recall debating four sets of regulations setting out the detailed provisions for disability living allowance and disability working allowance last December. The regulations before the House tonight make a number of minor technical corrections to one of the sets—the disability living allowance regulations—which were debated then.

The amendment regulations make five changes. Amending regulation 2(2) corrects the original regulation which provides that payment of the care component of disability living allowance should cease four weeks after admission to hospital. In defining a hospital for this purpose, the original regulation omitted the necessary references to Scottish legislation.

Amending regulation 2(3)(a) is also entirely technical. It merely alters the opening words of the original to reflect the amended structure of the regulation.

Amending regulation 2(3)(b) and (c) corrects an error in the orginal regulation concerning the treatment of the DLA care component for children in the care of a local authority. In the past, attendance allowance has not been paid for children in the care of a local authority when they live in residential accommodation such as a children's home, but benefit has been payable for children living in a private dwelling—for example, with a family. Our intention was to carry forward that entirely sensible distinction into DLA. We made that clear in all the documentation on the regulations but, regrettably, the original regulation was defective. As drafted, it provides for virtually all children under the age of 16 in the care of a local authority to carry on getting the DLA care component regardless of where they live.

We believe that it is sensible not to pay a DLA care component when the care needs are already being met from public funds. As hon. Members may recall, we have decided, from April, to allow children in hospital to continue getting the DLA care component for 12 rather than four weeks, which will be of substantial help to the parents of children who spend protracted periods in hospital.

Amending regulation 2(3)(d) corrects an error in the original regulations relating to the care component for people who are terminally ill. Again, it has been a long standing policy that attendance allowance is not payable when accommodation is provided, or may be provided, from public funds, so as to avoid double provision for the same needs. Once again, with the introduction of DLA we have moved to relax that rule in the case of people who are terminally ill.

The original regulations correctly provided an exemption for terminally ill people living in accommodation where funding may be provided from public funds, but is not necessarily so provided in practice—normally in a voluntary hospice. However, we inadvertently failed to extend the exemption to cases where some public funding is provided to the hospice—for example, via a small grant from the local health authority.

We do not believe that such funding should affect the rights of terminally ill people to get DLA or attendance allowance, so the amending regulation corrects the error and ensures that terminally ill people in such accommodation are entitled, as was originally intended, to the care component of DLA.

Amending regulation 2(4) corrects an error in relation to the suspension of DLA care component when a recipient enters hospital or residential accommodation. The policy is for the DLA care component to cease after the recipient has been in the accommodation for 28 days—or 84 days for children under 16 in hospital.

However, the original regulation was defective, extending far more widely than intended. It could have had the nonsensical effect of treating almost any accommodation as "residential accommodation"—meaning for example, that the care component would be withdrawn after 28 days from a person in a private dwelling. The amending regulation removes that unwanted effect, and restores the original policy intention.

From that brief summary, I hope that it will be clear to the House that the regulations are purely technical. I am sorry that it has proved necessary to detain hon. Members at this hour to debate the regulations, but they are technical and beneficial, and no losers are created as a result of any of the amendments. The amendments simply restore the original intention, and guarantee the rights which we had initially intended.

8.52 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): These new regulations may seem wholly uncontroversial. As we have heard, they seek to correct drafting errors by the Government that relate to payment of the disability living allowance in Scotland and tighten the rules on payment of the DLA for 28 days after the claimant has entered hospital or scheduled accommodation.

Nevertheless, I have been widely pressed to oppose the regulations, in order to mark the very deep concern felt by organisations of and for disabled people about the Government's "double-speak"—I quote from a statement last week by the Disability Alliance—about the £300 million of "new" money which, they say, Ministers so misleadingly claim to have put into disability benefits via the Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance Act 1991.

The Disability Alliance is a federation of more than 200 organisations, many of them household names. Its views are therefore highly deserving of the attention of the House, and the charge of "double-speak" is a deeply serious one for the Government. But the charge is well documented. Indeed, the statement from the Disability Alliance in which it appears continues:

> "The most glaring example of Government double-speak concerns the £300 million 'new' money they claim to have put into disability benefits in 'The Way Ahead' package (January 1990). In fact, the phasing-out of rights to invalidity benefit (additional pensions), just one of the cuts to disability benefits which form part of the same package, will save the Government £475 million within the next decade."—[*Official Report*, 21 January 1992; Vol. 202, c. *914*.]

In other parliamentary replies, the Government have also admitted that they will start saving money on the disabled working allowance within two years and that, in fact, 95 per cent. of disabled people will gain not a single penny from either the DLA or the DWA, whose net cost,

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as the Disability Alliance has demonstrated, is substantially less than the Government's anticipated saving from just one of their recent cuts to disability benefits.

It will be recalled that, in the social security changes of April 1988, more than 1 million disabled people lost payments that helped them with such unavoidable extra costs of disability as special diets, heating and laundering. Even people who are doubly incontinent, and too weak to carry bedclothes to a launderette, are denied the help that they used to get for their higher laundry costs.

The Government argue incessantly that spending on disability benefits has risen sharply since they came to power. The impression given is that disabled people are individually much better off than they were in 1979, but the increased spending since then has not been on higher benefits; it is accounted for almost wholly by higher take-up of the mobility and attendance, invalid care and other allowances that were introduced long before the present Government came to power. Since 1979, while average earnings have increased by more than 20 per cent. in real terms, disability benefits have risen by only 1 per cent. That is the truth about the Government's claim to have more disabled people better off.

Miss Widdecombe: I mean no discourtesy to the right hon. Gentleman, but we are debating a set of amending regulations. His speech sounds like the arguments that have been rehearsed fairly comprehensively on Second Reading, in Committee, and at later stages. What has it to do with the amendments under discussion tonight?

Mr. Morris: I have referred at several points in my speech to the amendments, and I shall refer to them again as I go along. I have also told the House that there are people in organisations of and for disabled people who have asked me to oppose the regulations, in order to emphasise their deep concern about the Disability Living Allowance and the Disability Working Allowance Act 1991. They want other amendments, and they have asked me to set the Government's amendments in the context of what they would like to see. I have shown that, relative to most other people, disabled people have been made very much worse off, and that neither the amending regulations nor the legislation from which they stem will alter that fundamental truth about the Government's record.

Nor do these amending regulations alter in any way the unacceptable complexity of the rules of entitlement to the DLA care component and attendance allowance for people in all the various forms of institutional care. The main ambiguities revolve around the definition of "scheduled accommodation". It is not clear, for example, how respite care funded by local authorities is classified. Thus, someone looking for respite care for a temporary period is likely to have difficulty finding out whether they are excluded from benefit by regulation 9.

As I pointed out before the Act became law, there will be 11 different combinations of DLA awards. One assessment procedure for what are still two very separate benefits—the mobility and attendance allowances—will not make life any easier for claimants. The DWA is so villainously complex that disabled people qualifying may well not realise before claiming that they will be no better off. In fact, taking poll tax liability and loss of housing benefit into account, they could actually be worse off.

The hon. Lady will know that, together with other right hon. and hon. Members, I have had concern expressed to me about the position of claimants who sit on disability appeal tribunals. While the Government are encouraging disabled people to sit on DATs, to do so can affect their benefit levels. The attendance fee for DATs is £100 a day, but the DSS has no plans to change the rules on therapeutic earnings, so disabled people who sit on the tribunals may lose both their benefit and status as "unfit for work". One woman who wrote recently to the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation about this commented:

> "We are being punished for doing a public service, which seems very unfair."

I hope the Minister will agree and act urgently to remedy the anomaly.

Again, I hope the Minister will respond urgently to the concern expressed by the ME Action Campaign about which I have made representations to her right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, as I know other right hon. and hon. Members will have done. In their letter to me on behalf of people disabled by myalgic encephalomyelitis, they ask for a rewrite of the entry describing ME in the DLA handbook. Their letter proceeds:

> "The fears of all disability groups concerning the Disability Living Allowance have been borne out, and particularly in the case of those disabled by ME, for whom the handbook description is outdated, inaccurate and demeaning and the application forms and tests for mobility are unfair and inappropriate.
>
> We are sure you will agree that it is quite bad enough to suffer from a chronic disabling illness, without also being deprived of the benefits on which so many sufferers depend and regarded as malingerers by Government."

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I very much regret having to interrupt the right hon. Gentleman, who has a long and considerable interest in the matter, but he is now straying rather far from the scope of the debate.

Mr. Morris: I am asked by the ME Action Campaign to say that, if the House of Commons is amending what is to them very important legislation, their voice should be heard as to other amendments to the Act, which are just as important as those now before the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am afraid that the scope of the debate is much narrower than that. I know that the right hon. Gentleman is a very considerable parliamentarian and has a long interest in and involvement in these matters. However, the scope of the debate is much narrower than the points with which he is now dealing.

Mr. Morris: Of course I accept your view, Madam Deputy Speaker. I very much hope that the hon. Lady will give pleasure to all parts of the House by responding to the point I have made, which is an important one for the people for whom I speak.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): When the Government talk about changes to benefits for disabled people in their legislation, what usually happens is that they set up a review. I am sick to death of this. Because of an increase in benefit or a change in benefit, the Government set up a review. People who have received disability benefit and who live in a wheelchair have to go through the review and for a period their benefit is stopped. It is a shocking state of affairs and it is high time that the Government came off it. Disabled people, not only in my constituency but nationwide, are entitled to many things. They should receive them, and they should receive proper treatment from the Department.

Mr. Morris: My hon. Friend has spoken with some intensity of feeling. He is taking an opportunity, as his constituents would expect, to represent their concerns. The amending regulations, to which I have referred on several occasions, are narrowly drawn. They have to be looked at in the context——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The regulations must be looked at in the context in which they are drawn. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will now accept my ruling on the matter.

Mr. Morris: I will go no further in responding to my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes).

Tonight's debate provides an opportunity briefly to raise other concerns that have been voiced about the Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance Act 1991 and, in particular, the charge that the Government's current "so-called information campaign" —again I quote the Disability Alliance—is in fact a propagandist version of the truth which taxpayers are being made to pay for during a general election campaign.

A high-profile media campaign of television and newspaper advertisements is now under way and will end on 6 April. It will now have to take account, no doubt, of the regulations we are talking about here. I have said that the television and press advertising campaign is causing concern to disability organisations which they want the House to hear.

Last Sunday in *The Observer*, the Department of Social Security placed a huge advertisement about the disability working allowance, with a tear-off coupon for the reader to request information on the disability living allowance. Has confusion ever been more confused? To make matters even worse, the same advertisement appeared in *The Guardian* the following day. I must take this opportunity to say to the Government that a mistake of that order has to be corrected and very quickly.

I am reminded of the leniency, as some people thought, of Mark Twain's remark that

> "Wagner's music is not as bad as it sounds."

In the view of many of this country's foremost authorities on disability benefits, the message from the Government's current media campaign is nowhere near as good as it looks.

These amending regulations do not go far enough to meet the concerns of organisations which speak for millions of disabled people in this country. I hope that the Minister will accept the concerns that I have expressed. I hope that she will appreciate the depth of feeling among those who speak for disability organisations. I do not ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to oppose the amendment regulations. No legislation, however, was more clearly in need of improvement than the 1991 Act. I hope that there will be more to it for the House to consider from a new Government, and very soon.

9.6 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I wish to speak only briefly on the amendment regulations. I had the honour to serve on the Standing Committee which considered the Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance Bill. I am pleased to see that it will come into effect on 1 April 1992. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consult closely with her colleagues in the Department of Health, because on the same date the community care plans will also have to be published by local authorities.

I recently received a consultation document published by the Bolton authorities entitled "Bolton Community Care Plan." It draws attention to the needs of nine different client groups, including the mentally ill, the mentally handicapped and the physically handicapped. At long last, the document identifies considerable unmet needs which would cost in total, in the case of Bolton, some £5 million in additional resources. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consult closely with her colleagues about how those unmet needs can be met.

The plans go into considerable detail. They have been drawn up well. They show that there is a need for £2·3 million in the coming year but that only £600,000 has been identified from existing resources as available to meet those needs. Those resources have been found from competitive tendering. Some £600,000 alone is needed to set up a centre at the former Moss Nook children's home, which will provide about 20 places for both mental health patients and people described as having challenging behaviour, many of whom suffer from severe mental and physical handicap.

I would like my hon. Friend the Minister to visit Bolton if she has an opportunity, to see how the disability living allowance meets the needs to which the plans refer. I hope that she will be able to meet members of the Bolton handicap action group, which I helped to set up a few years ago, and which has played an active part in working with the health authority and local authority to attempt to provide some of the requirements of people whose needs are not met at present. When she comes to Bolton, I hope that she will have a chance to read the document if she does not do so before.

I draw her attention to page 166 where, under the heading of "Corporate Review of services for people with a learning disability" it identifies certain themes where service needs are greatest. I shall mention one theme because it underlines the need to consider these amending regulations carefully and to decide whether anything further can be done. The comment in the report is as follows:

> "some people get nothing, others know there is nothing to get, and often the people who need the most get the least".

I hope that my hon. Friend will bear that closely in mind when considering these and any future regulations.

9.10 pm

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): I wish to take up several genuine matters of concern which were mentioned by the Minister. The first involves people who are terminally ill. The Minister is perhaps aware that I have written to the Department several times on this subject. The hospices in my constituency—the Accord hospice and St. Vincent's hospice—both mentioned to me some time ago that the previous arrangements were causing a great deal of distress. Many people who were terminally ill, but did not necessarily know it, would apply, under the special conditions for severe disablement allowance. As they did not know that they were terminally ill, the application was perhaps made by their carer or through the Macmillan nurses. However, the regulations

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state that the terminally ill person must be notified of any decision. That caused distress, because people who did not know that they were terminally ill were sent a booklet which told them that they had been awarded money because they were terminally ill. Will the Minister give an assurance that that will not happen with disability living allowance?

I received an ambiguous reply from the Minister recently which said that the Government would amend the wording, but gave no clear commitment that the carer would be notified if that was the choice of the carer and the terminally ill person.

Secondly, I ask for guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker, on whether it would be in order to mention the concerns of myalgic encephalomyelitis sufferers and to ask the Minister whether she has plans to introduce any regulations for them. I see my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) here. He has done a lot of work on that subject. We are worried about the wording in the booklet, as it says that the disease could be all in the mind, when medical evidence is becoming more stacked against that view. We hope that the wording will be revised.

Thirdly, the application form is causing some concern because it is so complicated. A genuine question arises from that. A body of opinion, in the all-party group in the House and in the Disability Alliance, believes that many forums can be consulted about the wording of regulations. Which organisations has the Minister consulted before bringing the regulations to the House? In future, will she consult knowledgeable people, including the Disability Alliance and all the disability groups which are affected?

Finally, the Association of Councillors lobbied yesterday on this subject. As I understand it, one can earn only £39 a week before money is deducted pound for pound. I believe that the Minister of State has given an assurance on more than one occasion that that anomaly has been recognised and that something will be done. The fact is that something has not been done. The result is that councillors can attend only two meetings a week. That is a big price to pay for democracy. When disabled people, no matter what their disability, cannot enter local government because they would be financially penalised, that is a bad day for democracy.

9.14 pm

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): I am disappointed that the regulations do not cover the real problems experienced by the sufferers of myalgic encephalomyelitis, of whom there are between 200,000 and 300,000.

The Department of Social Security is well aware of the problem, because it has received representations not only from hon. Members and as a result of private Bills, but from the ME Action Campaign and the ME Association.

There is a strong feeling among politicians, sufferers and the charitable organisations that try to care for those sufferers that there is a conspiracy among the medical profession not to identify the real problems faced by ME sufferers. Only recently, I received a representations from those in psychiatry who have challenged some of my views. However, I should like to restate views that I have already made known to the House.

For too long, the medical profession has used psychiatry as the dumping ground for its failures and inadequacies. More than 200,000 people suffer from an illness that has not been properly recognised. They suffer day in, day out for 24 hours a day, and they need help and recognition of their illness.

The Government talk, rightly so, about spending money properly and getting value for money. We have never been able to calculate the millions and millions of pounds that are spend in the health service on ME sufferers because of misdiagnosis. I challenge the Government to reconsider this matter. If we recognise the illness of ME properly we will not only be able to help those hundreds of thousands of sufferers and their families, but also save money for the health service. That is a true, self-financing Tory phenomenon.

I ask the Minister to reconsider this matter and, please, to ignore the advice that is coming from the demagogues of the medical profession who have ignored the plight of ME sufferers.

9.17 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I strongly support my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood), who has done so much work on this disease. All our constituents are grateful to him.

I have a question for the Secretary of State, who is present. In the necessarily fallow period while the elections are taking place, we all know that civil servants put their heads in proverbial cold towels and produce all sorts of plans for whoever are the incoming Government. I ask the Secretary of State to give an instruction while he is on the hustings that a good deal of thought is given to this complex problem. It is not easy, as all of us who have had to deal with this illness at first hand know.

This is a time for consideration and reflection in the Department. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will ask his chief medical officer and others who are likely to be producing plans for whoever are the incoming Government to have something ready on ME by the time that that Government are in place.

9.18 pm

Miss Widdecombe: This has been an interesting debate, with many contributions from hon. Members who have earned distinction for the way in which they have pursued these issues—over many years in the case of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris).

Although most of the points that have been raised have precious little to do with the regulations, they are important. I hope that I shall be allowed the same latitude in answering them as right hon. and hon. Members were allowed in the first place.

The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) spoke about the terminally ill and the sensitive problem concerning those who do not know that they are so ill, who find out that they have a limited time to live when they are informed about what money they will receive. The problem is fully recognised. Claimants have to be notified that they are receiving money and how much money, and we have not found a way to avoid doing that. However, they are not, and they never will be, told the reasons why.

We shall be watching this closely in view of the representations that have been made. I hope that that is satisfactory, but if, even on that limited basis, the hon. Gentleman can raise cases of distress being caused, perhaps he will continue his correspondence with me and we shall have another look. However, I cannot do as he asked and promise new regulations to take account of that.

I was amazed to be told by the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe that the television advertising campaign is propaganda. It is the provision of information, and that has been widely welcomed by just about all the disability organisations. If we had not had a take-up campaign or a series of advertising to get across the message, the right hon. Gentleman would, quite rightly, have been the first to ask what we were doing to make sure that a completely new benefit, and a slightly complex one, was being taken up. I refute any suggestion of propaganda.

The right hon. Gentleman raised a valid point about the unfortunate error in the disability working allowance advertisement. I assure him that anyone who sends off one of these coupons will get the right information and we shall be placing many more advertisements in an attempt to get the right message across and to correct that unfortunate error.

I am aware of the unfortunate business about disabled members of disability appeal tribunals and the problem of the effect on their benefits. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that the Minister of State is giving active consideration to how we can put this right.

Three hon. Members mentioned the ME Action Group and, before one of them was ruled out of order, they got in enough points to enable me to respond. The ME Action Group has made representations to the disability living allowance advisory board about whether people with ME should qualify for the DLA. That section of the handbook on ME was rewritten in the light of the helpful comments from organisations representing ME sufferers, but the whole point of the DLA is that it is related not to the illness or complaint of disability but to the effects of those disabilities.

So as to guage accurately those effects, we have the rather long form that has been criticised tonight. For many years, as the right hon. Gentleman will be only too well aware, we have been under pressure from organisations representing disabled people to introduce more self-assessment and to have less what they call "interference" from the medical profession. Self-assessment means asking claimants a large number of questions that would previously have been asked of the medical profession. Therefore, although the form is long, it is designed to address points made in the representations that we have persistently received, and it has been widely welcomed.

Mr. Dalyell: I ask this in an interrogatory spirit rather than a hostile or critical one. Is the Department quite sure that both it and the medical profession can be certain about the effects of ME? I have the impression as a layman that this is one of the problems. Constituency experience has shown me that there is considerable argument about the effects of ME. There is possibly a difference between how doctors see it and how patients perceive themselves.

Miss Widdecombe: Yes, but there is disagreement among the medical profession about the effects. The hon. Gentleman must realise that the advisory board is no longer medically dominated and we now take the advice of those suffering from disabilities and of laymen. It is not just a question of accepting one set of medical advice. We can act only on the information that we are given. I stress that it is the effects that matter, and the effects of most disabilities and illnesses vary from person to person.

Mr. Hood: I thank the Minister for her clarity. I shall photostat a few copies of *Hansard* tomorrow and send them to one or two doctors who have been ignoring the effects of illness and disability. I agree with the Minister. Those of us who try to advise our constituents on health matters are frustrated by the fact that doctors are getting into a wrangle about diagnosis and are ignoring effects. When a person is disabled, he or she should be treated as such. Although doctors may argue about diagnosis, they should ensure that a person who is ill and bedridden and needs help receives it. I am pleased to hear the Minister say that it is the effect that matters.

Miss Widdecombe: If the hon. Gentleman's interventon was aimed at getting me to clarify what I said, I have pleasure in confirming that his interpretation is correct —the effect rather than the defined illness matters.

The issue of counsellors relates to a completely different disability benefit—severe disablement allowance. I do not wish to introduce too quarrelsome a note into the debate because it has been productive, but I absolutely refute the suggestion by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) that the Government are guilty of double-speak when it comes to the new money that we are investing in the measure. It must be obvious to anyone capable of moving beads on an abacus that, if people are to receive the same level of benefits and if others are to be brought into the system for the first time, extra money is being made available.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) for his contribution. Obviously, we are in constant contact with our colleagues in the Department of Health and we recognise the many community care issues that must be dealt with.

Mr. McMaster: May I press the Minister on a further issue? Who will the Minister consult in future when bringing forward regulations that affect disabled people? Will she consult the groups that know what the problems are and can draft appropriate regulations?

Miss Widdecombe: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for having missed that point out of the many that he raised. We have already consulted widely on the regulations, the main Bill, and the various suggestions that were made to us as a result of the Bill and we shall continue to consult widely.

In the meantime, I commend these technical and beneficial regulations, which we have rather forgotten tonight, to the House.

9.28 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris: By leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is no part of my intention to forget the amendment regulations. I return specifically to them. It is not just my view but that of many other people who know the 1991 Act well that these amending regulations in no way alter the unacceptable complexity of the rules of entitlement to the DLA care component and attendance allowance for people in all the various forms of institutional care.

It is put to me by organisations closely involved in the care of disabled people who live in institutions that, as I

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

argued, the main ambiguities revolve around the definition of "scheduled accommodation". For example, it is not clear how respite care funded by local authorities is classified, which must be an important point. Someone looking for respite care for a temporary period is likely to have difficulty finding out whether he or she is excluded from benefit by regulation 9. I ask the Minister to respond specifically to that point about the amendment regulations.

I am grateful to the Minister for recognising the validity and force of the point that I made about the appalling mistake in the advertisement that appeared in two national newspapers. I am glad that the hon. Lady has accepted that it was a serious mistake that not only appeared in *The Observer* on Sunday but was repeated in *The Guardian* on Monday.

The hon. Lady said that she could not accept my charge that the Government are guilty of "double-speak". I made it pikestaff plain that the charge is not mine. I quoted the Disability Alliance, which speaks for more than 200 organisations of and for disabled people, many of them household names. It states:

> "The most glaring example of Government double-speak concerns the £300 million 'new' money they claim to have put into disability benefits in 'The Way Ahead' package (January 1990)."

To correct what the hon. Lady told the House, the organisation said that, with one cut alone—

> "the phasing-out of rights to invalidity benefit (additional pensions)"—

the Government will save £475 million. It is the totality of help arising from the package with which the organisations are concerned.

The hon. Lady told me that she did not think that the press and television advertising about that benefit was misleading. It is not my charge, but that of Sally Witcher, than whom few people know more about disability benefits, past and present. She was asked to join the consultative panel for the "BBC Select" series and says:

> "BBC Select . . . has so far clearly demonstrated a willingness to sacrifice understandability at the altar of propaganda . . . Presenting DLA and DWA in such a rosy light will not obscure the gross inadequacies of the two benefits."

The important charge that she makes, and which I have sent to Sir Michael Checkland, is that blatantly misleading election propaganda is to go on being transmitted by a public service broadcasting organisation, without right of comment by other parties, virtually throughout the expected timing of a general election campaign.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): Before the right hon. Gentleman concludes his ridiculous flight of rhetoric, will he tell us whether or not he thinks that measures that extend nearly another £12 a week to 300,000 people should or should not be advertised, so that the money can get to them?

Mr. Morris: I have said nothing against the desirability of advertising. I am quoting the organisations of disabled people. If it is a ridiculous flight of rhetoric, that is a criticism of what they are saying. I ask the Secretary of State, who has great experience in this policy area, and the Minister of State, to meet as quickly as they can with representatives of Disability Alliance and other organisations whose views I have been trying to present to the House tonight. They ought not to be of ridiculous flights of rhetoric. I am simply saying that their views—[HON. MEMBERS: "What are your views?"] My view is that grave mistakes have been made. It has been accepted——

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way again, as this is important. I am not asking him to rehearse the views of organisations outside the House. I am asking him to give me, across the Floor of the House, his view on whether additional benefits of nearly £12 a week to several hundred thousand people should or should not be advertised to those people.

Mr. Morris: I am saying that, if the benefits are advertised, they must be advertised correctly, not misleadingly. When the Secretary of State for Social Security was on the Opposition Benches, I was in government. He was always beside himself in trying to tell the House what organisations of and for disabled people were saying about the policies of the Government of the day—for example, about the mobility allowance that I introduced, the invalid care allowance and so on. He was always telling us what the organisations said. I rest our case there in support of listening to what the organisations say—please listen to them.

9.35 pm

Miss Widdecombe: With the leave of the House, Mr. Speaker. I cannot allow the comments of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) to go unchallenged. Before I come to the unpleasant part of the business, I must say that, on the matter of respite care—the purely technical point raised by the right hon. Gentleman—there is no change in the current position.

I am sorry that a productive, courteous and useful debate has had to end on a note of quite disgraceful propaganda—not from the Government, but from the Opposition. They accused us of issuing propaganda, but when challenged all that they could say was that there had been a mistake in one advertisement. Of what are they accusing us? The right hon. Gentleman cannot wash his hands of it; he has made accusations from the Dispatch Box. What is the right hon. Gentleman's view? Will he give my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State an answer? Should those benefits be advertised, or not?

Mr. Alfred Morris: I was a Minister for more than five years and I advertised benefits. Every conceivable step should be taken to maximise take-up. I am saying that a great deal of misleading information has gone to people who have enough to put up with because of their disabilities, without having to complain to the House about misleading information.

Miss Widdecombe: We are now clear that the complaint is not about propaganda, but about a mistake. The right hon. Gentleman has withdrawn the complaint about election propaganda. Is that what we are to understand? I think that we do understand that.

The two benefits will bring help to an additional 850,000 people, which will give additional help amounting to £300 million—no matter what the Opposition say—and which have been widely welcomed by a vast range of disability organisations, on whose representations we made the changes in the first place. They represent a major advance. I do not want to divide and rule, but most of the right hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends have been constructive tonight. The right hon. Gentleman's sentiments will not be shared by those who will now be able to work, but who were not able to work before without severe loss of benefit, and by those who will now be able to claim care components that they could never claim before.

This is a great, humane piece of legislation. It stands as a testimony to the ability and the dedication of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State—who, regrettably, cannot be here tonight—and to the humanity and the deep commitment to the disabled of the whole Government. The right hon. Gentleman should be ashamed of the way in which he has warped the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Social Security (Disability Living Allowance) Amendment Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 25th February, be approved.

PETITION

Mifegyne

9.38 pm

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I wish to present to the House a petition drawn up by the Ipswich branch of the organisation Life against the drug Mifegyne, also known as RU486. The petition bears the signatures of 194 parishioners of St. Mary Magdalene's church, Norwich road, Ipswich, who believe that untold harm will be done if that pill becomes generally available in this country:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House, which is committed to upholding respect for human life and protection of the weak and vulnerable, will do everything possible to prevent the distribution and use of Mifegyne (known as RU486) and any other drugs which, like it, are produced with the deliberate intention of destroying human life.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, wili ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Ozone Layer

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

9.39 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In the 30 years since I was elected in May 1962, I have had 37 Adjournment debates ranging from Lockerbie to the rain forest, from kidney transplants to unemployment in the then mining villages of Blackridge, Fauldhouse and Stoneyburn which, in 1963, stood at an unacceptable 5·5 per cent. Yet in all that time no topic has approached in importance the plant pathology and skin cancer threat of an ozone hole.

The stakes are mind-boggling. The issues, as the Secretary of State for the Environment was reported to have said in New York earlier in the week, are dramatic for humankind. If some of the more alarmist views are half correct, it could mean that we could go the way of dinosaurus and pterodactyl, and it would be curtains for human life.

However, I am not alarmist. One of the saltier scientists with whom I talked said that, in the short term, if a person spent March and April in the nude in Scotland he would be safer than if he sunbathed on one day at high noon in Malta. That is the view that I take in the short term. In the medium and longer term it may be a different story. In general, I am concerned about the year 2000, 2005 and 2010. By his nodding of the head I think that the Minister assents to that general view.

My application for an Adjournment debate was prompted first of all by the recent NASA public statements, which may, incidentally, have been prompted in turn by internal problems in the NASA set-up and, secondly, by the widely reported statements of Greenpeace.

For example, at the top of page one of *The Scotsman* on 14 February, over the byline of its justifiably respected environment correspondent, Auslan Cramb, my concerned constituents were told:

> "Pollution map points way to ozone hole over Scotland."

That appeared on the front page of a quality newspaper. He went on to say:

> "A new map of atmospheric pollution has for the first time given a dramatic early warning of possible ozone destruction above Scotland. It shows exceptionally high levels of the main ozone-depleting chemical—chlorine monoxide—over Scotland, Scandinavia and Russia, with the highest concentrations above Shetland and the west of Norway. Scientists have given warning that the pollution, caused by man-made chemicals, could herald the creation of an ozone hole similar to the one which appears over the Antarctic every spring. The next few weeks will be critical as increasing sunshine in the northern hemisphere encourages the reactions which can destroy the life saving layer."

That is strong stuff, and it is no wonder I came rushing down hoping to put a private notice question, so concerned were my constituents. That article continued:

> "Ozone protects the planet from cancer-causing ultraviolet radiation, and health specialists say a 10 per cent. decrease in ozone levels could lead to 300,000 extra skin cancers and up to 1·75 million extra eye cataracts each year.
>
> The possibility of an ozone hole above highly-populated areas was revealed last week by scientists in Europe and America."

What are the people affected to make of that? The article adds:

> "The latest graphic representation of the findings, showing the highest concentrations of C10 in yellow and orange, was produced for Heriot-Watt. Dr. Robert Harwood, of Edinburgh University's department of meteorology, stressed that concentrations of C10 would vary, and its presence was not a guarantee that ozone-thinning would take place."

That is alarming enough.

Those of us concerned with the environment are delighted that Geoffrey Lean of *The Observer* has made a marvellous and miraculous recovery and is returned to health, and he showed enormous courage in doing so. He wrote under the headline

> "Fears over the ozone layer spur action on treaty"

the following report:

> "The studies predict that harvests in the US and the former Soviet Union will be decimated as the greenhouse effect takes hold. Food exports from the US, which help to feed 100 nations, could fall catastrophically.
>
> The African savannahs, home to 200 million people, would dry out to resemble the Sahel."

That also is alarming stuff, yet with the experience of having written on a weekly basis for *New Scientist* for more than a quarter of a century, I must tell the Minister that Mr. Chris Rose and his colleagues at Greenpeace have produced serious work that deserves serious and detailed Government reply.

Greenpeace knows that I am the public friend of the nuclear power companies, of British Nuclear Fuels and, heaven help me, of Nirex—and do not always share Greenpeace's opinions. Rather than repeat everything that they said, and although I am fortunate to have a little extra time, I shall truncate their remarks. However, I asked Mr. Chris Rose to submit his material to Dr. Alan Apling of the Department of the Environment and to the Minister's other advisers. I also gave notice to the Minister of other authorities that I consulted in preparation for this Adjournment debate and before formulating my questions.

Those to whom I spoke included Professor Tom Blundell, FRS, director of Agricultural and Food Research Council; Professor John Dale, professor of botany at Edinburgh university, dean of the faculty of biological sciences—I should say I am a member of the university's biological sciences advisory committee; Dr. Joe Farman of Cambridge, who first identified the ozone hole above the Antarctic; Professor John Knill and his colleagues at the Natural Environment Research Council; Sir John Mason, a distinguished cloud physicist who was the former head of the Meteorological Office; Dr. Paul Rogers of Bradford university, and expert of NASA and a plant pathologist by training; and Dr. David Royle of Long Ashton research centre. I received valuable briefs from the House of Commons Library science section, and from the Labour party.

I just have time to make brief reference to the Greenpeace brief that was sent to the Department. It states:

> "We are pressing for a complete and immediate ban on ozone depleting substances and will continue to do so in the run up to the March 23 formal EC Environment Ministers meeting. Germany has reiterated its intention to go further than the EC informal agreement (of a 100 per cent. phase out by the end of 1995) and intends to phase out all CFCs in 1993. There is no legal obstacle to Britain doing the same (it is allowed under Article 130 of the Single European Act)."

Greenpeace believes that the results from NASA, and from the European Arctic stratospheric ozone experiment, show that severe ozone depletion, possibly resulting in the creation of an ozone hole could occur over parts of the northern hemisphere—including Britain—in the next few weeks or months. Preliminary NASA results released on 3 February show that the development of a late winter or spring ozone hole is increasingly likely. The reason is that CFCs and other chlorine-containing chemicals have reached the stratosphere and have been broken down to chlorine monoxide, with halons being broken down to create bromine monoxides. NASA has found 1·5 parts per billion of chlorine monoxide over eastern Canada and northern New England—a higher level than has ever before been recorded over the north or south polar regions.

Data have also indicated a lessening of the atmosphere's predicted ability to recover from periods of ozone depletion. The likelihood of significant volcanic ozone loss over the northern hemisphere, now and in the future, is greatly increased by the presence of large quantities of natural volcanic particles in the lower stratosphere, which effectively lock up oxides of nitrogen that would otherwise combine with reactive chlorine before it is involved in the reactions that lead to ozone destruction.

An increase in the number of sulphuric acid particles, which act in that way, is the result of a tenfold increase in stratospheric aerosol created by the Mount Pinatubo volcanic eruption. That eruption has affected the likely timing and severity of ozone depletion, but it would not cause that without the chlorine and bromine pollution.

The chemicals that contribute to the pollution include CFCs, carbon tetrachloride, HCFCs, methyl chloroform and halons. In the United Kingdom, ICI is the largest manufacturer of those chemicals. It has announced the closure of its CFC 11 and CFC 12 plants from early 1993, but it then intends to import CFCs from the Dutch chemical company Akzo.

The Department has received the rest—and, indeed, the summary—of the hard work done by Greenpeace. Let me add that, according to the opening leader in *New Scientist* on 15 February—written by an extremely responsible and knowledgeable man—

> "*New Scientist* does not always see eye to eye with Greenpeace, but it happens that when Greenpeace calls for a ban on the production of all substances that deplete ozone, it is talking sound scientific common sense. The Prime Minister should not instinctively reject its proposals."

Having received notice, will the Government tell me their reaction to the work of Greenpeace?

The Scotsman says:

> "Springtime is the danger period in both northern and southern hemispheres, when sunshine arrives after a long dark winter, causing the perfect conditions for ozone destruction by chemical reaction. The ozone overhead in Europe during this month and next month is already 8 per cent. less than it was a decade ago. Tackling the problem is not so much a political opportunity, but a life-saving opportunity, and the Government should act now. It will give scientists and environmentalists no satisfaction to say I told you so. In a week's time the satellite which suggested the ozone layer above Britain was primed for destruction, will face the northern hemisphere again. What it then reveals should be irrelevant. The need for drastic action has been proven."

My distilled view is that we are not dealing with an ecological time-bomb that is likely to go off in 1992 or 1993, but by 2005, the situation could be horrendous. However, because it will get worse before it gets better, we have a five to 10-year lag time. The questions that I ask are therefore urgent and really for the here and now. The hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), who is Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy and a knowledgeable chemist, knows that there are such things as lag times. I see that he assents to that general view.

The chief danger may not be human beings but the effect on crops. I understand that there is a possibility of ultra-violet damage to crops, especially seedlings. DNA absorbs strongly in ultra-violet, which causes chromosome breakages and mutations in higher plants, and that is proportional to dose. The suggestion is that natural levels of ultra violet, for example in polar regions and the tropics, may affect species distribution favouring those with a low nuclear DNA content.

If that hypothesis is correct, increases in ultra-violet may have long-term effects on ecosystems leading to the exclusion of species with high nuclear DNAs. Some evidence suggests that ultra violet can damage chloroplast DNA, the extra-nuclear genetic machinery present in green cells. This may lead to abnormalities in photosynthetic machinery and loss of yield, quite apart from any other effects through the nuclear genetic mechanism.

The susceptibility of seedlings to ultra violet varies with species. Most experimental work is done with young seedlings, because they grow quickly, in a limited range of crop plants. More work must be done, particularly in relation to flavonoid synthesis. On exposure to high levels of ultra violet, many plants produce large amounts of flavonoid pigments, which absorb ultra violet and thus minimise damage elsewhere in the cell. Quite a lot is known about the biochemistry of the effects, and ultra violet appears to increase transcription rates of genes involved in flavonoid synthesis.

There are common features of the biosynthetic pathways leading to flavonoid production and to production of anti-fungal compounds and phytoalexins, which are produced on exposure to fungal attack. I do not know—nor do those with whom I have talked—and I have been unable to find out whether exposure to ultra violet, thus stimulating the flavonoid pathway, also confers anti-fungal resistance by stimulating that part of the route common to phytoalexin synthesis. Plants weakened by ultra violet damage may be more liable to fungal bacterial attack nevertheless.

There is a desperate need for research in this field. I understand that researchers led by Dr. David Royle and Dr. Keith Brent at Long Ashton and by Peter Ayres at Lancaster are applying for a number of grants and help in dealing with this situation.

The Library of the House has produced some excellent material on the consequences for plants of ozone depletion. Dr. Ann Davies of the Library has written on that subject and the information will be available to the Department. I found it extremely convincing.

On 25 February, I asked the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment the departmental plant pathologists had made of the results for agriculture of changes in the ozone layer. The Under-Secretary replied:

> "Against the background of the Department of the Environment's continuing programme of work on the effects of ozone depletion on plants, this Department is considering advertising for a research proposal on this matter."

Why do not the Government agree at once——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed. That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Mr. Dalyell: Why do not the Government agree at once to back the proposal of the Agricultural and Food

[Mr. Dalyell]

Research Council from Long Ashton and Lancaster about the effect of climatic changes on plant diseases, especially in relation to ultra-violet radiation and moisture within the biological adaptation to global and environmental change programme?

I shall ask questions of which I have given notice. What information does the Minister have on the ozone-depletion studies being conducted by United Kingdom scientists at Kiruna in Sweden? What is the current and predicted depletion of the ozone layer this season? What is the percentage increase in ultra violet reaching the surface, and what data are the United Kingdom getting from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration on ozone depletion and ultra violet increase?

I commend to the Department an article by Dr. John Pyle which I know that it has read. I ask about the European Arctic stratosphere ozone experiment which has a better understanding of stratospheric ozone and how it is destroyed around the Arctic. Dr. Pyle ends his study by saying:

> "While the experiments end in March next year, that is not the end of the project. Analysis of the data will continue for months and in some cases for years afterwards. The experiments will provide new data that should reveal valuable and exciting information about the processes controlling the evolution of the low stratosphere. It will be a period of sustained concerted effort to monitor all the processes contributing to ozone loss in the northern hemisphere. The scientists involved hope for many advances from this innovative combination of data, experiment and theory. By its very nature the project already marks a significant success, the coming together of the European atmospheric scientists in an endeavour in which national and European Community funds have been pooled to build an enterprise well beyond the work of a single country."

There was a good deal of argument in the House yesterday about diversification of defence. There is a crying need for resources at the very limits of technology to do the work of the kind Dr. Pyle mentions, which, at the end of the day, may protect us all.

I draw to the Government's attention the Greenpeace note on ozone depletion over Sweden. Do they think that there are any inaccuracies in it?

What is the effect of ultra-violet on phytoplankton, and to what depth does it have an effect? That is a very important question in the view of Sir John Mason.

I refer to the letter of 3 March from Secretary of State for Scotland in which he said:

> "We do however share your concern which is why we have asked the advisory group, the Committee on medical aspects of radiation, to consider the implications for health."

I have given notice to the Department that I should like a comment on the work of that organisation.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on initiating the debate. The subject has been a matter of concern for many Members of the House, and has been the subject of two well supported early-day motions. Will my hon. Friend also say that it should be a matter for concern to the Government that in 1990 this country exported about 40,000 tonnes of CFCs, and that an earnest of Government concern would be an attempt to persuade exporters to curtail those exports rapidly and completely?

Mr. Dalyell: My hon. Friend is one of those Members who knows how best to use the considerable, expert and scholarly resources of the Library. He may like to read the briefs that have been prepared for me by Christopher Barclay and Nicola Donlon. In my view that is excellent work, which would go some way towards providing a serious answer to my hon. Friend's question.

What are the Government doing about sheer basic information to prevent the likelihood of cancers—simple advice such as saying, "If you must sunbathe, do so after three o'clock when the sun is lowering, rather than when the sun is high in the sky"?

In an excellent study in *The Sunday times* this week, Sean Ryan, its environment correspondent, wrote:

> "'Politicians say the right thing, but they never seem to get around to committing themselves to doing it . . .
>
> in 1985 . . . we reported the ozone hole. It was obvious there was a problem then but seven years later people are still arguing about whether it's necessarry to do anything'.
>
> Only time will tell who is right."

The figures for the occurrence of skin cancer appear in a written answer to a question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) at column *582* of *Hansard* of 27 February. I refer the Minister to what his colleague, the Under-Secretary of State for Health, told the House there.

Do the Government agree that there is no long-term future for CFC substitutes? What is their policy for recycling, and will they have proposals for the Copenhagen conference in November—whichever Government represent us there? What is the Government's commitment to getting rid of halo-carbons?

In that context it is vital to support the work of the Agricultural and Food Research Council. A year ago I went to Rothamsted, and was the guest of Professor Lewis and his colleagues. Professor Lewis has written a powerful letter to Professor Blundell, which is available to the Department, as is the work being done at Long Ashton, just outside Bristol. Some fairly quick decisions are wanted.

For example, some of the work being done is to determine the ranges of tolerance to key climatic variables of pathogen parameters important in determining epidemic development, especially the effects of ultra-violet light and moisture—in order to contribute to our understanding the effects of climatic change on the occurrence of fungal plant diseases. Incidentally, the fungal aspects are enormously important, as the hon. Member for Rochford, the Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy knows.

Finally, why have the Government not yet paid their cheque for the Montreal convention, and why have they not pressurised our European partners to ratify the protocol?

My good fortune in having a little more time that I expected has enabled me to give just a taste of the kind of evidence now emerging. I am glad that the Minister now has 22 minutes in which to reply, because more people will be interested in what the Government are doing, and in what the Department is thinking, than in what I have to say on the matter.

10.9 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): The whole House will be grateful to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for raising this important topic. It is a complex topic which requires a degree of intellectual honesty, and which requires us all to rely on the best science and to have regard to principles such as the precautionary principle. The hon. Gentleman has raised the issue with his usual courtesy and with his usual thoroughness.

The threat of stratospheric ozone depletion and the potential impacts that that might have on human life and on the environment have been of concern to the Government since the negotiations leading to the Vienna convention for the protection of the ozone layer in 1985. Throughout the period, United Kingdom scientists have made major contributions to unravelling the complexities of ozone depletion. The Government have played a full and often leading role in developing the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer, restricting and eventually phasing out the production of ozone-depleting chemicals.

We have made a payment of United States $1 million towards the Montreal protocol. That represents the United Kingdom contribution towards work programmes already agreed. We remain fully committed to meeting our obligations to the interim multilateral fund as agreed in June 1990, but it will be difficult for us to make future payments unless the fund starts forecasting future disbursements and receipts to give donors confidence that it is not building up excessive cash balances. We believe that contributions to the fund should match as closely as possible expected annual disbursements against work programmes and should not be required as arbitrary divisions of the total. Good, realistic financial planning and credible assurances that successive cash balances will not be built up are required and are routinely provided by other funding agencies such as the World bank.

We are determined to meet all our obligations to the Montreal protocol. We have taken a leading part in the work of the Montreal protocol.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister clarify the question of subscriptions to the protocol?

Mr. Baldry: With respect, that is the point with which I have been dealing for the past three minutes. I am happy to repeat my comments, but I suspect that, if the hon. Gentleman reads *Hansard* tomorrow, he will see that I have dealt with the matter at some length.

United Kingdom industry has also contributed by voluntarily limiting the use of ozone-depleting chemicals, taking a leading role in the development of substitutes and planning to phase out the production of the principal components ahead of the Montreal protocol requirements.

In recent weeks, considerable confusion and anxiety have arisen among the general public about the possibility of health risks from increased ultra-violet radiation as a result of ozone depletion. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to draw the House's attention to that concern. I will try to answer the concerns, some of which are largely based on misunderstanding, with the hon. Gentleman's other important points.

First, it may help if I summarise the facts as we know them about stratospheric ozone depletion. I will take particular care to differentiate between general ozone layer depletion and the special conditions that apply over the polar regions.

Only in the past year or two has painstaking analysis of satellite and ground-based measurements given clear evidence of general ozone layer depletion. In the mid-latitudes of both northern and southern hemispheres, including the latitudes of the British Isles and Northern Europe, total column ozone appears to have decreased at a rate of about 4 per cent. to 6 per cent. per decade over the past 12 years. The depletion is higher in late winter and spring than in summer. Total ozone layer reductions since measurements began in the 1950s could be up to 8 per cent. in those latitudes. There still seems to be very little depletion over equatorial regions.

The so-called ozone hole which now appears over south polar regions between September and December each year was much more easy to detect than general ozone depletion. It was the first measured stratospheric ozone depletion to be linked directly with chlorine and bromine containing chemicals released into the atmosphere from human activities. It has appeared every year since it was first reported by Dr. Joe Farman and his colleagues of the British Antarctic Survey in 1985. The depletion in 1991 was as deep and extensive as any seen in previous years, with total ozone over Antarctica being some 60 per cent. less than the pre-1970 levels.

The key to these dramatic Antarctic springtime ozone reductions is a combination of chlorines and bromine-containing chemicals and special meteorological conditions. Ice crystals that form in polar stratospheric clouds under the intensely cold conditions of the southern polar winter provide surfaces for chemical reactions which multiply the ozone-depleting effect of chlorines and bromine-containing chemicals. These reactions are triggered as the sun returns in the austral spring.

An ozone hole has not been observed over northern polar regions. There are some obvious arguments why this should be so. In the southern hemisphere, winds are relatively free to circulate, building up a vortex of intensely cold, isolated air during the Antarctic winter which is ideal for the formation of polar stratospheric clouds and development of the chemistry which precedes ozone depletion. In the northern hemisphere, the abundant land masses interfere with wind circulation and the winter arctic air mass is neither as cold nor as isolated as the Antarctic vortex.

Nevertheless, as levels of chlorine and bromine chemicals in the stratosphere are bound to increase for some years to come, irrespective of international actions taken on controlling production, there is concern that enhanced Arctic ozone depletion may eventually develop driven by the concentration of ozone-depleting chemicals.

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister uses the word "eventually". Is any timespan tagged to that? Incidentally, I welcome the presence of the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, who takes the matter extremely seriously and went to Estoril some 10 days ago.

Mr. Baldry: We cannot predict with any certainty. In several areas, one relies throughout on the precautionary principle, of which I shall say more in a moment. Indeed, the presence of my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside and the comments made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, to which the hon. Gentleman referred earlier, demonstrate that the whole Government take the matter seriously. Indeed, that is why I welcome the opportunity of this Adjournment debate to ensure that some of these matters can be recorded in *Hansard* for everyone to see.

It might be helpful if I were to give some indication of the present Arctic research campaign. This winter and

[Mr. Baldry]

spring, an intensive study of the Arctic atmosphere is being carried out by the European Arctic stratospheric ozone experiment. The experiment involves more than 250 scientists from 17 EC and EFTA countries. The key management role is being played from Kiruna in northern Sweden by the European Ozone Research Coordination Unit, directed by Dr. John Pyle and funded by the Department of the Environment and the European Community. It is fortunate that measurements are also currently being made from the new United States upper atmosphere research satellite launched last September and the United States airborne Arctic campaign. The three experiments complement each other and there is good collaboration between the teams of scientists involved.

The Arctic experiment is an exciting one. We hope that it will add substantially to our understanding of the scientific details of ozone-depleting chemistry and lead directly to improved predictions of future ozone depletion, about which I will say more later.

Unfortunately, early results from the study have been widely misinterpreted. There was genuine misunderstanding on the part of various commentators. That has led to recommendations for people to take unnecessary precautionary measures and to considerable anxiety among the general public. The hon. Gentleman made reference to certain articles in national newspapers which had exacerbated those anxieties.

The problem began in early February, when United States and European scientists announced the first results of the Arctic campaigns. Those results showed that, largely as expected, the chemistry of the Arctic stratosphere exhibited all the classic ingredients now well known from Antarctic studies that lead to enhanced ozone depletion, provided that polar stratospheric clouds are formed in sufficient quantities to provide the essential reacting surfaces.

An additional complicating fact this year is the presence of particulate matter injected into the stratosphere by the eruption of the mount Pinatubo volcano which might provide an additional source of reacting surfaces for ozone-depleting reactions.

Those reports were unfortunately misinterpreted as announcing actual or imminent ozone-holes of Antarctic proportions over the northern hemisphere. The misinterpretations have in turn led to calls for ultra-violet radiation forecasts and health warnings, arousing considerable but unnecessary general anxiety.

Let me say very clearly now, that there is no Arctic ozone hole and no indication of severe ozone depletion over Britain. That has been forcibly pointed out by Dr. Joe Farman, the discoverer of the Antarctic ozone hole, in the national press last week, when he emphasised that ozone levels over Britain were still within the range of natural variability at this time of year.

Mr. Dalyell: I have also talked to Joe Farman. Does the Minister accept that he is concerned about the years 2000, 2005 and 2010, and, whereas that is probably true in the immediate future, we had better not be complacent, had we?

Mr. Baldry: Nothing that I have said has been complacent. If the hon. Member gives me a chance, I shall get to the future. He asked a large number of questions, all of which I am endeavouring to answer, but they are complex and it is obviously important to get the science right.

The scientists studying the Arctic stratosphere are in constant, direct contact with Governments. They report that the perturbed chemistry that they have observed has not progressed to extensive enhanced ozone depletion of the kind seen in Antarctica. The ozone depletion that was observed in January and early February appears to have been broadly consistent with the rate of general ozone depletion of some 4 to 6 per cent. per decade in northern mid-latitudes.

Continuous measurements of ultra-violet radiation made in the United Kingdom by the National Radiological Protection Board on a routine basis, and research measurements made as part of the Department of the Environment's research programme show no evidence of being significantly higher than the normal range for this time of year. I have our results for Lerwick for 3 March, which at 324 Dobson units are well within the seasonal norm. Any sudden apparent increase outside the norm would immediately be notified.

The claims of possible danger to human health amongst people going about their normal business in the United Kingdom at this time of year are totally unjustifed, and I believe we need to get the risks of ozone depletion back into perspective.

There is no doubt that, all other things being equal, less stratospheric ozone means that more ultra-violet B radiation from the sun will reach ground level. Exposure to UVB is associated with a variety of human health problems. However, human beings are naturally subject, and voluntarily subject themselves, to a range of exposure which is much greater than any yet implied or expected due to ozone layer depletion. Even assuming clear sky conditions, UVB radiation levels in Britain are some twentyfold greater during the summer than in the winter simply because the sun is more directly overhead in the summer. Also in the summer, UVB levels in popular holiday areas at lower latitudes, like Spain—the hon. Gentleman mentioned Malta—are more than double what they are in southern England. We increase our exposure during the summer, and particularly while on holiday.

The Government are of course concerned at the significant increase of skin cancer, both in the United Kingdom population and in other countries, that has occurred in the past 10 years. The suspect factor is thought to be sunbathing, and the increased opportunities for sunbathing that modern travel and technology afford. The important point to bear in mind is that everyone should take care in the sun. Existing advice issued by the Health Education Authority about minimising exposure to sunlight should be observed.

In that context, a small increment due to ozone depletion on the already low levels of UVB that we receive at this time of year is insignificant.

However, coming to the question which the hon. Gentleman just raised, if that is the position, what is the concern? Is it at all justified? I believe that it is for four reasons. First, the concentrations of ozone-depleting chemicals in the stratosphere are bound to continue to rise for the next 10 years or so. This will remain true even if we are successful in advancing production phase-out dates for ozone-depletion chemicals when the parties to the Montreal protocol meet in November this year. We shall certainly take a full part in those discussions.

Secondly, we cannot yet predict with confidence how the increased ozone-depleting chemical levels will affect stratospheric ozone. Present predictive models only partially explain polar ozone depletion, and under-predict by a factor of about two the general ozone depletion now thought to have occurred in mid-latitudes.

Thirdly, while the present concerns over increased exposure in the United Kingdom as a result of ozone depletion at this time of the year are unfounded, in global terms there are data to indicate that skin cancers, cataracts and other eye problems and immune suppression would become more prevalent if ozone depletion continued, particularly if it extended towards the currently unaffected tropical regions.

Finally, the research base on effects on plants and natural ecosystems is far from well developed. There is some scientific consensus that increased UVB might overall tend to depress crop production yields, but precise estimates are difficult given the myriad other factors which affect the performance of agricultural crops. Similar arguments apply to natural ecosystems, including the oceans and phytoplankton, the basis of the ocean food chain.

There is considerable research in hand around the world, and within the United Kingdom science base, particularly the research programmes of the Natural Environment Research Council and the research programmes of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of the Environment. The general areas for concern are well identified and have been summarised in the recent impact assessment carried out under the Montreal protocol. The active interest and co-operation in this area is well illustrated by the session on ozone depletion and UVB effects being held in April this year at the Lancaster meeting of the Society for Experimental Biology, which the DOE is supporting.

The study of UVB impacts on plants and ecosystems is particularly difficult, because laboratory results are not easily extrapolated to the real world.

Mr. Dalyell: That is true.

Mr. Baldry: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman acknowledges the correctness of that.

The research into this matter involves some difficult areas of science. Other factors such as competition between species and pathogens and nutrient supply may well dominate. Results are being obtained steadily. I will, for example, be particularly interested to hear from our specialists an evaluation of the studies of impacts on Antarctic plankton reported by scientists from the university of California last month. However, we must expect progress towards confident quantitative predictions of effects to be slow in this difficult area of research.

I hope that it is clear from what I have said that the Government are greatly concerned about the possible effects of ozone depletion. Misleading and unwarranted scares about health impacts in the United Kingdom in winter are not helpful in developing a better appreciation of the real problems on which much further work needs to be done. There is no element about which we are complacent.

Action on controlling ozone-depleting substances does not depend on more research on either the science or effects of ozone depletion. Last December, we proposed that the European Community should support an earlier phase out of ozone-depleting substances when the Montreal protocol is reviewed this year. The Community will decide its position this month and the Government will be urging other member states to support the toughest possible measures.

The hon. Gentleman said that other member states seem to be taking tougher measures than we are. I suppose that the member state that is most frequently mentioned is Germany, which, in common with us, is a producer of CFCs and has a law for phase-out in individual sectors. Its law is extremely complex and it has many exemption clauses. Germany's position on phasing out CFCs by the end of 1993 is far from clear. Officials from my Department attended a major conference on CFCs in Berlin as recently as 24 to 26 February, at which German industry representatives and the German Government, including the Minister for the Environment, Dr. Klaus Topfer, were present in force. However, no mention was made at any stage of a 1993 phase-out.

The United Kingdom is committed to phasing out CFCs, carbon tetrachloride and others by the end of 1995 at the latest and halons by the end of 1994. Both United Kingdom producers have stated that they will cease production of those chemicals no later than the end of 1995. My hon. Friend the Minister of State proposed to the European Community Environmental Council in December that the protocol's phase-out dates be brought forward to the end of 1994 for halons and the end of 1995 for CFCs, carbon tetrachloride and tricholoroethane methyl chloroform.

It has often been asked why we do not ban CFCs straightaway. An immediate ban would not be practicable for a number of applications. For example, medical aerosols such as asthma inhalers still use CFCs; they cannot use recycled materials. We are determined to phase them out as soon as it is humanly possible. We are working closely with our EC colleagues and it is important, now that we have a single European market, to achieve that aim.

The depletions in stratospheric ozone that has so far been detected, our imperfect understanding of the science, and the evidence so far available on the possible impacts of ozone depletion are sufficient reasons for minimising as far as possible any further build-up of ozone-depleting chemicals in the atmosphere. That is the objective that the Government will pursue as we approach the next review of the Montreal protocol.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 5 March 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON UNDERGROUND BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration of Lords amendments read.

To be considered on Monday 9 March at Seven o'clock.

MERSEY DOCKS AND HARBOUR BILL *[Lords]* *(By Order)*

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time on Thursday 12 March.

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (LEWISHAM, ETC.) (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Monday 9 March at Seven o'clock.

ALLIANCE AND LEICESTER (GIROBANK) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE SAFETY BILL *(By Order)*

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (JUBILEE) BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 12 March.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Animal Welfare

1. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent initiatives he has announced concerning animal welfare.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I intend to make animal welfare one of my priorities in the United Kingdom presidency, as I made clear when I wrote to hon. Members on 27 February.

The Government are promoting action on animal welfare in the European Community, based on the high standards in this country.

Mr. Burns: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on ensuring that Britain is at the forefront of those countries in Europe that are pressing for improved animal welfare. I urge my right hon. Friend to ensure that other EC countries emulate our far-reaching rules and regulations to ensure that there is a total ban on veal crates throughout the Community and that the transportation of live animals, particularly horses and ponies, inside the European continent is as stringently controlled as it is in this country under our domestic rules and regulations.

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that, both on veal crates and pig stalls and tethers, the rest of Europe will have to come up to our standards. I am pleased that we have achieved what most pople thought that we could not—we have stopped and will continue to stop the export of live horses and ponies. I congratulate all hon. Members on the support that they have given to the Government in fighting that battle. I do not believe that this is a nationalist issue. Horses and ponies in the rest of Europe must have the same sort of protection as they do in this country. I am pleased that the standards on the transport of live animals generally are approaching British standards and are no longer the low standards that once obtained.

Mr. Geraint Howells: I am sure that the Minister is aware that there is great concern about the quarantine restrictions being lifted on 1 April. Will he clarify the position on pets and dogs? What are the latest developments on foot and mouth in European countries?

Mr. Gummer: We have managed to get the rest of Europe to come up to our standards, get rid of vaccination and introduce a slaughter policy in relation to foot and mouth disease. We already allow animals from countries that have the same policy as us, such as Ireland, to be imported into this country. When the rest of Europe reaches the same standards as us, the same rules will apply. Quite rightly, once we have won the battle to raise everyone's standards so that we all have the same high levels, we can have a single market. We have said clearly that we shall not accept changes in the rules on rabies unless we can have at least the same safeguards as we have today. But we are perfectly prepared to look at scientific evidence—we are not afraid of that. However, we will not make changes unless they benefit the United Kingdom.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend accept the support and praise of all horse lovers for what the Government achieved when securing the continuation of minimum conditions for the export of live horses for slaughter? Will he, however, assure us that he will do all that he can to secure proper transport arrangements for live animals being exported, particularly horses? Will he further assure the House that the same strict safeguards and enforcement of rules on the protection and welfare of horses and other animals that apply in our country will apply in the EC area?

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister ensured at Maastricht that the British proposals on this matter were passed: first, all countries committed themselves to improving animal welfare, which was a major step forward never agreed between those countries before; and, secondly, in future, the European Court of Justice will be in a position to fine countries that fail to keep their obligations under Community rules. During our presidency we must extend the competence of the

Community so that it can ensure that once animal welfare regulations are passed they are enforced—from Spain to Scotland and from Ireland to Greece.

Mr. Ron Davies: Let me assure the Minister that Labour fully intends to use the opportunities presented by Britain's presidency to make sure that animal welfare is high on the agenda.

Why is the Minister so inconsistent in his approach to animal welfare? On 11 February, he told the National Farmers Union that he had no intention of taking further steps unilaterally, but on 27 February he put out a press release saying that he did reserve the right to act unilaterally. Can he explain that contradiction, or is he just a politician running scared of the electorate and trying to be all things to all people?

Mr. Gummer: It is always dangerous when the hon. Gentleman reads only the first half of a sentence. I told the National Farmers Union that I did not believe that unilateral action would help, because if it is taken, the British housewife tends to buy the cheaper product from the rest of Europe and, therefore, we export animal welfare problems to the rest of Europe. I believe that we should not be nationalistic about animal welfare; we should care for animals in France and Germany as well as for those in Britain.

I said to the NFU and in my press statement that I reserved the right to take emergency action if, for instance, people in this country started to use coloured lenses for chickens, which would be outrageous—I would stop it before it started. That is a perfectly coherent position.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are making slow progress today. Could we please have brief questions and briefer answers?

Food Safety

2. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the implementation of the Food Safety Act 1990.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): The Food Safety Act is working very effectively improving the quality of our food and giving consumers confidence in the integrity of the food supply.

Mr. Coombs: Does my hon. Friend agree that the full implementation of the Food Safety Act 1990 will ensure that Britain is in the forefront of Europe in terms of food safety in years to come? Will he reassure representatives of women's institutes and townswomen's guilds and other voluntary workers that the implementation of the Act is not designed to target their fund-raising activities in the preparation of food in village halls and elsewhere?

Mr. Maclean: I thank my hon. Friend for his earlier remarks, in which he recognised the great step forward that we have taken with the Food Safety Act, but I am concerned about his latter comments. There is nothing in the Food Safety Act that could justify local authorities specially targeting those organisations. The advice of the Government and the Audit Commission is to concentrate on the main risks, and if town halls persist in targeting women's institutes, church fetes, village halls or charity teas, the Government will take action.

Potatoes

3. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the level of production of potatoes.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): Estimated potato production in the United Kingdom in 1991 was 6·3 million tonnes.

Mr. Cohen: Does not a Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food report show that production of early potatoes fell considerably, and that meant an increase in price? Is not it the case that we do not have widely available anywhere near the diversity of potatoes that is available in other countries, such as the United States? Is not this subject wholly appropriate for the Minister, because his Government have had their chips?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman has his facts diametrically wrong. There are 131 varieties of commercial potatoes in the United Kingdom, which is a great deal more than in any other country. I know that because I grow at least a dozen of them in my allotment.

Mr. Moss: I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is well aware of the widespread concern among arable farmers in my constituency about the EC Commission's proposals to review potato marketing. As the Potato Marketing Board has for many years worked successfully for the benefit of processors, consumers and producers, does he agree that any proposals to scrap the PMB should be strongly resisted?

Mr. Curry: The Potato Marketing Board is doing an excellent job, and we fully support it. Changes introduced a couple of years ago are working well and the aggressive marketing that is now taking place is very much to be desired. We have to face the European proposals and we shall tackle them as we tackle all other European proposals—in the interests of British farmers and British consumers.

Common Agricultural Policy

4. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects to meet his European agricultural colleagues to discuss reforming the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Gummer: At the next Agriculture Council on 30 and 31 March.

Mr. Evans: Does the Minister agree that reform of the common agricultural policy—which costs £25 billion a year, consumes 65 per cent. of the Community budget and costs the average British family £17 per week—would be assisted by the introduction of an organic farming policy? Does he recall that more than two years ago he announced that an organic scheme would be introduced in a matter of months? What on earth has happened to that scheme?

Mr. Gummer: As I have said, the European Community has failed to produce the legislation under which we could do that. I have made it clear that the reform must include legislation enabling us to do that. We have led the way in organic farming, both by the introduction of the United Kingdom register of organic food standards and by ensuring that European standards follow British standards. The hon. Gentleman's figures on the payment per family are not correct. One issue that is particularly damaging is the decision by the Labour party that if it were in power it would tax British farmers and give the money to the farmers of Spain, Portugal and Greece.

Mr. Marland: It is good to give credit where credit is due. Is my hon. Friend aware that he has earned the widespread respect of British farmers by standing up for their interests? Furthermore they know that they can trust him because he will not filch money from the common agricultural policy, as Labour would do, to use it for other purposes. Will he confirm that he does not stand alone in the European Community but that other countries support his firm stand?

Mr. Gummer: I am pleased to say that more and more European Community countries are coming to the views that we have pioneered on reform. I am sorry that the Leader of the Opposition has announced that he would take money from British farmers and contribute it to those in southern Europe. That is the wrong way to use common agricultural policy reforms.

Dr. David Clark: After all these years in office, does not the Minister yet understand that the British consumer simply cannot afford the exorbitant cost of the CAP, which does not exactly help the British farmer either? Has not he realised that the CAP is the only agricultural support system under which consumers pay a subsidy to farmers and end up paying more for their food than if they had not paid the subsidy in the first place? Will the right hon. Gentleman, in his swan song at the Dispatch Box, admit that not only has he been the most expensive Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, supporting an increase in CAP spending of 55 per cent., but that, by his failure to get meaningful reform of the CAP, he has been the most unsuccessful one, as well?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is in no position to make any of those comments. His party has now signed up to Mr. MacSharry and his basic philosophy. The Leader of the Opposition has said in the House that CAP reform would mean that he would take money from British farmers and spend it on farmers in southern countries. That has been contradicted by the Labour spokesman on Treasury matters, who has said that his party would take money from British farmers and divert it to regional policy. That has been contradicted by the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), who has said that he would take money from British farmers with one hand and give part of it back to them with the other. It is the usual example of the Labour party spending money that it does not have and will not get. It proposes to do so three times, and those from whom the money would come would not get any benefit.

Mr. Hume: Is the Minister aware that the Commissioner for Agriculture is now the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development? A major part of the reform of the CAP is focused on rural development, and that is important for less-favoured areas where there are smaller farms. What steps has the Ministry taken to encourage farmers in those areas to consider alternative land use and to recognise that agriculture policy is no longer about prices only but embraces rural development, rural housing and rural agriculture that is based on their products? Is there a planned approach by the Government to make maximum use of such a policy to develop employment in the poorer rural areas?

Mr. Gummer: Yes, certainly. We oppose Mr. MacSharry's proposals because hardly any farmers will be able to gain by his support for rural development. To Mr. MacSharry, rural development means no help for the farmers of Wales and more help for the farmers of southern Ireland. It means no help for the farmers of Scotland and more help for the farmers of Portugal and Bavaria. That is a divisive policy, not a rural development policy, which would affect countries and areas of the European Community. That is why we oppose it.

Mr. Cash: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the British farmer is the most efficient farmer in Europe? Does he agree also that the MacSharry proposals will have an extremely damaging effect on the British farmer? Will he do everything to ensure that the recent announcement by the European Community, which reflects the attitude of the French and those who agree with them in respect of the general agreement on tariffs and trade proposals, will not be immensely damaging to British farming and world trade as a whole? Will my right hon. Friend do something about that?

Mr. Gummer: It is most important that we have a GATT solution. Britain, together with most of our partners, made sure that the next step towards that was taken on Monday. The French and one or two other countries were outvoted on that issue.

It is clear that, increasingly, other countries in the Community are supporting our view on CAP reform. That is why they refuse to accept the Commission type of document that was presented on Monday and Tuesday and have demanded that we look back once again at the fundamental and basic principle. The principles that we want are no discrimination, a closer approach to the market, consideration of more environmental matters at the centre of the European Community and a sensible CAP that is designed to support efficient farmers and the proper backing of the rural economy.

MacSharry Proposals

5. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement on the implications for United Kingdom agriculture of the MacSharry proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The GATT round is regularly discussed at the Agriculture Council and I expect it to be considered again at the Council on 30 and 31 March.

Mr. Kennedy: The Minister obviously recognises that there is continuing concern, not least in Scottish agriculture, including north of Scotland agriculture, about the likely effect of the MacSharry proposals as presently cast. Does he agree that Scottish agriculture, including north of Scotland agriculture, can hardly have been——

Several Hon. Members: The Minister gave the wrong answer.

Mr. Gummer: I am happy to apologise.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) asked about the MacSharry proposals. The Commission's proposals for reform of the CAP would discriminate heavily against United Kingdom agriculture. That is why I continue to seek an outcome to the negotiations which is fair for British farmers and encourages, not discourages, efficiency. I hope that the GATT solution will help that as well.

Mr. Kennedy: I think that hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree that those two issues are closely connected, but I should like the Minister to say a little more about the specific question that I raised.

Given their less-favoured area status, Scottish and north of Scotland agriculture can hardly be said to have contributed to the problems of CAP overproduction and the related MacSharry implications. What is the Minister's guess in regard to a possible deadline for a conclusion to the MacSharry discussions—not least in the context of the GATT negotiations that must follow?

Mr. Gummer: It is important to secure the GATT solution first, if we are to have one. That must be done within a reasonable period. Until we know what we have signed up to in GATT, it will be difficult to tell how much we must alter the CAP to meet our obligations. Many alterations will have to be made in any event, and there is no question of CAP reform depending on the GATT solution.

The timetable will, I hope, mean a rapid solution to the CAP problem very soon after the achievement of a GATT solution. I hope that it will come about under the Portuguese presidency, and I am working towards that end; but it must be an end that does not discriminate against Scottish farmers or British farmers generally. I shall keep the process going until we achieve a fair solution.

Sir Hector Monro: Will my right hon. Friend continue his robust and effective opposition to the MacSharry proposals? Will he bring home to Ministers on the continent the fact that the headage basis would prove devastating for hill and upland farmers in the United Kingdom and will he do everything possible to make those Ministers see our point of view?

Mr. Gummer: The Spanish, Dutch, Danish and Belgian Ministers have now committed themselves to the view that such discrimination is unacceptable. That is a great improvement, and I hope very much that the Commission will soon understand that headage limits do not reduce overproduction but merely discriminate against some of the poorest parts of the United Kingdom. Some of the farmers concerned—especially those in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the backbone of England—suffer particularly from the low prices.

Mr. John P. Smith: Does the Minister realise the damage that the current MacSharry proposals will do to family farms in my constituency, Vale of Glamorgan? Does he share the concern that I now feel, following my recent meeting with MacSharry, that any MacSharry proposals that include price support will penalise our farmers?

Mr. Gummer: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's comments about the danger of MacSharry's proposals, particularly in areas such as Wales, which are so dependent on farmers who are not big farmers in the general sense of the term but who need the support that they now have. I hope, however, that the hon. Gentleman will explain to the Leader of the Opposition that Welsh farmers could not afford to have their incomes cuts so that the money could be spent on Spanish, Greek and Portuguese farmers. That is what the right hon. Gentleman has said that he would do if he were Prime Minister.

GATT

6. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when next he expects to have talks with other European Ministers about GATT.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave a few moments ago.

Mr. Rathbone: In anticipation of the meeting of the Agriculture Council, will my right hon. Friend re-commit the Government to the search for an equitable basis on which to reduce farm prices within the European Community and worldwide and to reduce trade barriers as well?

Mr. Gummer: I am wholly concerned to fight for the achievement of an equitable GATT solution as rapidly as possible. It must be a solution that reduces prices across the board, not only equitably throughout Europe but in the United States. This is a proper negotiation, in which both sides will have to give ground if we are to achieve a solution. I look to the current discussions, and also to the United States, to give the ground that is needed.

Mr. Edwards: What reassurance can the Minister give the dairy farmers of Monmouthshire that during his discussions on GATT their interests will be protected? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that those farmers have seen a decline in their incomes and an increase in their costs, and are worried about their capacity to invest in the future? What reassurance can he give them that they will be able to invest in dairy production in Monmouthshire?

Mr. Gummer: The reassurance is that there will be a Conservative Government to fight for them, and that after the next election they will be represented by a Conservative Member for Monmouth.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Pursuant to the reply that the Minister gave earlier to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), and as there has been much speculation that there will be no GATT settlement at all this year, will the Minister confirm that, should there be no GATT settlement, he will oppose the MacSharry proposals for the rest of this year?

Mr. Gummer: If there is no GATT settlement, during our presidency we shall seek to achieve the necessary reform of the common agricultural policy. That reform will be based not on the discriminatory attitudes of Mr. MacSharry but on a sensible policy of supporting agriculture fairly throughout the Community, bringing agriculture closer to the market and ensuring that the environment is a central concern of the CAP. It will also ensure that economic farmers are enabled to compete throughout the world. There will have to be specific help for those in the least favoured areas, and particular help for restructuring in the southern countries of Europe.

Mr. Favell: It is reported on the front page of *The Times* today that the common agricultural policy—that squalid policy which is costing British families an average of £18·50 a week each—will destroy the world free trade talks, which have been going on for four or five years, and involve just about every country in the world. Is it not clear, in retrospect, that our right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) was absolutely right when she went to Rome in October 1990 and warned our partners that the talks should be about world free trade, and not about cloud cuckoo land—that is, political and economic union, which was doomed to failure in any event?

Mr. Gummer: The fact is that *The Times* report is not correct. The second fact is that there has been a great deal of obfuscation and obstruction from the United States in the negotiations. It is wholly wrong to suggest that it is the European Community alone which has difficulties with the agriculture dossier. We must both find a way through this, and I demand that we in this country support the Commission in its negotiations, demanding that the United States come further towards us, so that together we can find a solution for the whole world, instead of throwing batons at each other across the Atlantic.

Dietary Supplements

7. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on European Community proposals to restrict the availability of dietary supplements.

Mr. Maclean: The Government will support the continuing availability of safe and clearly labelled products in the forthcoming EC negotiations.

Mr. Hain: The Government propose to Brussels that the same upper limits be set on dosages of dietary supplements for ordinary consumers buying off the shelves as for professional practitioners of alternative medicine, even though such practitioners may have good reasons for recommending higher doses to their patients. Surely the Government should exempt them. Otherwise, 18 million people who depend on food supplements—including healthy eaters such as yourself, Mr. Speaker—will be discriminated against.

Mr. Maclean: I entirely reject that suggestion. To suggest, as do other countries in the European Community, and the Commission itself, that there could be maximum daily doses of individual tablets prescribed, is not incompatible with saying that the products will continue to be freely available to all those who wish to use them.

Sir Anthony Grant: Will my hon. Friend confirm that he has no proposals to set up some absurd bureaucratic organisation to tell farmers what bureaucrats think that people ought to eat, as is proposed by the Labour party?

Mr. Maclean: I entirely agree. The more I read about Opposition policy the more convinced I am that if they were in government there would be no food left to eat in this country. They would adopt ridiculous food safety measures.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

8. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he will take to ensure that early payments are made to farmers in respect of hill livestock compensatory allowances in response to the current economic climate.

Mr. Curry: Payments to farmers under the 1992 hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme have already begun. That will put nearly £150 million into the rural economy.

Mr. McGrady: I thank the Minister for his reply, but is he aware that there is already considerable delay in these payments? As the farming community has suffered a substantial reduction in real income in 1991—to the extent of 17 per cent. of income in the north of Ireland—and that the hill livestock farmer depends very much on such payments at this time of year, will he ensure that these payments and other headage payments are made in accordance with the rules and regulations and thus assist the distraught financial circumstances especially of the small farmer who has been paid scant regard in the House this afternoon?

Mr. Curry: I can certainly give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. We have been paying them in England since 21 February and virtually a third of claims have been met. It is the same in Wales. Almost a third have been met in Northern Ireland and £17·4 million has already been paid out. We cannot pay if farmers do not make the claims. In previous years about 20 per cent. have not claimed until April. If the hon. Gentleman will urge his farmers to ensure that claims are on time, we shall deal with them as soon as humanly possible.

Mr. Amos: Does my hon. Friend accept that the good farmers of Hexham are grateful for his sincere effort to look after the interests of farmers in the less-favoured areas? However, does he also accept that they are worried about two things—first, proposals to put 50p on a gallon of petrol and, secondly, proposals for environment controls which would strangle them to death—proposals made by the Opposition parties?

Mr. Curry: I speak to many farmers—large and small—including some in my hon. Friend's constituency. They are terrified by Labour party proposals to create a great new machine spitting out red tape all over the countryside. Labour's planning controls and proposals for access would be directly contrary to the interests of farmers in the United Kingdom.

Citizens Charter

9. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about his Ministry's contribution to the citizens charter.

Mr. Maclean: We are developing citizens charter principles in various sectors of the Ministry and, as part of that, I am today announcing a comprehensive food safety and consumer protection programme.

Dr. Howells: It is difficult to understand how the Government can claim to be concerned about looking after the welfare of citizens when there has been a fourfold increase in the incidence of food poisoning in the past 10 years. Why do the Government continue to extol the virtues of this obnoxious Gummerburger food culture instead of instituting an independent food standards agency as the Labour Government will do in a few weeks' time?

Mr. Maclean: It used to be that Opposition spokesmen quoted figures that were four years out of date, but the hon. Gentleman depends on statistics that go back 10 years. Let me tell him about the previous 12 months' statistics which show a decrease in salmonella food poisoning and that the Food Safety Act 1990 is working. For the first time in many years the statistics are going down. I note that the first thing that the Labour party would do in my Department, if it came to power, would be to change the name of MAFF to FAFF.

Mr. Lord: On food safety, my hon. Friend will be aware of the crippling effect of veterinary inspection charges on chicken-producing companies such as John Rannoch and Sovereign Chicken in my constituency, which are making it impossible for them to compete with their European counterparts. Will he please take the most urgent steps to correct that, because it is not only deeply damaging to companies in my constituency but harmful to the image of the Community?

Mr. Maclean: We shall do our utmost to ensure that we have a level playing field throughout Europe. If my hon. Friend has any evidence that other countries might not be implementing the regulations as carefully as we are, we shall certainly take action. However, at the same time I must say that we have very high welfare and hygiene standards in this country. That guarantees that the consumer feels safe with our food supply and that is in the best interests of all our chicken producers.

Dr. David Clark: If the Minister claims to be so concerned about the consumer, can he explain why his right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, at the National Farmers Union annual general meeting last month, produced a list of nearly 100 regulations from the Ministry and promised to discuss their relevance and implementation with the farmers? Why does he refuse to meet any groups other than farmers, as he confirmed to me in the House on 17 February? Why does he refuse to discuss the regulations on the welfare of animals in transit with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals? Why does he refuse to discuss the reduction of salmonella controls with the consumer organisations? Why does he refuse to talk to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds about licensing to kill birds? It is not the citizens charter that the consumers of this country want; they want a Ministry of Food and Farming which the incoming Labour Government will introduce.

Mr. Maclean: That is absolute nonsense and it is nonsense that is years out of date. Only last week my right hon. Friend concluded yet another of his quarterly meetings with 15 consumer organisations. Those meetings are held every quarter to discuss issues of food and consumer concern. We have set up the consumer panel and I meet consumers regularly when I have discussions in the Ministry. Never before has the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food had so many detailed discussions with consumers and consumer organisations. They know that; it is a pity that the hon. Gentleman does not.

Mrs. Gorman: Knowing my right hon. Friend's concern for birds and particularly for our very valuable poultry industry, will he keep an eye on the latest scare for our "bootiful" turkey industry and ensure that that nonsense about which we are hearing—podo dermatitus—does not turn out to be a load of gobbledegook?

Mr. Maclean: I am sure that my hon. Friend will be the first to spot gobbledegook whenever it arises. I assure her that we are having discussions in Europe on various aspects of animal health and welfare. However, there is no intention to include turkeys in the EC's zoonoses proposals and that seems to be very sensible.

Set-aside Schemes

10. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what account he takes of proposals for public access to the areas concerned when considering set-aside schemes and schemes relating to environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Gummer: Considerations concerning public access do not feature in either of these schemes. Separate grants for providing public access to set-aside land are available in certain counties under the Countryside Commission premium scheme, a scheme which, in the reform of the common agricultural policy, we hope will have the powers to extend to the rest of the country.

Mr. Bennett: Is the Minister aware that the Ramblers Association has published a manifesto for access? Will the Government endorse that manifesto? Will the Government support the Common Land Forum in its proposals? If they are re-elected, is there any chance that such proposals will be carried out this time?

Mr. Gummer: The Government are determined to ensure that the kind of access proposals that have been pioneered, particularly by the Countryside Commission, are extended. However, we recognise that the countryside is also a place for conservation, for bird lovers, for agriculture and for a whole range of people. Access is not the only requisite in the countryside. We have to keep a proper balance or we will continue to see destruction in the countryside that we have seen in some areas where there is too much access and where what used to be a path has become as wide as the M1.

Milk Marketing

11. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received regarding the Milk Marketing Board's proposals for changes in the milk marketing scheme,

Mr. Gummer: I have received a number of representations from milk producers and processors, hon. Members and members of the public.

Mr. Taylor: My right hon. Friend is putting forward and considering proposals for reform. I notice that the Milk Marketing Board has come forward with propositions. Will my right hon. Friend undertake to ensure that any changes in the milk marketing regulations are introduced in an orderly manner? There are a very large number of cows munching in the green pastures of my constituency, but there are also a large number of people who are employed by the Milk Marketing Board.

Mr. Gummer: The Milk Marketing Board has produced proposals for reform. When the Government are re-elected, they will enable the Milk Marketing Board to carry forward those proposals as far as possible through the Commission and through the House. They will do that because the Milk Marketing Board has put forward those proposals for reform. I note that the Labour party knows better than the Milk Marketing Board and has said that it would not help the Milk Marketing Board to get the reform that is necessary for British farmers and British consumers. Recently, British milk producers have received less for their milk than most of the other countries in Europe, and the housewife has paid more for milk on the doorstep than housewives in Europe. The Milk Marketing Board wants to improve that situation. The Labour party will make sure that it could not.

National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations

12. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next intends to meet the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations to discuss fishing matters.

Mr. Curry: I am constantly meeting fishing organisations.

Mr. Mitchell: When the Minister next meets them, will he tell them why he stood on his head over a decommissioning—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Mitchell: Why he stood on his head over a decommissioning scheme which is too little, too late? *[Interruption.]* Will the Minister tell them how he proposes to cut the days-at-sea restriction by introducing effective conservation measures, including a one-net rule, square mesh panels and a ban on industrial fishing? Will he tell them why, if there is to be a days-at-sea restriction, he cannot pay fishermen the same financial support that farmers get when their land goes awry?

Mr. Curry: The industry demanded a proper conservation package. That is what it has. It has a combination of decommissioning; we are extending the licensing rules; we are attacking the problem of the effort directed against fishing; and we are going to control fishing boats. In other words, we have delivered precisely what we promised—a measure which would guarantee the long-term future of the fishing industry. We remain committed to that. Happily, we will have many years to carry it out.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Mitchell: As the Prime Minister savours one of his last few busy days before the deluge, will he think back to the dinner that he gave at No. 10 Downing street last November on behalf of the Tory party *[Interruption.]* for what *The Sun*—I must quote it accurately because it is from *The Sun*—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. No quoting; paraphrase, please.

Mr. Mitchell: In that case, I will paraphrase, Mr. Speaker. For *The Sun* told us of members of Britain's Asian community being brought together to win the votes of that community. *[Interruption.]* Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that nine of his 21 guests were tax exiles in this country who cannot even vote here? Will he also confirm that he was able to tell them that the loophole in the tax law which enables them to pay virtually no tax in this country will not be closed by his Government? Finally, will he tell us whether they were asked—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is a terribly long question.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is quite mistaken, and I will set out the position clearly for him. I give a number of dinners for industrialists at Downing street, and the dinner for business men was no different. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman thinks that I should not have such occasions with business men. He also shows his usual willingness to exploit every leak that comes to him. He may care now to listen carefully.

What I said on that occasion was to confirm a policy agreed with the hon. Gentleman's own party. He has obviously forgotten that the Government decided not to introduce a tax on world income in 1989, following consultation and representations from the Labour party.

Q2. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the encouragement of savings is important not simply because it gives security to the saver but because it provides funds for investment in the future of our country? Will he give an assurance that a future Conservative Government will take measures further to encourage savings? Will he condemn the narrow-minded and vindictive savings tax proposed by the Labour party?

The Prime Minister: I shall happily do both those things. My hon. Friend makes a good point. We shall continue to encourage personal savings by keeping income tax rates low, and through special schemes such as the tax-exempt special savings account, which has been a remarkable success. The savings tax proposed by the Labour party is one of the most poorly thought out and damaging of its proposals. It would hit widows on ordinary incomes. It would hit people taking early retirement such as miners, policemen and soldiers. Now that the Labour party has finally decided to publish its phoney budget, it should think again and drop those damaging and vindictive proposals.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister aware that this morning the University College hospital cancer specialist, Dr. Jeffrey Tobias, said:

> "30 per cent. of the time I have to say to my patients, 'Sorry, I had planned to give you chemotherapy today but that is not possible'"

because the beds are not available? Does not the Prime Minister think that that is a terrible indictment of the health policy of a Government who have been in power so long and could have made things so much better?

The Prime Minister: But as the right hon. Gentleman knows, things have been made much better. Waiting lists are improving—are falling. More people are being treated and there are more resources for the national health service. If the right hon. Gentleman wants to swap quotes, perhaps he will listen to what Dr. David Colin Thorne, a Labour party member who stood for Parliament, said on fundholding. He said:

> "I'm aware that what we're saying may be used . . . but we do believe . . . it is the most energising thing that has happened in my 21 years as a GP . . . It has been good for care, public health and management."

That is a Labour party former candidate, a doctor, supporting our Conservative party reforms of the health service.

Mr. Kinnock: Why does the Prime Minister never even try to answer the question? The reality is that cancer specialists are unable to treat patients because of a shortage of beds. Why do not the Government even now get rid of the tax concessions for private health insurance and put the £60 million saved straight into fighting cancer? That is what the Labour Government will do. That is the right thing to do.

The Prime Minister: That would have more credibility if we were not spending more on the health service than the right hon. Gentleman even promised to spend. It would have even more credibility if the Labour party was not pledged to introduce a minimum wage that would cost the health service £500 million. It would have even more credibility if the Labour party would claim and set out the funding that it would provide for the national health service, which it has expressly failed to do. We have repeatedly indicated in public expenditure round after public expenditure round that we are increasing over and above inflation substantial resources for the health service—far more even than the right hon. Gentleman dared to promise.

Mr. Kinnock: Just in recent weeks we have had public reports of a cardiologist who has had to turn seriously ill patients away because of the budget system—*[Interruption.]* I am telling the truth about the health—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Member has a right to put his question.

Mr. Kinnock: We have had other public reports of closed accident and emergency units. We have had public reports of a mortally ill little girl being unable to gain treatment in a paediatric intensive care unit. Now we have a physician reporting that he cannot treat 30 per cent. of his cancer patients because of a lack of beds. Why does not the Prime Minister address those issues of life and death instead of parading false claims about his Government?

The Prime Minister: We have addressed those issues. That is why the waiting lists are falling by record amounts at this moment. Let me tell the right hon. Gentleman what was the test for our new health service reforms set by his hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). The standard test. The hon. Gentleman invented it. He asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health whether he was prepared to measure the success by the simple test of whether the trusts did more or less work for the national health service. They have done more work. During the first six months of operations English trusts treated 6·5 per cent. more patients than in the months before they became managed. They have treated 5 per cent. more out-patients. That is the Cook test, not mine. Why does not the right hon. Gentleman accept it? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to settle down.

Q3. **Mr. Thorne:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thorne: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the launching of the first Trident submarine yesterday, and the fact that three more are under construction, is the minimum insurance policy that the country can afford to accept in a dangerous and uncertain world? Does he further agree that, at this critical time of ordering, building and commissioning that submarine fleet, we should not pay attention to the recommendations of the two main Opposition parties, whose opinion appears to vary, not merely from day to day, but from hour to hour?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right about defence and we have no intention of gambling with this country's defence. My hon. Friend is also right about the Opposition's position on Trident. They have said that they would order it, they have said that they would not order it, and they have even suggested that they would order it and send it to sea without any weapons. Frankly, one has no idea what they will say next on defence. This morning the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said that Labour

> "have nothing whatsoever to do with CND. We have no connection with CND."

What can he have meant? According to the chairman of CND more than 100 Members still belonged to it late last year. Have they all resigned? Have they all let their membership lapse?

Q4. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wareing: The Prime Minister has made much of the citizens charter and the need for openness in Government. Does he realise that many of our citizens would like to know whether and how much Mr. Vijau Mallya, an Indian millionaire, and Mr. Adam Polemos, a Greek shipping magnate, contributed to the funds of the Conservative party?—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is very unseemly behaviour.

Mr. Wareing: Will the Prime Minister emulate the Labour party by publishing the accounts of the Conservative party, so that citizens of this country may know the truth before the general election, about who donates to the finances of the Tory party?

The Prime Minister: It is difficult to take that seriously from someone whose party is a wholly owned subsidiary of the trade union movement. According to Labour's own figures, in 1987 the Transport and General Workers Union gave more money to the Labour party than the whole of industry gave to the Tory party, and it gets votes for it, even on the leadership of the party.

Q5. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Moss: Has my right hon. Friend had time to study the reaction of the CBI to the proposal for a national minimum wage? Has he seen its estimates, which suggest that it would increase business costs by an extra £50 million and cut 150,000 jobs? Does he agree that to propose such a policy at this time is the economics of the mad house and that the Labour party should stop it at once?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend and I have read reports of the CBI's views. The Labour party claims that it listens to the views of business. The views of the CBI could scarcely be clearer than they have been on the subject of the minimum wage. As I said a moment ago, even in the national health service that policy would cost £400 million to £500 million a year. I wonder what the Labour party would cut elsewhere in the health service to make up for that loss of revenue.

Q6. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: The crime rate in the United Kingdom is the highest ever, the detection rate is the lowest ever and our prisons are the fullest ever. Would the Prime Minister explain why he thinks that deplorable situation exists?

The Prime Minister: I shall take lectures from the hon. Gentleman when he and the Labour party support the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989.

Mr. John Browne: I offer my sincere thanks to my right hon. Friend for the crucial personal role that he played in securing compensation for the three injured Grenadiers. Will he now look personally into the cases of some other very obvious cases of severe injuries to service men, in particular those of Mark Booth and Andy Konalyck of the Parachute Regiment and Martin Ketterick of the Royal Marines? In those obvious cases, they have not been compensated properly because they were not covered due to a lapse of cover in the law. Surely, it is time that some form of flexibility was introduced into the compensation legislation for armed services personnel who are severely injured in the course of their duties.

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of the particular cases to which my hon. Friend draws attention. He knows that wide-ranging compensation schemes are available. I will certainly ask to see the details of the cases that he mentioned.

Q7. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Ewing: Does the Prime Minister accept that, when the people of Scotland vote for independence, Scotland will become an equal partner with England in the European Community?

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Lady is unwise to assume that Scotland will react as she proposes, but in any event, were that unlikely event to occur, Scotland would have to reapply for membership of the European Community. Every member state would have a vote on that application. The United Kingdom's existing membership of the European Community would continue, but Scotland would have to apply.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): Will the Leader of the House make a statement about the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 9 MARCH—Second Reading of the Friendly Societies Bill.

Debate on a motion to approve the report of the Accommodation and Works Committee in respect of the new parliamentary building (phase 2) (House of Commons Paper 269-I).

Motions on the Social Security (Class I Contributions —Contracted-out Percentages) Order and the State Scheme Premiums (Actuarial Tables) Regulations.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 10 MARCH—My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will open his Budget statement.

WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH and THURSDAY 12 MARCH—Continuation of the Budget debate.

FRIDAY 13 MARCH—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 16 MARCH—Conclusion of the debate on the Budget statement.

Mr. Hattersley: As the Government have already told the broadcasting authorities that they will announce the general election next Wednesday, how does the Leader of the House justify making a business statement which he knows to be wholly fictitious? The Government are ending their term of office in exactly the same shabby way that they have conducted themselves during the past 13 years.

Mr. MacGregor: The right hon. Gentleman began with a fictitious comment: the Government have done no such thing.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Will the Leader of the House tell us what progress he expects to be made in the other place on the Asylum Bill? Is he aware that yesterday members of the Home Affairs Select Committee, who are considering the policing of European Community frontiers, visited Gatwick airport and witnessed no fewer than 30 men, women and children who had come from Casablanca, who were supposedly in transit at Gatwick airport, claiming political asylum? The immigration authorities at the airport made it clear that, if the provisions of the Asylum Bill were in place, that kind of incident would not recur. Can my right hon. Friend explain why there is such opposition from the Labour party to that essential Bill?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot comment on the particular cases that my hon. Friend mentions. On the generality of the issue, I believe that the vast majority of people in this country want to see the Asylum Bill in place as quickly as possible. That is why the Opposition are entirely wrong to be opposing parts of that Bill. I assure my hon. Friend that it is our intention to get the Asylum Bill, whatever the opposition from hon. Members opposite, on to the statute book as soon as we can.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Will the Leader of the House come clean and say that he will make another statement next week about the general election? Is he telling the House this afternoon that he will not make such a statement? In other words, will he deny that he will not be making a statement next week?

Mr. MacGregor: My job today, as always, is to announce the business for next week, and I expect to be making a business statement next week as usual.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate soon on the renegotiation of the Uruguay round of the general agreement on tariffs and trade, which is a matter of considerable importance to United Kingdom agriculture, the farming industry and all those involved in rural areas, in addition to such industries as textiles and clothing, which need support from the House as a vital part of the nation's economy?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of the GATT Uruguay round. In view of some of the rumours circulating today about the death of the Uruguay round, I must say, to paraphrase Mark Twain, that those rumours have been greatly exaggerated. Only on Monday of this week, European Community Trade and Agriculture Ministers reiterated that an early, positive conclusion to the round is vital for the international community. That continues to be our view. As for when we might have a debate, I would obviously wish to have one at the appropriate time.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Next week's business is rather more important than the right hon. Gentleman seems to think. May we have a guarantee that for the Budget, which is probably one of the most important Budgets to be placed before the nation because we have seldom been in such a grievous economic situation, we shall have four full days of debate? May we also have an assurance—will the right hon. Gentleman give his word—that he is not deliberately deceiving the House today?

Mr. MacGregor: I am certainly not deliberately deceiving the House today. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that next week's business is extremely important. I agree that it will be a very important, and, I am sure, a very good, Budget. But I totally disagree with his assessment of the economic situation. As a result of so much that has been done to strengthen the economy in the past 10 years, I believe that, as we move out of the world recession, the British economy will be in a more competitive state than it has been for a very long time. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that, under a Government of whom he was a member, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had to go cap in hand to the IMF to bale us out.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate next week on education? During that debate we could perhaps mention the visit of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) to St. George's school, Gravesend, a grant-maintained school, where he did not noticeably tell the parents that he would overrule their vote by nine to one to become a grant-maintained school and claw their funds back to the centre of bureaucracy and away from the school, where they deserve to be spent.

Mr. MacGregor: I would like to oblige my hon. Friend with a debate next week. I am glad that he raised the point, because he has re-emphasised that, not only in Gravesend but right across the country, parents are voting strongly for grant-maintained schools. There is a big demand for places in them and we are seeing an increasing number of them. As always in education, the Labour party would deprive them of that choice.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will the Leader of the House say whether failing to announce legislation to change the requirements for registering candidatures for Parliament reflects the fact that the Government have moved away from that foolish ploy, bearing in mind the fact that we are all equal in this place and that for 20 years we have been putting our names—and our addresses—forward for election? Also, may I plead with the right hon. Gentleman to urge the Chancellor to have better news on Tuesday for the British shipping industry?

Mr. MacGregor: Obviously, I cannot comment today on what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will say on Tuesday. A number of hon. Members on both sides of the House have asked me to consider the question of electoral addresses and there has been support for them from elsewhere. I have been consulting the various parties in the House on the matter and we are now consulting more widely to assess Members views. I have noted the hon. Gentleman's comments in that context.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on early-day motion 785?

[That this House, noting that the Manor House Hospital is independent of the National Health Service; that the 1979 TUC Conference called for the Manor House Hospital to be absorbed into the National Health Service and for all affiliated unions as a matter of principle to discontinue any relationship with the Manor House Hospital; that it is Nalgo policy to campaign for the assimilation of Manor House Hospital into the state service; is surprised that Mrs. Glenys Kinnock has supported a fund raising event at the hospital; and condemns the double standards which enable Labour supporters to praise Manor House Hospital whilst condemning the use of private health care by others.]

Is he aware that one of those who helped in fund-raising activities at that independent hospital is none other than the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook)? Is it not hypocritical of the hon. Gentleman to object to private health care and then encourage fund-raising activities by an independent hospital?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is typical of the double standards adopted by the Labour party towards private health, which adds to the total income available to health services in this country. The Labour party should come clean on the matter and say whether it supports private health care, or whether it is only for certain trade union members. It should also say whether it would remove pay beds from the national health service. I noticed what the Leader of the Opposition said a few moments ago. The Labour party's policy would deprive the health service of £100 million in additional income. I notice that it has made no pledges to increase the overall funding of the health service.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Will the Leader of the House ensure that, if an announcement is to be made in the middle of next week, the first day's debate on the Budget statement lasts until at least 10 o'clock on Tuesday so that I have a chance to ask the Chancellor whether he is aware of a chamber of commerce survey in Coventry some 15 months ago on the health of 150 local firms? When the chamber of commerce tried to repeat the survey a few weeks ago, it found that only 64 of those businesses were still in existence. With fewer than 300 vacancies in Coventry's job centre, and with 20,000 people chasing those vacancies, I would ask the Chancellor whether he still thinks that the misery of the people in Coventry is a price well worth paying.

Mr. MacGregor: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I intend that the debate should run until 10 o'clock on Tuesday. Whether he will be called to speak, however, is not a matter for me. If he is, I hope that he will give the House his reflections on the Confederation of British Industry's report today, which, after a widespread trawl of its members, has concluded that any attempt to impose a statutory minimum wage would add at least 150,000 to the unemployment figure, and that, if existing differentials are maintained, the extra payroll costs could amount to £50 million. The hon. Gentleman will accept that that could have a devastating effect on jobs in Coventry and elsewhere.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Could we have a debate next week on parking and the use of roads so that I can raise the problems of my constituents, many of whom have great difficulty in Ealing, North, Northfields, Perivale, Hanwell and west Ealing, in parking their vehicles and making progress on the roads when going about their business? Something must be done about that urgent and important matter.

Mr. MacGregor: As ever, my hon. Friend is extremely assiduous in raising issues that affect his constituents. I am sure that he will pursue those matters locally and will find opportunities next week—other than in Government time, which he will recognise is fully taken up—to pursue them in the House.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): May I ask the Leader of the House about next week's business in the hope that, on Monday—given that the Budget will not have been presented by then—he will encourage as many hon. Members as possible, first, to see the exhibition on the new building in Westminster Hall, which you, Mr. Speaker, were kind enough to open last Monday; and, secondly, to try to participate in the debate on the new building? It is no good hon. Members talking about proposals for the new building after they have been accepted by the House unless they have participated in the debate on the new accommodation which Members will require in the future.

Next week there will be a draw for private Members' motions. Last week, I was fortunate enough to be second on the list for private Members' motions on Friday 13 March. It broke my belief in the superstition, because after seven years my name had come out of the ballot. I hope that the Leader of the House will guarantee that, after waiting seven years, on Friday 13 March the opportunity will still be afforded me to present an important proposal on unemployment, the underfunding of the training and enterprise councils, and the necessity for the Government to do something about training programmes.

Mr. MacGregor: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, I agree, and I pay tribute to the work of the Select Committee on Accommodation and Works under his chairmanship, and to all that the hon. Gentleman has done. I echo his suggestion that as many hon. Members as possible should see the exhibition. There has always been great pressure to improve office accommodation, particularly that of secretaries, in the House, so the proposal is important. If we can manage to agree the matter next Monday, it will be possible to move faster on the building programme than if we cannot. Therefore, it will be important to have a debate next Monday, and I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said.

On the hon. Gentleman's second request I shall have to be less obliging. I notice that the debate that precedes his is on taxation and public expenditure. I have a suspicion that many of my hon. Friends and others will wish to participate in that debate and to draw attention to the huge gaps between Labour's spending commitments and its tax commitments. They will also want to draw attention to the substantial public expenditure programmes that the Government have carried through as a high priority, including those relating to training, which are two and a half times bigger in real terms that they were under the Labour Government.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, according to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, £96 million of public money provided by the Government for university tuition fees has not been passed on to universities by some local education authorities? Will he find time next week to discuss that scandal and try to find some way to achieve fairness for the universities and ensure that they receive the money that the Government intend them to have?

Mr. MacGregor: I take my hon. Friend's point. I shall act immediately and do what I am sure he has already done —draw the matter to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Leader of the House stop ducking the question that he has been asked three times and come clean about the length of the Budget debate? The Government have one of two options next week: to stick to the traditional Government economic policy, which is manifestly a disaster and which will lose them the election, or to change the policy radically by increasing public expenditure and giving people money in their hands in an attempt to cut and run. Given the need to debate the Budget properly, are we to have a Budget debate for four days, or are the Government to prevent us from having even that opportunity to test their policies—yes or no?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman will have to wait and hear my right hon. Friend's Budget statement. I have already stated the business for next week.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Has my right hon. Friend seen the admirable White Paper published by the Ministry of Defence today, "The Future of Britain's Reserve Forces", in which the Ministry of Defence draws on the lessons to be learned from the Gulf war and from the deliberations on the armed forces Bill about the call-out of reserves? Will he ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to come to the House tomorrow or on Monday to make a statement on that issue, as it shows that Her Majesty's Government have a commitment to effective reserve forces, as distinct from Labour party policies?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree entirely with what my hon. Friend says about the merits of our policy, and the distinction between it and that of the Labour party. I am grateful to him for drawing attention to the White Paper. As to whether my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence can make a statement on the Floor of the House, we have had a considerable number of statements and we have important business today. I felt that it was not possible to have another oral statement today, particularly as we are to have the estimates debate and an important debate on Northern Ireland. Therefore, I fear that I may have to disappoint my hon. Friend on that.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): The Opposition would welcome a debate next Friday on taxation and public expenditure, because we would welcome the chance to hear the Government's views on their bizarre philosophical twist to the economic programme of John Maynard Keynes—that taxation can be cut by increasing the public sector borrowing requirement to £31 billion. That will be a talking point in pubs and clubs up and down the country.

As some of us are superstitious about Friday the 13th, may I invite the Leader of the House, as a Cabinet Minister and a Privy Councillor, to give us a categorical assurance that we will be debating those issues on that day?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot give a categorical assurance about any aspect of a business statement. I have made the position clear, and there will be plenty of opportunities next week to debate these matters.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will note that, if we had a public expenditure borrowing requirement of the levels that pertained under the last Labour Government, it would have averaged £40 billion and, at its peak under that Government, £55 billion. That is a measure of the irresponsibility from which the country suffered under the Labour Government.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): May we have a debate next week on advertising standards? An advertising campaign is running in my constituency under the slogan, "Made in Britain", but it has become clear that the perpetrator of that campaign, given the opportunity to buy a car, decided to buy Italian. It is a Labour party campaign, and we need another opportunity for the Labour party to tell us what it thinks. Has not the Labour party told the British people, "Don't do what we do, do as we say"?

Mr. MacGregor: I also recall a Labour party political broadcast recently which endeavoured to show falsely that most of the items in the broadcast were made abroad and were not available from manufacturing in this country. That was another attempt to undermine the great success of much of British manufacturing industry in the past few years. Typically, Labour did not comment on the fact that we have increased our share of world manufacturing trade in each of the past three years.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, if a general election is announced next week, it will be the first time since the war that the Budget debate has been curtailed and the first time ever that a Finance Bill has been guillotined from its start?

Mr. MacGregor: I have nothing to add to what I have already said about the business for next week.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will my right hon. Friend try to make time for a debate on the relationship between Australia and the United Kingdom following recent discourtesies to the British Army and Her Majesty the Queen? In passing, should not we send our congratulations to the English cricket team who, with the assistance of Guy the gorilla, thrashed the Aussies by eight wickets?

Mr. MacGregor: I entirely agree, and I am sure that the whole House joins in my hon. Friend's congratulations.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 701 on the Warrington Czech book appeal?

[That this House congratulates the people of Warrington, Warrington Borough Council and all the companies who have assisted in any way in donating goods and money towards the collection of eight tons of books which will be transported to Czechoslovakia at midnight on Saturday 22nd February in transport loaned, fuelled and driven by Warrington people and the business community; and expresses the hope that the twinning arrangements between Warrington and the people of Nachod prosper and goes from strength to strength in the future.]

The motion congratulates the people of Warrington on donating eight tons of books to Czechoslovakia. It also points to the partnership between Warrington borough council and the private sector in transporting the books. In view of the uncertainty surrounding the business for next week, will the right hon. Gentleman, instead of waiting until then, congratulate the people of Warrington today?

Mr. MacGregor: For once, I can take up a request by the hon. Gentleman in a positive way. I should certainly like to add my congratulations and those of the Government to the people of Warrington on the appeal. As the House knows, this is a difficult time for the people of Czechoslovakia, as it is for all who have had to endure communism for so long. One of the worst things for a people as well educated and as cultured as the Czechs has been the absence of free access to books and information. I am happy to underline what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I understand that the Leader of the Opposition is offering the country an adventure. I wonder whether it would be possible next week to have a debate on political adventurism, then we can decide whether it would be more appropriate for the Leader of the Opposition to have a starring role in "Boyo's Own", or, alternatively, to take the leading part in Peter Pan, with its inevitable destination of Never-Never Land.

Mr. MacGregor: I think that there will be plenty of opportunities in the period ahead to make some of the serious points underlying my hon. Friend's comments.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Has the Leader of the House seen the report in this morning's issue of *The Guardian* that the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), is making an announcement about the sale of the four generating stations in Northern Ireland for £1 billion? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, although the people of Northern Ireland, through the Northern Ireland Exchequer, paid for the construction of those four generating stations, it appears from the press story that the funding will not be credited to the Northern Ireland Exchequer but will be transferred to the central Exchequer in London? Why are we not to have a statement in the House on this matter? As it increasingly looks as if the Government would be well advised to delay the election until June or July, would the Leader of the House consider initiating a debate on this matter during the next three weeks, because it appears that the Conservative Government are stealing £1 billion from the people of Ulster?

Mr. MacGregor: I have noted the request for a debate within the next three weeks, and I shall bear it in mind. It might be possible briefly to refer to that matter in the wide-ranging debate on Northern Ireland that will take place later today. I shall certainly draw the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that since the debate on the National Lottery Bill, at which time Britain shared with Albania the privilege of being the only country in Europe without a national lottery, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) has just returned from Albania to report that lottery tickets are on sale in the streets of Tirana? Therefore, is not the matter of considerable urgency, and will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that a statement or commitment of some kind before the House rises would be extremely popular in the country?

Mr. MacGregor: The further work that was announced by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department on Friday 17 January is in hand, and I, hope that we can announce our conclusions as soon as possible.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have a debate next week on the shameful lack of consultation by Bradford district health authority on the proposed closure of Westwood hospital, in my constituency? No doubt the Leader of the House has noted early-day motion 761.

[That this House is appalled by the privatisation proposals of Bradford Health Authority to be implemented through the closure of Westwood Hospital and the transfer of mentally handicapped patients to Takare plc, Care Solutions Ltd. and AHP Rehabilitation Ltd. in the profit-seeking private sector; notes that Care Solutions Ltd. is a recently formed company with a director resident in Lugano, Switzerland, who has not yet made any returns to Companies House, and that AHP Rehabilitation Ltd. has one hundred pound issued shares and that the company has given an unlimited guarantee on bank borrowings; regards the use of the mentally handicapped as profit sources as immoral and places their future in jeopardy should any of these companies fail; and calls on the Bradford District Health Authority to scrap these odious proposals and retain Westwood Hospital as demanded by those who put patients before profit.]

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

The district health authority proposes to transfer patients from the excellent site on which Westwood hospital stands and which gives peace and serenity to mentally handicapped people to a home which has yet to be built by a company which is so fresh that it has not even made any returns to the Registrar of Companies. How can proper consultation have been undertaken with relatives and people with an important involvement when they have not been told about proposals for alternative accommodation, and cannot be, given the nature of the matter? The matter is urgent. Relatives and parents are concerned, and I hope that the Minister for Health will make a statement to the House before the general election.

Mr. MacGregor: I have seen the early-day motion. As the hon. Gentleman knows, Bradford health authority has carefully developed plans for the patients of Westwood hospital. Those plans are in accordance with our widely accepted care in the community policy. I am told that the health authority is satisfied that all the companies mentioned meet the requirements of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, no matter how short the Budget debate, there should be time to make it clear that, every year since 1986, the yield from income tax has risen despite cuts in the basic rate, and that makes absolute nonsense of the claptrap being peddled by the Opposition parties that there is a choice to be made between cutting income tax and the yield therefrom?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend. The yield from higher rates of tax has risen over the period during which we have cut the higher rates to internationally competitive levels and taken them away from the totally punitive levels of Labour when it was in power. That is the interesting result of the extra endeavour, enterprise and economic growth achieved by our tax policies.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Although the right hon. Gentleman will not much longer be responsible for these matters, will he set in train the process of a re-examination of the taking of points of order? Is he aware that, in the old days, when I came into the House, points of order were taken the moment they arose? Is he aware that the present practice of delaying points of order is yet another result of the deleterious effects of the introduction of television cameras into the House and is designed to prevent Members from raising points of order in prime television time?

Mr. MacGregor: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is not a matter for me.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Is my right hon. Friend aware that Torbay hospital now approaches its 12th month of self-governing status within the national health service? Is he aware also that during that period 60 extra doctors and nurses have been employed, along with nine extra consultants and several other additional staff? Two new wards have been opened and the largest number of patients ever treated in the hospital have been looked after with marvellous care. Will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate next week on such matters so that Torbay hospital and its achievements can be presented to the House?

Mr. MacGregor: I would very much like to do so. My hon. Friend underlines what is happening in so many trust hospitals. We are getting improved health care. The accusations made by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) have been proved in practice to be completely out of touch. It has been demonstrated that the Conservative party is increasing funds for the NHS and carrying through management reforms that enable the funds to be better spent at the front line on patient care.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Is the Leader of the House aware that many people of Indian origin who have settled in the United Kingdom are extremely concerned at the consequences for them of an extradition treaty between the United Kingdom and India and of a bilateral agreement between this country and India on the confiscation of terrorists' funds? As there is insufficient time for a treaty and the Orders in Council for the agreement to be laid in compliance with the parliamentary rules and conventions on the time that such matters have to be laid before the House, will the right hon. Gentleman give a categorical assurance that neither the treaty nor the agreement will be laid before the House in the next few days so that these extremely important matters can be given fresh consideration by a new Labour Government with a new mandate?

Mr. MacGregor: There will not be a Labour Government with a new mandate, but I shall look into the matter that the hon. Gentleman raises.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): My right hon. Friend will know that there have been a number of debates about a minimum wage policy and that there have been comments about it on other occasions. Did he read in the *Employment Gazette* in April 1991 that the half minimum wage pledge made by the Labour party would cost employers £3·80 an hour, not £3·40, and therefore by extension today's half minimum wage would cost employers more than £4 an hour? Bearing in mind these statistics, I wonder whether we should discuss the matter more fully to give the Opposition a chance to withdraw their foolish pledge.

Mr. MacGregor: Yes. I would couple with that the results of the authoritative survey which was carried out by the CBI, which were made available today. We are all awaiting the comments of Opposition Members on the survey. It is the sort of issue that my hon. Friend might be able to raise in next week's debates.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May we have an assurance from the Leader of the House that, before the election breaks upon us, there will be time for a debate on the tragic increase in crime throughout the United Kingdom and the reductions in detection rates in so many places? Is he aware that in Leicestershire crime increased again and again last year and that detection rates fell by more than 6 per cent.? The chief constable has warned that policing will be further hit by cuts of more than £1 million in the coming year's force budget, and has complained about them. With crime rates soaring under the Government, it is surely unacceptable that police forces should be forced by Government cuts to reduce their expenditure on protecting our constituents.

Mr. MacGregor: The substantial increase in real terms on spending on the police under this Government cannot be described as a cut. High priority has been given to increasing police numbers and improving police pay so that we are not faced with the recruitment and retention problems that had to be tackled when we came to power. We have sought generally to assist the police with modern technology, for example. We have given high priority to supporting the police and to dealing with the issues that the hon. and learned Gentleman has raised.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): May we have a debate on car ownership, so that we can discuss the welcome news that British companies such as Rover are now producing cars of the highest quality and competitiveness, which are being exported with increasing success? Is it not a shame that, rather than backing the boys at Longbridge and Dagenham, the first Kinnock in a thousand generations to be able to aspire to middle-class values and buy his daughter a car has chosen to stick two fingers up at the British car worker and back the boys in Turin by buying an Italian Fiat?

Mr. MacGregor: I entirely agree with what my hon. Friend has said about the improvements in the quality —and every other aspect—of British cars, and I certainly support all that he has said about the improvements in Rover cars.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That was not the kind of question that should be asked in business questions.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I shall endeavour to call the hon. Members who are now rising, but I ask them to confine their questions to the business of the House, rather than making what are basically straight electioneering points —and not very good ones at that.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Every hon. Member knows that the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) is riddled with malice. It is very tragic.

May we have a debate about company contributions to political parties? Is there not a strong moral case for the Conservative party to return the £440,000 that it received from Mr. Asil Nadir? Should not that money be given to the receiver today? Is it not his property? What will the Government—and, indeed, the Conservative party—do about that?

Mr. MacGregor: Let me make it clear to the hon. Gentleman that those donations were received by the party entirely legally and in good faith. As for the general question of funding, as far as I can establish, business contributions are much smaller as a proportion of funds raised by the Conservative party than are union contributions as a proportion of funds raised by Labour. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already pointed out, research shows that, in the last election year, the political spending of a single union on the Labour party exceeded all company donations for all political activities.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): During the Budget debate, may we discuss the position of pensioners, particularly Mirror Group pensioners? As my right hon. Friend knows, they have lost a great deal of money which was given by Mr. Maxwell to the Labour party; perhaps we could discuss the question whether Labour will give that money back.

Mr. MacGregor: I have every sympathy for pensioners who find themselves innocent victims of the gross misuse of pension funds.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): In view of what the Leader of the House said to my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), will he arrange time for a debate on my Bill which would ensure that all political parties represented in the House of Commons published detailed reports of their finances, and that any moneys—whatever their source—whose donor had no authority to provide them would be returned? The Tory party should certainly return the money in question.

In such a debate, we could discuss placing a limit on the amount that political parties can spend during a general election campaign. If the amount that can be spent on our behalf in our constituencies is to be restricted—and I agree that that is right—why should political parties nationally spend as much as they like? In the last general election year, the Tory party spent between £15 million and £20 million on its campaign.

Mr. MacGregor: I have already pointed out that, in the last election year, a single union contributed more to Labour than companies contributed in political donations. As for the hon. Gentleman's first point, I must tell him that I see no opportunity for his Bill to be discussed in Government time next week.

Mr. Bob Dunn: (Dartford): I urge the Leader of the House to reconsider the request for an urgent debate next week on car ownership and "Made in Britain" campaigns. After all, what message is being given to workers at Dagenham and in the west midlands by the prospect of the leader of the Labour party buying an Italian car for his daughter, and the leader of London café society driving round in a French car—*[Interruption.]*

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say to the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) and the whole House that I hope we can leave our families out of our political arguments. It is quite unnecessary to bring them into the party political arena.

Mr. Dunn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think that it is reprehensible for us to be addressed in that way when the Labour party always attacks the family, manipulates the sick, and, in 1978, would not even allow the dead to be buried.

Mr. Speaker: I say again to the whole House that I hope that we can leave our families out of electioneering. There are plenty of other issues.

Mr. Bell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a serious point of order. The Opposition have sat through a number of entirely untrue comments and allegations made by Conservative Members. One such statement was that pension fund money belonging to Mirror Group pensioners had gone to the Labour party——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us ask questions about policy.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): And business.

Mr. Speaker: Yes—and business.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster make a statement next week about

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

the £440,000 received from Asil Nadir by the Tory party? That money was given illegally, and, bearing in mind what the Leader of the House has said, I ask why the Tory party does not publish its accounts. The Labour party does. Why does big business give money when the Labour party gets money from the trade unions only after a ballot? If students and people who get money from the social fund have to give their loans back, why cannot the Tory party give the money back to the people? [HON. MEMBERS: "What about Maxwell?"] I hear the word "Maxwell". I moved a resolution, which was successful, at the Labour party national executive committee a few weeks ago which means that if the £43,000 that came to the Labour party was connected with the Mirror Group pension fund that money will go back. That is what the Labour party is doing. Now will the Tory party do the same?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already made the point that the donations were received entirely legally by the Conservative party. I have also noted that there have often been considerable delays in the publication of some union accounts. Furthermore, as I have already said, the Labour party receives a much larger proportion of its total income from the trade unions than the Conservative party receives from companies. Trade unions have considerable influence on and power over the election of the leader of the Labour party, and also made a very significant contribution to its funding. There is no such situation with the Conservative party.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Was it not clear from the exchanges during Prime Minister's Question Time today that my right hon. Friend would be doing a favour to the nation if he arranged for a further debate on the national health service before the House was dissolved so that many of us could make it clear to the Leader of the Opposition that, when his party was last in government, our constituents—often people dying of cancer—were being turned away from hospitals by porters and other ancillary workers, who fund the Labour party and who have no interest in patients whatsoever?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree that it would be highly desirable to have another debate on the health service. What my hon. Friend has said is only one of the many points that could be made. Another would be, that, in order to meet the demands of health service unions, there would be a reduction in the amount of funding for patient care. As the Labour party does not propose any overall increase, that would mean a total reduction. The kind of comments and accusations that we are hearing from some Labour Members are totally off the mark—my hon. Friend is right.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Is there any likelihood of time being found for the Offshore Safety (Protection Against Victimisation) Bill? The Leader of the House will know that it passed its Report stage in another place on Monday. We co-operated actively with the Government to ensure its swift passage. What is to happen to it? Many of our constituents—fine, decent and honourable men—lost their jobs because they had the courage to speak out on safety matters on offshore installations. Lord Cullen said that there was a need to protect those men, but what will happen to them? Is the Bill to be jettisoned?

Mr. MacGregor: I am aware of the Bill and have already told the hon. Gentleman that the Government support its objectives. I shall have to look into the exact position.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): In the light of the earlier remarks of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), may I ask my right hon. Friend to consider initiating a debate early next week on early-day motion 402?

[That this House notes that the Daily Mirror and the Daily Record have over the years played a vitally important campaigning and news role as the only left of centre daily newspapers in the United Kingdom; further notes the need in a free society for balance in the news media; expresses its solidarity with the journalists, editorial and production staff; and also pledges full support for their current attempt to secure the paper's future by means of a management buyout.]

There is an amendment to that motion which stands in my name and which calls on the Labour party not only to reveal for the first time the amount of cash with which Maxwell supplied it over the years but to disclose details of that which was received in kind. Is my right hon. Friend aware that there have been reports in quality newspapers of equipment being provided by Maxwell to the Labour party, of jobs being provided for the Leader of the Opposition's children, and of a cut-price Jaguar being supplied? If the information mentioned by the hon. Member for Bolsover is to come out, we need to know about those things. Pension funds have been pillaged by that man——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Ask a question; do not begin a debate.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend raises an important point in relation to the early-day motion. Any proposed transfer of the group will be inspected by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in accordance with the provisions of the Fair Trading Act 1973.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If questions put to the House are found by you to be out of order—*[Interruption.]* Clearly the previous one was because you rose to stop the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), who persisted despite your previous cautions, but you allowed the Leader of the House to answer it.

Mr. Speaker: I said that the hon. Gentleman should ask a question, not begin a debate.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Before the general election is announced—whenever that might be—should not the electoral registration figures for England and Wales be published for the benefit of hon. Members? Such figures are available for Northern Ireland, constituency by constituency. Provisional figures are available for Scotland, and the number of overseas voters has now been published for England and Wales, constituency by constituency. Why cannot we know the number of voters on each register in each constituency so that we know the general pattern before the election is announced?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman is extremely fearful of the general election because he asks that question week after week. He is clearly highly nervous about the forthcoming election. I shall give him the same answer that I gave him before. Electoral figures for as many parliamentary constituencies as are available will be published immediately before the general election, whenever that may be.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): May I repeat the earlier request for a debate next week on education, so that we can make three points? First, good education is underpinned by competition and by variety and choice for parents. Secondly, it would be a disaster if grant-maintained schools, city technology colleges and especially grammar schools were abolished. Thirdly, it is gross hypocrisy for people who had the opportunity to have a grammar school education—such as 14 members of the shadow Cabinet—now to try to deny the same opportunity to thousands of children.

Mr. MacGregor: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. He is 100 per cent. right on all three points, and I hope that he will have many more opportunities to make them.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Before the conclusion of this Parliament, will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement or a special debate on the situation facing old-age pensioners? A statement should enable the state old-age pension to be raised by £17 on 1 April so that it is at least calculated on the same basis as it was in 1980. That would be a start on returning the billions of pounds that have been stolen from old-age pensioners over the past 13 years so that they can at least live in some dignity in retirement instead of having to face the enormous cut in the state pension during the lifetime of this Government.

Mr. MacGregor: I would be happy to have a debate on the position in relation to pensioners, but we cannot have one next week unless hon. Members can raise the issue in our debate on the Budget statement. I would be happy to have such a debate because that would enable us to point out yet again that the average income of pensioners——

Mr. Corbyn: Income, not pension.

Mr. MacGregor: I will come to that. The average income of pensioners has risen by more than one third in real terms during our period in office. It has risen faster than for the general population, and it has risen a good deal faster than ever before. Part of the reason for that is the Conservative philosophy and concentration on encouraging pensioners to have a wide spread of occupational pensions, personal pensions, and other savings and not on clobbering them with tax like the Labour party.

We have fully observed our commitment on the state pension. Well above that, we have concentrated substantial sums of extra public expenditure on those who rely on the state pension, and who are therefore less well off, through increases in disability benefit, housing benefit, income support benefit and community charge benefit.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 585?

[That this House is increasingly aware of how it was misled, and indeed used, as part of a finely calculated and deliberate injustice perpetrated for party political reasons against the honourable Member for Winchester and his constituents on 7th March 1990, by senior Government Ministers and the abuse of the whipping system on that day to influence the vote of the House whilst sitting in judgment over one of its honourable Members; notes that of the Government Ministers directly involved, namely the Right honourable Members for Surrey East, Mole Valley and Mid Sussex, one was a Queen's Counsel and a past Foreign Secretary in charge of MI6 and another, as Home Secretary, is now in charge of MI5; is deeply concerned that if such Ministers, deemed fit to control the secret services of the Crown, can take such blatantly discriminatory and unjust action against a loyal colleague, then no citizen of the land is safe under the law; believes that continued delay by Her Majesty's Government in the face of this obvious case will be seen by the general public either as a cover up or as condoning the gross misconduct of the senior Ministers involved; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to act swiftly, before the election, either to bring this matter urgently before the Committee of Privileges or to allow the honourable Member for Winchester to present his case before Parliament in Government time before further injustice is done in this or any future case.]

As none of the key issues were even known about when the House debated the matter on 7 March 1990, will my right hon. Friend please publicly correct his reply during business questions on 30 January 1992, as reported in *Hansard* at column 1083, when he said that all those matters had been "fully debated"?

Mr. MacGregor: During business questions, one can give only a short reply. My hon. Friend had a debate on that matter last Friday when he took up a great deal of the time of the House and he was therefore able to make his case fully. I gave a fuller reply to him then which covered the issues.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In view of the heart-rending delays suffered in the Scottish courts by those who have asbestosis or mesothelioma, what is the Government's reaction to the report of the Scottish Law Commission published today on the effect of death on damages? I have given notice of that question. Is there any hope of quick action? I have also given notice of my next question. With regard to Libya, do the Government understand—and they should have been told by the security services—that one of the so-called Libyans has far more to do with Beirut and terrorist gangs in Lebanon than he has with Tripoli? If there is not to be a statement on Libya next week, may we have an assurance that there will be no military action or sanctions?

Mr. MacGregor: On the second point, I do not know whether there will be a statement on Libya next week. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice that he would raise his first point. As he knows, the report was laid yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and it is being considered.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): May I remind the Leader of the House that local authorities are now presenting their budgets to their poll tax payers? Last

[Mr. William O'Brien]

year's fiasco, caused by the delay in sending out poll tax demands, created many problems for local authorities in collecting the poll tax. The only reason why poll tax bills are being sent out this year is that Tory Members demanded it.

Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for the Environment to make a statement next week confirming that there will be no delay in the issue of poll tax demands and that they will be allowed to be sent out before 1 April, the beginning of the financial year for local authorities? May we be assured that the Government will not play canny and delay poll tax bills being sent out throughout the country just because an election is pending?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think that there is any need for a statement, because my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities made the position very clear in the past 24 hours in response to certain wild allegations.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): As this is probably the right hon. Gentleman's last appearance at the Dispatch Box on the Government side of the House, may I thank him for his courteous treatment of my questions in the past? Will he look at early-day motion 796 about the proposed Canadian seal cull?

[That this House expresses concern at the news that the Canadian Government is contemplating an expansion of harp seal culling; believes there is insufficient scientific evidence to substantiate a claim that seals have significantly contributed to a fall in East Coast cod stocks; notes that Canada still has the largest annual seal hunt in the world with a current quota of 186,000 per year with over 50,000 seals killed last year; calls upon the Canadian Government to put in place improved fishing management schemes in conjunction with member states of the North West Atlantic Fisheries Organisation including the European Community; and warns the Canadian Government that any expansion of seal slaughter will undoubtedly result in a campaign to boycott Canadian fish stocks.]

May we have a chance in the last few days of this Parliament to discuss the matter? If the Leader of the House will not allow that, will he, in the few days left to him, make representations to the Canadian Government about the proposed cull, say how much opposition to it there is in this country, and warn them of the effect that there will be in this country if the cull proceeds?

Mr. MacGregor: I have to disappoint the hon. Gentleman in relation to his opening comment, which I think he will find will not be correct. *[Interruption.]* I can assure him that it will not be correct. I shall draw his question of substance to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, but the Canadian Government are well aware of the long-standing public concern in this country and in other countries about seal culling.

BILLS PRESENTED

EUROPEAN UNION (PUBLIC INFORMATION)

Mr. Nigel Spearing, supported by Mr. John Biffen, Mr. Peter Shore, Sir Richard Body, Mr. Austin Mitchell and Mr. Richard Shepherd, presented a Bill to require the preparation and distribution of a statement summarising the provisions and implications of the draft Treaty on European Union and its principal associated Treaties, and the consequent changes in the rights and powers of the citizens and Parliament of the United Kingdom; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 13 March and to be printed. [Bill 106.]

POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING

Mr. David Winnick presented a Bill to require political parties represented in the House of Commons to publish detailed annual reports and accounts and to specify information to be contained therein; to provide that, where a donor makes to a political party a donation to which he has no title, the donation may not be retained by the party but shall be paid to such person as a court may direct; to impose a limit on expenditure by a political party during a general election; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 6 March and to be printed. [Bill 107.]

ESTIMATES DAY

[2ND ALLOTTED DAY]

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1991-92

CLASS II, VOTE 2

Yugoslavia

[Relevant document: First Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee of Session 1991-92 on Central and Eastern Europe: Problems of the Post-Communist Era (House of Commons Paper No. 21).]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a further sum not exceeding £27,939,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges that will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1992 for expenditure by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on grants and subscriptions etc. to certain international organisations, special payments and assistance, scholarships, military aid and sundry other grants and services.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Mr. Speaker: We now come to the class II, vote 2 estimates, and I must draw the attention of the House to the fact that the subject for today's debate is Yugoslavia and not the whole of the Select Committee report.

4.26 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs will be grateful for this opportunity for a brief debate on Yugoslavia related to the vote on the Order Paper and also to that part of the recent report from the Select Committee which covered central Europe as a whole, but which also related to Yugoslavia and the crisis and the killing going on there. This could hardly be a better time for the House to consider developments in Yugoslavia, because, while we are debating this matter, a major United Nations force is beginning to be put together to move into the former Yugoslavia.

It is the first United Nations force in history to be assembled on the European mainland. So far, 22 nations have said that they will take part. It will cost an estimated $633 million for the first year, although my own view is that that will only be the beginning and that it is likely to stay there for much longer than that. As I understand it —no doubt my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office will clarify the matter—Britain has offered to participate through a 1,000-strong logistical battalion. This is the beginning of a mighty operation. It is not the biggest United Nations operation since the war, but it is the first ever on the European mainland, and it is very sobering that it should be so.

The situation in Balkans is an extreme example of the splintering, fragmentation and self-determination run riot that has followed the retreat of the communist ice age and the withdrawal of the Communist party tyrannies all over eastern and central Europe, leaving behind many disputes, bitternesses and hatreds which many people mistakenly thought had been buried in history, but which turned out to have been living all the time in the mud, strife and debris under the communist tyranny veneer.

The Select Committee, whose members visited parts of the former Yugoslavia, found again and again witnesses saying that what had been going on in Croatia—the conflict between the Serbians and the federal forces and between the Serbian enclaves in Croatia and Krajina and the Croatian forces—was merely the prelude to further conflicts. All the people we saw were convinced that there was more terror and bloodshed and more horror to come. That was a grim prospect.

Again, even as we debate the issue, the neighbouring state or province—it is not yet fully recognised as a state —of Bosnia-Herzegovina is in great danger. The tensions there are rising by the hour. They appear to have been triggered partly by the recognition of Croatian independence by the European Community in a rather rushed way. The United States and United Nations still hold back from that recognition. The tensions were also triggered, of course, by the referendum. It was recommended to the Bosnians by the European Community, but it has created incredible tension.

We hear reports that Sarajevo is like a tinder box, that peace is on a knife edge and that the prospect could be about to open up of Croatians, Serbians and Muslims fighting each other again. Indeed, some have already died in the past few days. Just as it is a "first" that the United Nations is mounting a vast operation on European mainland soil, so it is a first in recent times, although certainly not in history, that Muslims could be fighting Christians. Of course, Christians of one denomination are also fighting Christians of another denomination in the Orthodox and Catholic Churches.

It is also a sign of a remarkable reinvolvement of that problematical country and nation, Turkey, in areas from which it was driven many decades ago. Indeed, the issues of Turkish domination in those parts were hotly debated in the House 100 years ago and more.

So that is the ugly and miserable scene. Many thousands of people have already died and United Nations troops are now being asked to go into this precarious situation. Several international organisations have already been involved and the Select Committee's report examined the position of all of them.

The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe tried without much effect to calm down the processes of the independence of Slovenia and the move towards independence by Croatia. The invasion of the federal Serbian-backed forces led to the killing in recent months.

Then the European Community sought to establish a peace process and put monitors into the area. It eventually put pressure on the Serbians in particular, but Yugoslavia in general, by introducing economic sanctions. Then came the recognition that none of that was having much effect and that the time had come for a higher level of intervention by the United Nations. That is what we are seeing unfold. Meanwhile, the EC peace efforts continue.

If I may offer my own view, no praise is too high for the role being played by Lord Carrington, who has had the unenviable task of heading the Hague peace conference under the aegis of the EC in an attempt to bring these warring people to the peace table. So far, the conference has had some success. Indeed, with the prospect of the United Nations forces coming in, it has succeeded to the point of achieving a ceasefire, but at any moment things could go badly into reverse.

It is an ugly and dangerous situation. No one can say with confidence that the blooddshed is over or even that an end is in sight. One has to ask, and the report of the Select Committee asked, what lessons can be learned from the events in Yugoslavia. For instance, did the interventions of

[Mr. David Howell]

the European Community help or hinder the process? One must say that the EC monitors were brave. It was a tragedy that some of them were killed. They appeared to do a good job. The EC trade sanctions may also have brought it home to the Serbians and Mr. Milosevic that the outside world would not put up for ever with the uncontrolled assaults of the federal army and the ridiculous exercises in which the federal troops indulged in trying to destroy the pearl of the Adriatic, Dubrovnic, and in other atrocities.

However, at the same time, it must be accepted that the EC's recognition of Croatia went against the recommendations of its own arbitration commission under Mr. Badinter. The Select Committee had the opportunity to meet the arbitration committee. We met Mr. Badinter.

There was no doubt, once it had been established that the EC was going to recognise Croatia and did so, that it added new fears to the minds of the Serbian minority in Croatia and in Bosnia, where there has been a referendum in which the Serbians refused to take part. That, added to other tensions and worries—blame can be fairly laid on all sides and no one side can be accused of being all guilty—has brought the pattern of conflict to an extremely dangerous point.

On 11 November last year, some members of the Select Committee met Mr. Slobodan Milosevic in his baroque palace in Belgrade. He told the Committee a number of things. He gave some absurd and transparent excuses, which did not impress us at all, for the behaviour of the federal army, which was rampaging round Dubrovnik at the time.

However we caught hold of one of his remarks. For the first time he was prepared to consider the admission of the United Nations to the scene. His views were clear about the terms on which he wanted that to happen—the United Nations forces should come into the Serbian enclave areas of Bosnia, Krajina and other parts of the former frontier province areas between Bosnia and Croatia and they should stay there for many years. He wanted them to stay there as long as was required for tempers and memories to cool, if that were possible. Heaven knows, memories are monstrously long down there—there are plenty of monstrous things to remember—and they seem to go on for ever. He thought that if the United Nations troops stayed long enough it would be possible to freeze the political status of those enclaves, so that the unending dispute about whether they were Serbian or part of Croatia, and whether they should have autonomy, and of what kind, could at last be settled in a peaceful atmosphere.

The view which has come out of Zagreb and from the Croatians has always been totally different. They have said that they will let the United Nations in—there was common ground there—but only for a few months while things are settled and before the lands revert to the new, independent Croatia, which is a totally different concept.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): My right hon. Friend has given us the views of others, but he is reporting to the House the conclusions of a Select Committee. I hope that he will give us his unbiased view of the premature recognition by the European Community of Croatia, bearing in mind the fact that the boundaries of the various Yugoslav republics were determined by the arbitrary decision of the communist Tito. Croatia includes within its boundaries a large Serbian minority, who have every reason to remember brutality and cruelty—which can only be compared with the worst excesses of the Nazis—committed against them in their country. Surely there can be no future in the present rulings unless the United Nations remains there permanently.

Mr. Howell: My right hon. Friend is right. That is on page 2 of my brief remarks, which I am coming to.

I want to offer some views, but in this situation views are easy. It is solutions to the contrary and the deeply held views of the parties involved which are the difficult part. My right hon. Friend is right; those people hold violently different views on the validity of internal borders. Those difficulties will continue, even though the United Nations troops are there, which leads the Committee to the view that

"it is likely that UN troops will find it extremely hard to withdraw for many years hence"

although the present commitment is to stay for one year. Urged on by my right hon. Friend, I stress that it is important to consider what can be done by those outside —the international order and the United Nations. What lessons can be drawn so that a better life and higher justice will prevail over the justice of the bullet and the slaughter that have prevailed in recent months?

As the Select Committee pointed out, the United Nations intervention raises new issues. It takes the United Nations beyond its reluctance to intervene in domestic affairs. Yugoslavia remains an international personality to this day. In theory, the United Nations is interfering in a nation state. Even if one accepts that Yugoslavia is finished—in practice it is, more or less—the United Nations is intervening in an area where there are disputes about whether it is on Croatian soil, as President Tudjman insists it is, or is in a Serbian enclave, as Mr. Babic and others claim. Alternatively, will the United Nations remain in a no man's land until somebody decides whose rules prevails and what the law should be?

The Committee's second question was whether the European Community had succeeded in "managing" the Balkan turmoil or it was a hopeless task? I and some of the members of the Committee were uneasy when we sensed that the European Community was seen to be intervening, not necessarily in line with a particular strategy, because it felt that it had to do something. It felt that its foreign policy had to be gathered together and something should be done; the result was EC intervention.

One could argue, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) has argued with characteristic forcefulness, that that led to extraordinary action whereby the European Community did not recognise Croatia in the summer, when that might have achieved some good, but rushed to do so in January, when it was driven on by German insistence. That happened in a way that was bound to harden attitudes all round, increase tensions and raise the temperatures in Bosnia and Sarajevo. That might lead to yet more killing. That is a real danger, which was foreseen by some, but not other policy makers in central Europe, and it has led to a worsening of the crisis.

The Select Committee took the view that our hopes must rest on the United Nations as an effective force. It may have to remain in Yugoslavia for some time. Its forces should go to Sarajevo, where the headquarters of one of its administrative offices has already been set up. It must demonstrate forcefully to all the parties concerned that they have nothing to gain from more fighting or killing. That is true for Mr. Milosevic and his encouragement of the remaining federal army forces in Bosnia, for the Croats who wish to bring the Croats of Bosnia into a greater Croatia and the Muslims, who, it is reported, are arming themselves and seeking help from fellow Muslims outside the Balkans and Europe. None of them will gain and that should be demonstrated. Hitherto, that has been a sad and weak demonstration. Now it must be strong.

The longer-term task must be to decide how such little nations can settle down with their own independence or how they can work together. If four or five of them want to create a new form of Yugoslavia, they should be allowed to do so. I hope that the Committee made it clear that the fullest possible support should be given to the large UN forces to be deployed. It will be made up of 13,240 military personnel in a total contingent of 14,287. It represents the third largest UN commitment since 1945. Support for that body is our immediate task.

In the longer term, we must find a new role for and the principles upon which the United Nations can act and define the security context of the new mini-nations. Will they be embraced by NATO or the new North Atlantic Co-operation Council? On trade and economics, Slovenia and Croatia are considering applying to join the European Community. Will we welcome that? If not, what economic relationship will they have with us?

A lasting peace and democracy cannot be imposed or ordered from above or from outside. However much we try, that will come from the readiness of the people to elect leaders they trust, to have sound finance, good trade and democratic practices. They must realise that fighting will not pay and will only lead to more death and no gain to anyone. That is the Committee's objective view.

Meanwhile, I pray that this is not the beginning of another bloody chapter in Europe's history.

4.45 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): History is not dead: it is alive and unwell in Yugoslavia. Those who wish to find heroes or villains in that tangled conflict or to discover the aggressors or apportion blame will start their clocks at different times. Some will go back to the second world war, some will go back to the first world war and some will reach back even further into history to the great fault line between the Ottoman empire and Christendom.

The immediate background to tragedy is the collapse of communism and the death of the charismatic Tito, which removed the evil and superficial overlay to reveal old national realities. Now that that overlay has been removed in Yugoslavia and elsewhere, there is a real danger that it will be replaced by authoritarian leaders or the military.

The speed of the dissolution—the implosion—of Yugoslavia and the depth of the anger between the different nationalities that it has revealed has surprised some. However, with the benefit of hindsight, that dissolution seemed almost inevitable given that so few unifying factors remain in what was once Yugoslavia.

I congratulate the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) and his Select Committee on producing, yet again, a first-rate report, which is, of course, a valedictory dispatch. That Committee has been most fortunate because, for the past five years, it has observed one of the most fascinating periods of history. During that time, the Committee has distinguished itself, as it has with this report, by bringing its wisdom to the House.

As the right hon. Gentleman said, this particular Select Committee report appears as a timely background to the debate. It has helped us to reflect on the lessons and perhaps it will enable us to avoid some of the looming tragedies that could occur in the remaining parts of what was once Yugoslavia. We may, of course, face similar challenges in various crises with the dissolution of the former Soviet Union. Even in Yugoslavia, as the right hon. Gentleman underlined, the tragedy may yet be played out because there is a precarious peace in Bosnia, and Macedonia offers its own special complexities.

The questions for us to analyse include what lessons we can learn from the drift to war since the summer of 1991. When could intervention by the international community have been justified and productive? For example, an arms ban could have amounted to intervention on behalf of one of the combatants, given the way in which arms were distributed between the various parties to the conflict. In the summer there were no simple, agreed frontiers and there were many pockets of fighting, which certainly would have endangered any peace-making forces that sought to intervene.

Was it too brutish for the international community to allow the combatants, in effect, to exhaust themselves? Perhaps we are faced with a similar problem in Nagorany Karabakh, after the failure of the peace-making efforts by Iranians and Turks, at a time when the CIS—the Commonwealth of Independent States—forces are withdrawing and when there seems to be no international body with the will and resources to intervene in that sad part of the world.

Was it right to try to keep the federal structures intact? Our presumption was that it was right to do so, certainly as a transitional mechanism, while a longer-term solution might be sought. We in the United Kingdom viewed some of the pressure that came from at least one of our EC partners with a certain wariness, because of our experience in Northern Ireland and in Cyprus. Precipitate intervention, in our view—knowing the difficulties of extricating oneself—would have considerable and long-term resource implications.

Key questions included the definition of national sovereignty. At what point could the international community intervene in a recognised country at a time of civil war? Similarly, a key quesiton was the point at which the component parts of a state could legitimately demand self-determination for themselves. Where were the limits? Was it a question of size? Where could one stop? There was also the question, as the Select Committee pointed out pertinently, of the recognition criteria—the fact that the Badinter criteria were overlooked or ignored by the Community, which accepted the fait accompli of its own recognition.

The Yugoslav crisis has revealed that the United Kingdom is not relevant on its own but only as part of its alliances. It has revealed that the European Community, after its dismal showing in the Gulf crisis, has played a key and largely positive role. But the problems of a common foreign and security policy, to come into effect formally post-Maastricht on 1 July of next year, are clearly revealed by an examination of the EC response to the crisis. The problems of Macedonia remain and may lead to a Greek opt-out of any EC decision.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Regarding Macedonia, does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is nonsense for the Greeks to make so much fuss about a name when the people of Macedonia are Bulgar in origin and have no claims on any part of Greece?

Mr. Anderson: It is more than a name. As the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) pointed out, names and symbols have a particular relevance in that part of the world.

Sir Bernard Braine: The hon. Gentleman is making such an excellent speech that there was no need for that type of intervention from the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), bearing in mind the fact that Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great were not Bulgarians. Indeed, there is great danger of a collision coming as a result of the ill-treatment of the people of ethnic Greek origin in Macedonia, unless the matter is brought under proper control.

Mr. Anderson: I accept the complexities of the matter, so perhaps it would be imprudent of me to go further down that road just now.

A key card that was not played, at least not openly, was the fact that all the combatant republics in Yugoslavia would eventually, at the end of the fighting and when the dust had settled, be looking to the EC for financial assistance. That key leverage aspect was available to the Community, and had the EC, possibly earlier in the conflict, said in terms that any financial assistance would come only when the status quo ante in terms of frontiers had been established, that would have given a clear signal to the combatants and forced them to ask whether their fighting was worth while. That point may have been made forcefully in the corridors. It was not made openly.

Whatever criticism one may make of the EC monitors, it is clear that they were necessary at the time. They were the only show in town and nobody else was available. Presumably they will now fade away and be replaced by the United Nations. Indeed, there has been a curious parallelism between the EC and the UN—an overlap between their two roles. I fully join the right hon. Member for Guildford in congratulating Lord Carrington who, true to his reputation as a conciliator and mediator-in-chief, has done a remarkable job in that area.

At times, the torch was passed to Cyrus Vance, with his own power base and legitimacy at the UN, and it was predicted that the EC would recognise the two republics, that that would provoke more bloodshed and that it could be argued that that would be an obstacle to a comprehensive peace. Happily, so far the dire predictions of that possibly precipitate recognition have not been borne out. The United States has not yet followed the EC line, but it now appears that Bosnia, after the referendum, probably satisfies the Badinter criteria. I agree with the right hon. Member for Guildford about the importance of the EC forces going in speedily to try to maintain the existing frontiers within Bosnia. That may be their key role.

The problem of what is the appropriate institution was addressed by Edward Mortimer in *The Financial Times* yesterday. He quoted from the NATO Rome summit of last November and wrote of the need

"for a framework of interlocking institutions"—

or, as he preferred to put it, a certain "institutional overcrowding." As we look around the landscape of Europe, we see a vast variety of institutions which came into being at certain times for specific purposes and are still there, desperately looking for a role and seeking to expand their competences into spheres that were not envisaged when they were established. One understands that to be the professional deformation of people involved in organisations, be they the Council of Europe, Western European Union or NATO.

In June 1991, the CSCE—the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe—established what was described as "an emergency mechanism", but it is untried and the organisation is hamstrung by its consensus principle, the problems of resources, and, of course, the issue of legitimacy. It is suggested that the lack of a power base militarily on the part of the CSCE might be met by an expanded role for NATO in the form of a North Atlantic co-operation council.

The Select Committee veered towards favouring an expanded role for NATO in this and other conflicts. That conclusion is probably, at the least, premature—the bewildering overlap of functions might have to continue for some time—and we should be wary of the search for tidiness or the creation of new institutions to manage change and conflict.

Our aim must be to build and maintain a more stable Europe. The tragedy of Yugoslavia has provided a laboratory experiment which, unhappily, is not yet finished. There remain the problems of Krajina, Kosovo and Bosnia. We understand that Lord Carrington has given himself about six months to establish a peace settlement. Ultimately, the United Nations will play the key role, but it may, in this regional conflict as in others, choose to sub-contract the effective work to tried organisations that can be more effective on the spot. In Europe, for example, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there is a possibility of many similar challenges.

All that we can do now is set out the broad principles on which the international community should meet the problems within Yugoslavia, which may be replicated elsewhere in what is now called the "wild east of Europe". Those principles include, first, the principle that frontiers —even those said to be artificial—should be changed only with consent and not as a result of military conflict; and, secondly, the establishment and guarantee of ethnic minority rights. If Serbia concerns itself with the fortunes of the Serbian minorities in Croatia and comes with clean hands in respect of its position in Kosovo, its case will be mightily strengthened.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): I am glad that the hon. Gentleman mentioned Kosovo, because I am mindful of the fact that 90 per cent. of those who live there are ethnic Albanians. Incidentally, they also form a substantial minority in Macedonia and they cannot be overlooked.

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the saddest reflections of the present conflict in Yugoslavia is that only when fighting has broken out have perfectly legitimate claims to the concept of nationhod been taken seriously? Croatia and Slovenia have now disappeared from the headlines to be replaced by Bosnia because of the actuality of the conflict there. Does he agree that it would be a tragedy if any solution were to overlook the wholly legitimate claims of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo who, so far, have resisted violence but who are being offered, in practice, no other option?

Mr. Anderson: Is the hon. Gentleman arguing that Kosovo should not be independent but that the human rights of those who live there must be guaranteed? If that is his view, I share it.

Mr. Norris: I do not wish to make a speech now in the middle of the hon. Gentleman's speech. I would not take a view on the independence of Kosovo, but the recognition of human rights there would be a welcome first step.

Mr. Anderson: Lessons to be learned by the international community are, first, to try to anticipate such problems and anticipate realities and, secondly, to base policy wholly on guaranteeing human rights, even if those are behind artificial frontiers.

However it is defined, there is a Europe out there which is unstable, needs to be made more stable and which will impact on us, for good or ill. The dangers of instability in our common European home are clear—refugees, the nuclear question and poverty. The main leverage for us in Europe and the European Community will be economic but the questions, the crises and the tragedies such as Yugoslavia demand a creative and generous response, which is in our long-term interest.

The future of Yugoslavia and further east is our future. As the old Europe—the Europe of Versailles and Yalta—unravels, we must painstakingly mould institutions in the light of experience to promote long-term stability. In that context, Yugoslavia is a test case, and we must not fail.

5.4 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): The admirable speech of the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) was interrupted by questions about the ethnic composition of Macedonia and whether it is Bulgarian, Greek or Albanian. We should always bear in mind the words of Saint Paul, who said in one of his epistles:

> "Come over into Macedonia and help us; for the brethren are sore oppressed."

They are still oppressed.

In March 1950, 42 years ago, I ventured to make my maiden speech in the House in a debate on foreign affairs largely angled on eastern Europe and Yugoslavia. It was the most painful ordeal that I have ever been through, and I had been through some in the war. Mr. Ernest Bevin opened the debate and Anthony Eden replied. There was a full House, not because hon. Members wanted to hear my speech, but because, in those days when Members did not have a room, there was nowhere else to sit. It was an alarming experience. I was told that I must not speak for more than 20 minutes in a maiden speech and I wonder what you, Mr. Speaker, would feel about that nowadays.

Yugoslavia was one of the countries that became involved in the spread of the Soviet empire. I thank God that I have lived long enough to see that nightmare removed. Naturally, there are painful consequences now that daylight has returned to eastern Europe. But it is a rebirth; and birth, like death, is a gory business. We must not let our anxiety and horror at some contemporary events obscure our understanding of the fact that what is going on is better than what was happening before.

The Yugoslavs did not have the worst of it. By playing east against west, they managed to maintain some national independence and, although they had an appalling economic socialist regime, they managed, through tourism and exporting labour, to let some air into their lungs. When the Soviet empire collapsed and united Germany rose to the fore, the Slovenes and Croats naturally saw their chance of escape from the domination of Belgrade and for a return to the Mitteleuropa to which they had always previously belonged.

Germany dominates the scene today and Austria is once again a part of Germany. It is not an official anschluss, but the strength of Germany is once again not very different from what it was at the beginning of 1938. German influence is spreading to all the countries that were once under the Prussian empire and under the Hapsburg empire—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and now Croatia and Slovenia.

I do not suggest that there is a deliberate imperialist policy directed from Bonn. It is a much more natural, spontaneous development. Germany is a dynamic economy and German business men are keen to exploit the opportunities open to them in the countries to the east, particularly the countries where they feel culturally at home, where German is widely spoken. When the German Government jumped the gun and said that they would recognise Croatia and Slovenia whether we did or not, it was largely because of pressures exercised by German business and the German Churches on the German Government. The flag follows trade. However, it was a bad day for Europe when that happened. After all, the ink was hardly dry on the Maastricht agreement. We had all been talking about the importance of a European foreign policy, and they were jumping the gun. In so doing, they pulled the rug from under Lord Carrington's efforts.

We now have the Bosnian situation. The intervention of the United Nations is beginning to build up and the European Community committee is looking into the problem. Where does that German drive stop? I do not know the extent of the lebensraum that Germany quite naturally—I am not talking about the Bonn Government—will seek. It is interesting that Mr. Genscher, who was so keen to recognise Croatia and Slovenia, hesitates about Bosnia. Perhaps he believes that it has reached the fault line between the Hapsburg and Byzantine-Ottoman world to which the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) referred.

I would like to say a word about the Serbs. I am all against people making hobbies of Balkan countries. This has bedevilled our studies of them both before and after the first world war. The Serbs are a remarkable nation. Their resistance to the Turks in the 19th century was extraordinary. Their conduct in world war one can only be described as heroic, when one considers the way that they stood up and defeated the Austrian empire over nearly two years. In the second world war, their people rose like one man to throw out the Government who were prepared to make them satellites of Hitler. Much as they fought each other, their resistance movements were the most remarkable in Europe. When Tito broke with the Cominform in 1948, he had the support of the great mass of his people.

We must bear it in mind that this is a formidable country with formidable people, and the decisions that we must take could put us on the wrong side of them. We may have to make such decisions.

Should we recognise Bosnia as an independent country? As the hon. Member for Swansea, East said, it has conformed to all the Badinter principles, so I do not see how we can avoid doing so. If we do, we may well find ourselves with a Serbian and Croatian intervention. What

[Mr. Julian Amery]

should we do then? How far should we increase the United Nations force? It is salutary to remember that Hitler needed nine divisions of troops to keep the roads open during the war.

Another factor touched on by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) was that there are 2 million Muslims in Bosnia, 2 million Muslims in Kosovo, about 3 million Muslims in Albania, nearly 1 million in Macedonia and half a million in Bulgaria. I do not want to suggest that we are facing an Islamic crisis in the heart of Europe. There is talk about Saudi and Libyan money coming in. I do not believe that there is a crisis, but we should bear it in mind that the Islamic population is not just a relic of the Ottoman empire, but may develop a dynamo of its own.

The link between Bosnia and the Kosovo-Albanian world is the Sahjak of Novipazar. In our somewhat historically illiterate world, we forget that the Sahjak of Novipazar occupied acres of dispatches before world war one. It is a narrow belt of country that links Bosnia to the Albanian Muslim population. I went there many years ago, and in my experience the inhabitants of the Sahjak are Albanian on Monday, Serbian on Tuesday, Christian on Wednesday, Muslim on Thursday, and at the weekend I am not sure what they are. I do not think that they have changed very much.

We must remember that another power is rising: Turkey. Turkish diplomacy is active, not only in the Caucasus and central Asia, but in the Balkans. They recognise Macedonia and Bosnia as independent countries. That does not pose a threat to the gates of Vienna, but if the Turks succeed in doing a deal with their Kurdish minorities to give them access to the oil of Mosul —and I hope they will—they could become quite a strong economic power with the capability of joining the European Community. I was glad that the Government and the Labour party put out the red carpet for Mr. Masud Barzavi when he was here. He may prove a formidable factor.

What is the British interest? Britain has no great economic stake in Yugoslavia, although before the war we had some important mines there. However, we have a considerable political stake. We fought on that country's side at the Salonica front in world war one and contributed to the resistance movements of Tito and Mikhailovic. I do not want to go into details about whether we were right or wrong; the matter has been explored ad nauseam on television. But we were the only people who helped that country. When it broke with the Cominform, we were the first—led by Mr. Attlee with the full support of the Conservative party—to back it up and ensure that it maintained its independence.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I am listening with fascination, as I have done on many occasions for the past 30 years. From the right hon. Gentleman's experience, would he say that to commit troops, albeit with United Nations berets, into that mire, would beg the question: in what circumstances could those troops ever be withdrawn?

Mr. Amery: I thought that I went rather further than that when I recalled that Hitler needed nine divisions to keep the roads open. I am not sure what we are embarking on, but we should bear that point in mind.

We do not have a great economic stake in the matter, and we have some political credit. But we are concerned with the balance of power within the European Community. Before the European Community existed, we were concerned with the balance of power in Europe, which was not a community. Now we have to concentrate on the balance of power within Europe. Here our first priority is to restore our relations with France.

From de Gaulle's time onwards, the French have had the idea that Germany is the horse, and they can be the jockey and ride it. The horse has turned into an elephant, and the mahoud who sits on top has nothing like the control of a jockey. Equally, the idea that one can tie down Germany with treaties is as absurd as the Lilliputians' belief that they could tie down Gulliver.

Between the wars, France was the patron of Eastern Europe. Those considerable men—now, alas, forgotten —Benes, Titulescu, and King Alexander all looked to France for support. When France fell, all that they stood for was shattered.

I remember going to a small peasant holding in central Serbia just after the fall of France. I was shown round by an elderly peasant who had one pig. He told me that he called the pig Churchill. I was somewhat offended and asked him why he called it Churchill. He said, "Winter is coming and this is my last hope of eating my way through the winter."

Together, Britain and France, with the help of Turkey, could build up a Balkan community—I shall not call it a Balkan federation—which could look towards association with the European Community to which we belong. That association would be based not only on democracy, but on giving help to the agricultural community which still predominates in all the Balkan countries.

Hon. Members may not always have seen me as a peasant, but I have been an honorary member of the Peasant International since 1940, because, on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, I was in a position to found the peasant parties of Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania to participate in resistance against the Germans.

It has often been assumed that the Bulgarians are not really part of the progressive element in the Balkans. Perhaps the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) will think differently—after all, there was a great Liberal penchant for the Bulgarians —but I remember clearly that the peasant parties before the war and the communists during the war wanted Bulgaria and Serbia to come together. Dimitrov and Tito wanted that: only Stalin stopped it. Perhaps there is work to be done there.

There is certainly a task for us—for Britain, working with France and Turkey, to try to build an association of the countries that lie east of the fault line—if not Mitteleuropa then what we have always called the Balkans. I hope that it will be our Government, but whichever Government take the chair of the European Community next July, I hope that they will make this one of their first priorities.

5.21 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I am glad to have the chance to follow the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery). I am sure that the whole House listened with great care and attention to what he said. We have heard him speak often, but even when we do not accept his wisdom it is worth listening to. I should like to disagree with parts and agree with other parts of his speech. The whole House will have been fascinated to hear the right hon. Gentleman; no one speaks with greater experience on these and allied matters—which makes it all the more extraordinary when he appears to get them wrong.

The right hon. Gentleman portrayed developments in the Balkans as largely resulting from German policy—a new drang nach osten. German policy is not as formidable as all that, and it does not account for the origin of the difficulties in the Balkans and in Yugoslavia. It is quite possible that the German Government have been trying to determine how best to serve their own interests, but several other Governments have been known to try to do that when they can.

The right hon. Member for Pavilion spoke of British interests, but I believe that he was wrong about the origin of these affairs. While these developments were taking shape, the German Government came along with certain proposals, some right and some wrong—but they do not explain the origins of this business either.

I do not believe, either, that the Yugoslav problem represents a recrudescence or revival of what has happened in the area before. Most of the Balkan countries before the second and the first world wars were rebelling against foreign imperialism, against outside Governments that tried to impose their will on them. The Austrian Government was the most hated of all; Turkey was another. The people of the Balkans sometimes combined against them.

On top of all the human tragedies taking place in the area we must number the tragedy of the fact that Croats and Serbs have begun fighting each other at all. It is not as if they have often fought before or have just been waiting for a chance to start fighting each other. At times they combined to resist Austrian and then German imperialism, not to mention Turkish imperialism. Sometimes they united successfully to that end.

Another reason why I question the right hon. Gentleman's advice in respect of British interests lies in his recommendation that we back the Turks—they look strong, so perhaps we should support them. The Turks have a great deal to answer for in their part of the world. They have been among the worst oppressors for many years. Without wanting to offend the Tory instincts of the right hon. Member for Pavilion, I recall that, when Gladstone and the Liberal party came out against some of the Turkish horrors, they did not receive the support of the Tory party in those far-off times. I believe that it would be short-sighted to look to Turkey as an ally.

Turkey's behaviour towards the Kurds, towards the Greeks and over Cyprus militates against our picking on Turkey as an ally that we want to fold to our bosom merely because of the power that it may be able to exercise in years to come. It would be wiser of the British Government to understand how dangerous are some of the adventurist policies of the Turkish Government. They seized half of Cyprus in an act of aggression; they have committed many other acts of aggression and some horrific crimes against the Kurds. Yet the Turkish Government have not had to face an appropriate response from western countries, which have not denounced them because of our supposed interests in not quarrelling with them too openly.

For all these reasons, I do not think the right hon. Gentleman's recipe for what we should do in these circumstances well advised, in the interests of the world or of this country. The predominant origin of these terrible events in Yugoslavia, the event which primarily, if not solely, led to the destruction of the Yugoslav state, was the letting loose of the federal army. The right hon. Member for Pavilion mentioned the successes of the Yugoslav state and how it successfully resisted the Stalinist empire. I agree that this country gave the Yugoslavs valuable support at that time. Had we not done so, perhaps they would not have made such a successful stand. Nevertheless, it was important for the Balkans and for the rest of the world.

I do not want to go over atrocities committed both ways before, during or after the war. No one can deny that terrible atrocities were committed on both sides, often encouraged by the fascist powers occupying the countries concerned. Still, I believe that the immediate and overpowering cause of recent wretched events was the way in which the federal army was let loose. Either it was an army out of the control of the Belgrade authorities—that would be serious enough—or, if they still controlled it, what ensued was even more shameful and shocking.

This, at any event, is the real reason for the spread of hatred and the revival of similar feelings. It is why they have gone so far that the state cannot be put back together again. Slovenia is an illustration of that. I know that it does not contain so much ethnic variety as the other states, but when, after trying to seize it, the federal army was stopped and withdrew, the question of Slovenia was satisfactorily and decently settled.

That did not happen in Croatia, because the federal army was behaving differently there. It was rampaging through the country, exhibiting wanton barbarism. There were no Serbian minorities who had to be rescued from along the Croatian coast, and in so far as there were pockets of Serbians dwelling there, they were better treated than anyone else during these events. The Croats there understand that, and we must ensure that they do. There are no Serbian minorities in Dubrovnik. That city attracted the spectacular attention of the world because of its beauty, but it has more important features.

The federal army rampaged up the coast and used its might in a way that it thought would enable it to impose itself by widespread intimidation not only there but throughout the country, including Bosnia. It thought that it would be able to do what it wanted. The army is almost 95 per cent. Serbian, and the percentage is more than that when the officers are included. Their doctrines had taught them that military power was all that would count in the end, if they used it with sufficient force and venom. Some member, of the army had practised that in Kosovo. The army thought that, if it did that, it would carry the day.

That did not happen, because many people, some armed and some unarmed, were prepared to die in Croatia and elsewhere and they resisted. That is a much clearer account of what happened and the causes than the deeper historical causes about which the right hon. Member for Pavilion spoke, or any question of the German Government thinking that they could extract advantage from the place. Perhaps the German Government like to see their own interests advanced, but the idea that that was predominant was wrong. What I have described happened, and at that stage the EC countries and the United Nations had to decide what measures to take.

I shall later speak about the conclusion of the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) with which I strongly agree. The question of recognition for Croatia had to be

[Mr. Michael Foot]

settled. It would have been impossible to continue for much longer refusing the Croatian demand. It might have been better if recognition had been given earlier, and in that sense the German Government's recommendation to the European countries had some sense. Those who deny that or question it should look at the votes cast by people in other parts of the country.

I hope that the Macedonians will not exploit their position and cause trouble with the Greeks. They would be foolish to do that, but they had a right to vote for what they did, and if it had not been for the conduct of the federal army and those in Belgrade who backed it, I do not think that Macedonia would necessarily have voted in that way. The Bosnian vote might not have gone the same way three, four or six months ago. However, having had an illustration of the way in which the Serbian-controlled, or uncontrolled forces, operated throughout the area, the Bosnians were bound to vote in that way, and who are we to deny them the right to do so? We cannot say, "You should have waited a bit longer and seen more of your people slaughtered under the methods employed by the federal army."

I hope that every hon. Member knows what happened in Dubrovnik, for example. What the federal army tried to do was one of the worst acts of that nature that has occurred since the bombing of Guernica, not only because of the beauty of the place but because of the people. The federal army tried to intimidate the whole population of Dubrovnik, and thought that if it kept up the bombardment and the threats, the population would have to clear out and the army could go in. If that had happened, most of Dubrovnik and many of the surrounding areas would have been occupied by Serbians and Serbian forces. But the people resisted and said, "We would rather die in our homes than see that happen."

The same kind of resistance was offered in Macedonia and is now developing in Bosnia. It will not be overriden. It has been decided that Yugoslavia cannot be held together and that these separate countries or states, whatever they may be called, must have the right to make the choice by the ballot box. Of course that is extremely difficult where there are such conglomerations of people —nobody can deny that.

I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who suggested in an intervention that it was wrong for British troops as part of the United Nations force to be sent into such a dangerous situation. Even before the decision was taken, I was in favour of it, and without it the killing would have gone on. If that had happened, the possibility of its uncontrolled spread not only in the Balkans but beyond would have been incalculable.

This action is one of the primary functions of the United Nations. I was present as a reporter in 1945 at the establishment of the United Nations in San Francisco. Conflicts similar to these led people to say that we must have an international authority with the power and the capacity to send in troops speedily and the authority to settle disputes. To some of us, that was almost the first lesson to be learned from the failures between 1918 and 1945. We wanted a real United Nations with the power to act strongly and the backing of a Security Council to carry through what it wanted to do. I know that there are problems, but if the United Nations had refrained from acting, it would have been a disaster for Yugoslavia and for the remnants of that country, and an even greater disaster for the world at large.

I hope that the Government will remedy some of their past actions. It was not a glorious hour in the history of the British Foreign Office, because, for most of the time when the federal army was engaging in the rampaging acts that I have described and about which the whole world now knows, when Dubrovnik was starving and Cavat was being conquered and the whole coastline was being ravaged, the British Government should have done much more to get food to Dubrovnik. They gave support to the Red Cross, which is natural, but they could have done much more.

Some other countries, such as Italy and France, did more than Britain. It may be said that those countries acted in their own interests. Perhaps they did, but it was an intelligent thing to do. We held back at critical moments. I hope there will be no more such holding back because for the solution to this problem and for the future of the world, we must hope that this United Nations force will have the necessary backing for as long as is necessary to try to establish real peace in the area.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): May I ask for a little voluntary restraint in the length of speeches? I am anxious to call all those who wish to speak, and there is much interest in the debate.

5.39 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): It is always a great pleasure to be able to follow my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery). We came into politics together, and we have been on many platforms advocating the same causes. It is always stimulating to listen to the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), and I did so with great interest. The entire House too is deeply in debt to my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) and the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs for a masterly survey of one of the most intractable problems of our time. He introduced us in his speech to consideration of a most worrying problem. His Committee has performed a real service.

The speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford rightly focused on the situation in Croatia. The entire region, however, is on the edge of a catastrophe. In Hungary, to the north, there has been rapid economic progress since the throwing off of the shackles of communism, but there is deep anxiety about the safety of the Hungarian community in Vojvodina. Similarly, there is great anxiety about the considerable Hungarian population next door in Transylvania. I was in Budapest last summer. One of the most touching experiences that I had was when His Holiness the Pope visited the city. Many Transylvanian Catholics tried to cross into Hungary. When some of these people were told that I was British, they came to me weeping and pleading in broken English, "Help us." They did so because their own situation is dire.

There is concern in Greece too about the threat of Macedonian expansion. Greece is a civilised member of the European Community. There is also deep anxiety about the ill treatment of the Greek minority in northern

Epirus in southern Albania. As I have said, we are dealing with an entire region and not only with the situation in Croatia, bad enough though it is.

There is every reason for anxiety when we come to consider the Serbian minority in Croatia. My right hon. Friend the Member for Pavilion and I are old enough to remember the war years. Incidentally, during the two world wars, the Serbs were our gallant allies from the beginning. I have never forgotten the resistance of Yugoslavia and Greece during the second world war. I remember an occasion when, in uniform but on leave, I was at a meeting in London on the very day that Yugoslavia declared war on Nazi Germany. It was a meeting of the Conservative central council addressed by Prime Minister Churchill. I remember him beginning dramatically, "Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, this morning Yugoslavia found her soul."

There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that the resistance of the Yugoslavs and then of the Greeks, followed by the last battles on Crete, delayed the German invasion of Russia by six weeks. As we know, the Nazis never captured Moscow, and that was one of the most decisive chapters in the war; it made a major contribution to the ultimate defeat of the Nazis. We therefore cannot separate ourselves from the brave but gravely troubled nations of which we are talking.

We cannot be unsympathetic to the Serbs. We must remember that Croats in Nazi uniform massacred vast numbers of Serbs. The memory of that is still vivid in Serbian minds. We are dealing with an explosive situation.

Last year I took the chair here at a remarkable meeting organised by a movement called Democratic Encounters. Many Yugoslav residents here were present and many Members of both Houses. I remember calling the first speaker and introducing him as an economist who worked in Belgrade. He was a Macedonian. I called the second speaker, who was a lady teacher of modern languages in Ljubljana university. She was a Slovene. The third speaker was a Croat and the fourth was a Serb. They all spoke from the vantage of their own community and in their part of Yugoslavia, but every one of them said the same thing. They were unanimous that there was no future for their country unless there was recognition of the democratic rights of minorities wherever they lived.

It does not matter whether Yugoslavia is a single nation or whether it is, as in reality, a group of different nations but all linked by history and by blood. The only way forward is for all to recognise that such differences exist. There can be a future for them only if the supremacy of human rights is recognised.

For that reason, I strongly welcome the arrival of the United Nations peace-keeping force. There is no point in saying now that members of that force may have to be there for ever; I am not a pessimist when it comes to human affairs. Who would have thought, two or three years ago, that communism would collapse in the Soviet Union, of all places, and in eastern Europe? Who would have thought that Mr. Gorbachev would go to Honecker at the time of the riots in East German cities and warn, "You will not use force against the rioters, and if you do you cannot count on the support of Soviet troops"?

That message spread like wildfire through eastern Europe. The Poles had been the leaders, and followed the events that took place in Berlin, in Czechoslovakia and then in Hungary. But no shots were fired. No blood was spilt. Why? A British journalist who was present at the crucial events, whether in Prague, Budapest or Berlin, wrote, "No Bastilles were stormed, no guillotines were erected and lamp posts were used except for lighting the streets." Why did that happen? It was the result of Mr. Gorbachev's warning to Honecker.

Those who despaired and thought that they would never see the end of communism and its associated brutality in eastern Europe must not despair when examining the situation in Yugoslavia. We must keep our heads. It is pretty clear that a United Nations presence will have to be maintained in Yugoslavia for some time to come. In the meantime, there are forces of diplomacy and good will in Europe. The French used to have great influence in the Balkans. Russia still has a great interest in the region. Is it beyond the wit of western leaders now to find ways and means of persuading the troubled peoples of the Balkans to live and work peacefully together? I think not.

5.49 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I agree very much with the remarks of the Father of the House about the problems of the Hungarians in Vojvodina and Romania. I take the opportunity to salute the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), who is no longer in his place. I have often had the opportunity to take up his remarks in foreign affairs debates. We shall miss his pugnacious, assertive and informed contributions.

We must remember that Yugoslavia was an artificial creation of the great powers after the first world war. It was sustained after the second world war by the dictatorship, effective but cunning as it was, of Marshal Tito. When the collapse of communism came, it was widely predicted that there would be trouble in Yugoslavia. It was against that background that on 22 May 1991 I asked whether

> "the British Government would be willing to argue in the European Community in favour of the EC's taking on a role of mediation and perhaps even providing a peace-keeping force."

The Minister—who is present now—replied:

> "I do not think that the European Community should play such a role."—[*Official Report*, 22 May 1991; Vol. 191, c. 919.]

I repeated my arguments at greater length in an Adjournment debate on 22 July.

Things have changed, but I feel that it should be put on record—I know that this is not a majority view in the House—that, in my view, the Government's approach to what had happened in Yugoslavia, right up to the early part of this year, was misguided: indeed, it could be described as wrong. In the end, as has already been said, we were dragged protesting into recognising Slovenia and Croatia by the Germans—not, I think, for want of good advice, but because of bad judgment.

Let me be fair to the Government: that was the general British view. It was held by the press, by the academic foreign affairs establishment—the Chatham house people —and by many members of the Labour party; although, clearly, it was not held by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), who has made such an effective speech this evening.

After the destruction of Vukovar—which we should never forget—I set out my arguments in a letter to *The Times* on 3 December. I shall not read out that letter, but I shall summarise it. I said that what took place was not a civil war, as has been suggested; it was a war between Serbia and Croatia. Part of the "civil war" argument,

[Sir Russell Johnston]

advanced at the time by both the European Community and the United States, was the proposition that we all had an interest in keeping Yugoslavia together. I do not agree with that either.

It was also said that we must be even-handed. As a number of hon. Members have pointed out, the Serbs had guns, tanks, aircraft—the Croatians had no aircraft—and armed ships. It was said that recognition would inflame the Serbians and make matters worse.

By chance, on the very day on which my letter was published in *The Times*, an article by the Foreign Secretary was published in the same paper. It was entitled "Averting a Balkan tragedy". The Foreign Secretary wrote:

> "The recognition of Croatia, Slovenia and perhaps other republics may not be far off. But the advantages need careful calculation . . . If we recognise the republics too soon, we risk detonating the fragile peace in Macedonia and Bosnia".

A number of hon. Members have mentioned that, too. It was widely argued that recognition would lead to an all-out assault on Croatia by the Serbians, involving all the horrors that correspondents such as John Sweeney of *The Observer* pictured so vividly.

When the Germans pushed us into it—hon. Members who made that suggestion were right—they were accused of flexing their muscles post-Maastricht and of pushing people around. Often, that accusation was made by the very same people who were against the integration of the Germans in the Community decision-making process in regard to foreign affairs and other political matters. In the end, what had been done did not have that effect: hon. Members should remember that. In fact, it provided the basis for a cease fire and a settlement.

It was necessary to demonstrate to the Serbs that they could not win a war of conquest. At the time, I was constantly sending letters to the Foreign Secretary, suggesting an air blockade, a naval blockade or some similar action to prevent the attacks, made from a distance, that Split and Dubrovnik—where, as has been said, there were no Serbs—had to suffer. The hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) mentioned Kosovo; it was not mentioned by the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell).

Croatia's population is 12 per cent. Serbian, and in Kosovo the proportion is 13·8 per cent. There is not much difference between those two figures, but in Kosovo, the Albanians, who represent an absolute majority, have no rights at all. It was, I suppose, not unreasonable to fear the possibilities. I am not attacking the Serbs per se; that would not be fair. I am not saying that all the Serbs supported Milosevic, or the old nomenklatura that still dominated the army. I do say, however, that we should have been much more active.

I disagreed with the right hon. Member for Guildford, who used an odd expression: he spoke of "self-determination run riot". He also repeated the canard—as I judge it to be—that the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia made matters worse. It did not; in any event, I consider self-determination to be an entitlement, guaranteed by the United Nations. In that context, recognition was right and necessary.

Mr. Norris: I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument with interest. In considering the desirability or otherwise of recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, does he recognise that one of the concerns expressed by Kosovans whom I saw, in Pristina and elsewhere, in December relates to the pressure imposed on Milosevic at least to try to rescue something of the dream of a greater Serbia that he has sold to the Serbian people, and thus to increase still further the pressure on the neck of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and Hungarians in Vojvodina? That might prove very dangerous for those poor, oppressed peoples, and they see it as the disadvantage of the premature recognition of Croatia and Slovenia.

Sir Russell Johnston: I agree with the first part of what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I do not think that the second part follows. I entirely agree with him about the situation in Kosovo. The desperate situation in which Albania now finds itself is the main reason why there has not been a major problem: The Albanians cannot do anything about it.

Then there is the matter of the Ustashe, and the suggestion that the Croatians were all fundamentally fascists. That is the other argument that is trundled out quite regularly. What the Ustashe did in the last war was awful—dreadful; there is no argument about that. But it is wrong to imply that the present Croatian Government had any intentions of that kind.

I am not defending President Tudjman, who is not of my political persuasion—my contact in Croatia was with liberal democrats—but his Administration were anxious to impress on me their wish for a fair and open system that would protect the human rights of all people. I met many of the members of that Administration in December, when I visited Zagreb—including the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Separovic—and that was the view that they expressed. I do not deny that there was fear among the Serbs, but that fear did not justify what happened in Vukovar and Dubrovnik.

This is my argument. Given the failure of Lord Carrington's efforts—I am sure that we all salute them—to achieve peace, the European Community, acting perhaps through the United Nations, should have been prepared to do something about the carnage that was being wrought by the Serbian army. On 4 December, in the Western European Union, I quoted from *The Independent*—which, in its turn, had quoted from a report by EC monitors. I do not think that it was ever published, apart from the press; I have never seen a copy.

The Independent stated:

> "EC monitors have no doubt the Serbs bear greater responsibility".

The European Community faced four choices, said the report:

> "to continue the monitors' mission, though it is increasingly ineffective; to withdraw . . . to generate a new UN or European initiative; or to deter the Yugoslav Army by force. Amplifying this last point the report says: 'The warship that fires on a defenceless city from a safe distance out to sea . . . must be put in a situation where it knows it can do so at the cost of being promptly sent to the bottom . . .'".

I said that it was

> "that kind of direct and blunt talking and the presentation of choices"

that we needed.

I warmly recommend to the House the first-class editorial in today's *Financial Times*, which sets out a positive way forward:

> "Independence for Bosnia will be meaningless unless the territorial integrity of the republic can be guaranteed. Therefore the EC, if it goes ahead with recognition, must serve notice that it will not countenance claims on Bosnian territory",

with all that that means.

I shall sum up my position. First, we should not belittle or mock self-determination. Secondly, we should face the fact that peacekeeping will be a necessary role in which the European Community will have to be increasingly involved. Thirdly, we must recognise Bosnia and Macedonia, and concentrate on ensuring human rights there.

We must stop talking about the British interest and the German interest. We must talk about the human rights interest, instead of those old-fashioned issues. The Muslim issue must not be over-dramatised, either. On Tuesday night in Vienna, I had dinner with the Albanian ambassador—I had never met an Albanian before. He was a most interesting, intelligent and constructive man, who had been taking part in the negotiations in Vienna for 18 months, and he stressed strongly the fact that the idea that Iranian-style fundamentalism was operating in Albania was complete and utter nonsense. The right hon. Member for Pavilion also said that.

My last point is that territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs are dead doctrines. Democracy is about letting people decide and defending their right to do so, provided that they do not impose their decision on others. It is a sad fact that hatred lasts a long time, so the United Nations may have to stay a long time. But what is the alternative? The alternative would be to do

6.1 pm

Mr. Michael Mates (East Hampshire): It is all too rare in this place that in a short debate such as this there are so many distinguished contributions from some of the giants of the House. I for one am privileged to have been able to hear them, and now to be able to take part in the debate. Without in any way wishing to be sycophantic, I can only say that the next Parliament will be greatly the poorer because the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and my right hon. Friends the Members for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) will not be here still to give us the huge amount of advice that we have had from them over the years.

Almost for the first time, I can tell the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent that I agreed with almost everything he said. He and I have often debated such matters without often being in total agreement, but I am in complete agreement with what he has said today.

I shall intervene only briefly in the debate on the narrow point of the British military contribution to the United Nations force. Over the past few weeks, especially following the Secretary-General's recommendation to the Security Council, it has been widely reported that we shall make a substantial contribution of service personnel to the proposed United Nations force to be deployed in Yugoslavia. However, nothing has been said to the House on the subject, or to the Select Committee on Defence, which has a special interest in such matters.

The Select Committee returned a couple of weeks ago from a two-day visit to the British forces in Germany—during which time, coincidentally, we met our sister committee, the defence committee of the Bundestag. We had an interesting debate on the matter, and mentioned the rather strange fact that, although the Germans were the people forcing the pace of European action, now that action is to be taken they will tell us that they are the only ones who are unable to play any part in the consequences of what they so strongly advocated. Germany's position on the deployment of troops outside her borders is an interesting paradox which we all hope will be resolved sooner or later.

When we returned, we asked the Ministry of Defence for some sort of briefing, or some information about the United Kingdom component of the proposed force. We suggested either a formal or an informal appearance of a Minister or senior official at our meeting at the end of February so that we could get some idea of what was being proposed. The Committee had hoped thereby to be able to assist the House in today's debate by making available some sort of brief document.

Alas, Ministers judged that

"there is very little at this stage on which the Committee could usefully be briefed, either in private or open session".

We were told that the Government were likely to want to report to the House once agreement had been reached with the United Nations, but since then there has been silence —although, according to a written answer given last Friday, 28 February, to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) the Ministry was still discussing what form the United Kingdom contribution might take.

We understand, again from the press, that there are anxieties about the costs of the force, and who is to meet them. That is right. I am sure that such matters should be settled first. Our recent experience in the Gulf has no doubt shown us, as well as our American and French allies, and the military planners, how much time, trouble and money can be saved by sensible use of existing civilian infrastructure on such occasions, and the advantages to be gained if one can obtain host nation support.

Yugoslavia is well endowed with much that would be useful to a force, so I have no quarrel with the idea of taking time to get things right. However, I do not find it so understandable that the House has been told so little about the assets that we have proposed to make available, and the conditions under which British troops will be expected to serve. To put the matter in context, a number of British troops are currently deployed under United Nations auspices, notably the 800-strong United Kingdom contingent with the United Nations forces in Cyprus, which the Select Committee last visited in January 1989, and which has been there for almost 30 years. There are also contingents with the multinational force and observers in Sinai, with the observer force in the western Sahara.

Shortly, I gather, there will be a contingent in Cambodia, as part of the United Nations effort there. We have recently contributed to mine clearance training in Pakistan and to the United Nations transition assistance group in Namibia. We provide logistic support—that phrase may understate how crucial the support is—for the United Nations forces in Lebanon and on the Golan heights, and for the United Nations forces in Cyprus as a whole. That is in addition, of course, to the considerable Royal Marine contribution to the relief and protection of the Kurds in the wake of the Gulf war.

Those peacekeeping tasks, which primarily, although not exclusively, fall on the Army, are an important contribution which the services make on our behalf, and one which all commentators agree will increase both in total and as a proportion of other tasks in the decades ahead.

[Mr. Michael Mates]

In its thorough and excellent report, the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs warned of the danger that the United Nations peacekeeping force would be unable to retire from the area once it was established, and that Serbian areas in Croatia could become

"uncontrolled with a virtually permanent large force."

It is agreed that the force will remain in Yugoslavia until a negotiated settlement is achieved. Despite the heroic efforts of my right hon. and noble Friend, Lord Carrington, that could still be a very long haul.

Those two aspects—the likelihood that the United Kingdom contribution on this occasion will be the first of several, if not the first of many, and the possibility that it will become as established a part of the United Nations peacekeeping structures as our force in Cyprus has proved to be—lead us to be especially interested both in what we are to contribute and the detailed arrangements that will be made.

In the middle of February the press carried several broadly similar articles on the likely British contribution, stating that it would consist primarily of Royal Engineers, Royal Signallers and the Royal Corps of Transport, but that there would be no combat infantry or armour, and that the total number of personnel would be about 1,000. The press also speculated—I suppose that it was no more than that—that senior officers had hoped to field a complete self-supporting infantry battalion group, but that commitments, especially the two additional battalions in Northern Ireland, ruled that out.

Mention was also made of the provision of several C130 Hercules aircraft, and a Royal Fleet Auxiliary escorted by HMS Arrow. Two weeks ago the *Daily Express* reported:

"British sappers and RAF transport planes will fly to Yugoslavia in the next two weeks to join the UN peacekeeping force".

Have they? Was that all pure invention, or were Ministers, senior officers or officials willing to tell journalists yet unwilling to tell the House?

Assuming that that is the type of contribution envisaged, a number of questions arise which the Select Committee on Defence would usually ask Ministers in the next few weeks. However, we are in the dying days—or what might be the dying days—of a Parliament, so the Committee's functions can best be fulfilled if I now ask at least some of those questions in the hope that answers might be forthcoming, either later this evening or in writing at an early date.

What are the command arrangements within the force below the level of force commander? What will be the rank and function of the senior United Kingdom commander, and to whom in the United Kingdom chain of command will he be responsible? On security, the Secretary-General's report suggests that the force will hire four fixed-wing aircraft and 26 helicopters. They will presumably be unarmed, so what protection will the force —especially the United Kingdom elements—have against air attack?

United Nations documents say that the normal rules for the bearing and use of arms will apply. Will Ministers say whether all our personnel will be armed for self-protection? What rotation arrangements are envisaged for personnel—the usual six months? What allowances will be paid? Will any reservists be called out? What medical services will they need to have made available?

I have no doubt that the thorough planning which has occurred during the past few months will ensure that our contribution to the force is well planned and well thought out and will, as always, demonstrate to the world at large the outstanding qualities of our professional armed forces. I regret that information is so scarce and that our chances to do what we can to generate a better understanding of what is involved is so limited.

In the hope that the Minister will be able to answer some of my questions, it only remains for me, on behalf of the Select Committee on Defence, to wish any of our service men who are sent to do what will be a very difficult task the very best of good fortune.

6.11 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I associate myself fully with the concluding remarks of the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates) about the contribution that British troops may make to the United Nations force in Croatia and Yugoslavia.

The Father of the House reminded us of the amazing convulsive changes that have occurred in the past few years. As we end this Parliament and face a general election, I wonder what we would have thought about a parliamentary candidate in 1987 or about an hon. Member at the beginning of 1987 if he had said that in the lifetime of this Parliament we would see the reunification of Germany, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a war in Iraq, a white president in South Africa abolishing apartheid and the prospect of 1,000 British trooops ending up on the Bosnian-Croatian borders to attempt to create peace and harmony in those far-off lands. I think that he might have been the victim of the men in white coats who would have carried him away. He would not have been heard with the seriousness that he deserved.

We have witnessed those very events. As a member of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, it has been my privilege to witness and to try to report on them during the past four dramatic years. On behalf of my hon. Friends, may I say what a pleasure and privilege it has been to serve on that Committee under the chairmanship of the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell).

This report was one of the hardest to prepare and to write, because we were facing issues that we did not believe that we would have to face in Europe again. That belief is shared outside among the young generation. The collapse of the old post-war order established by Yalta which created the division of power between east and west and suppressed the tremendous variety of feelings and national identities within Europe is bringing about a range of new problems with which we have not had to deal for the best part of 30 or 40 years. Members of the Committee, people in Europe and those on the international scene must consider whether there are any ways in which new political arrangements and a new order can be established—even in the wider Europe—to accommodate the problems, difficulties and potential conflicts that arise.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) rightly said that we must begin by realising that the sense of self-determination, national consciousness and national identity is not a temporary phenomenon. It is basic and fundamental to the human condition and to society.

That point was vividly and brilliantly described in a recent essay by Isaiah Berlin called "The Bent Twig". It describes the thinking of the 18th-century German philosophers who, in some ways, were the creators of the best aspects of national consciousness and identity. He writes that one such philosopher argued

> "that every human condition had its own unique shape and pattern. Its members were born in a stream of tradition which shaped their emotional and physical development . . . There was a central historically developing pattern that characterised the life and activity of every identifiable community"

and that expressed itself in the nation state.

If we do not recognise the fact that what is now emerging had been suppressed by the universalism of communism which tried to ignore separate identities and feelings, we shall not be able to decide how best to arrange our affairs and possibly create a new order in Europe and beyond.

Talking to my children and the younger generation, I find that they are astonished that, as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, arguments are being expressed in what they thought were old-fashioned concepts. They thought that such concepts were for Africa—African nationalism is throwing off imperial domination—but they did not think that it would be part of the new European experience. Only the older generation understood what Bosnia-Herzegovina was about and what the problems were.

The Committee had to ask whether, despite the tremendous fragmentation and the fact that there were to be different expressions of freedom through national identity and the principles of self-determination, there was a better way to handle matters than we had witnessed in Yugoslavia. Unlike the Foreign Office, I do not believe that Yugoslavia is sui generis. Although Yugoslavia may be an extreme, the issues that it raises must be considered in other contexts.

When we put that question to witnesses, including the Foreign Secretary, we were understandably given a cautious and, indeed, minimalist view. The Committee's report quotes the Foreign Secretary as saying:

> "I do not think we should have standing machinery for resolving conflict as we have just been describing because I think they are all different. I think in practice the countries concerned have to work out the way in which they are going to live together."

Of course, the ideal would be internal self-determination by peaceful resolution of conflicts within the communities, but it has not happened and it may not happen. What contribution can the international community and political institutions make to assist and perhaps help to avoid conflicts of the type that we have witnessed in Yugoslavia?

I agree with hon. Members—including my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot)—who said that we have at last rediscovered the real function of the United Nations. It is now beginning to play the role that those who built and promoted it after the war meant it to play. It is a major international role, and I wholeheartedly support the commitment that we are making as part and parcel of the United Nations force. However difficult the task and whatever mire the force may go into, it could at least create some stability, but we must go further and offer other alternatives.

While drawing up our report, we discovered that although communities are now breaking up, although there is fragmentation and although people want to govern themselves and decide what type of institutions and political society they wish to create—whether Croatian, Slovenian or Serbian—they also want, paradoxically, to belong to something bigger. They want to belong to a bigger community of one kind or another. With that fragmentation and self-determination come requests to belong to NATO and the European Community. In a curious and interesting way, the new smaller self-governing communities that are emerging from the collapse of the Soviet domination of many of those territories will seek to belong to workable and successful organisations and communities that are bigger than themselves.

We have something to offer in two areas. First, we can offer security through association and involvement in a broader and redefined NATO. The Select Committee found that the new communities want to belong to a community that is broader than NATO—to a North Atlantic Co-operation Council. Secondly, there is no doubt that the new communities of Croatia, Slovenia and others that might follow, will want to belong to a broader and wider European Community for economic and political reasons.

The combination of the United Nations role in the peace-making context and the institutions such as the conference on security and co-operation in Europe, NATO and the European Community offers an opportunity to embrace a new order and create meaningful political relationships that may resolve some of those conflicts instead of their being resolved through the use of guns or armed conflict. That may be a cock-eyed and optimistic view, but at least the desire of those smaller communities to belong to larger communities offers an opportunity to encourage development.

We should make it a condition that, to belong to the European Community in its broader sense, to the North Atlantic Co-operation Council or to CSCE, those communities should accept a series of values, a form of behaviour and a way of resolving conflicts different from the way in which conflicts have been resolved in Yugoslavia. We should use the desire to belong to broader communities to change behaviour. Surely that is the great political value of the European Community.

Even in my political lifetime, Spain, Portugal and Greece have been governed by dictators. However, they will no longer accept dictatorship, because they realise that they cannot have a dictatorship and also belong to the broader European Community. If we can create the same meaningful relationship between the new smaller states and communities that will emerge as a result of the break-up of the Soviet Union in respect of the broader community of Europe and NATO, and at the same time, impose the condition that those communities should resolve their conflicts differently from what has happened in Yugoslavia, there is real hope for a new European order.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): I have listened with interest and sympathy to the hon. Gentleman, and I hope that he is right. However, will he consider one awkwardness that might arise? Is there not a danger that disputes between people on a small local level might be escalated to the larger local level to which they might

[Mr. John Gorst]

subsequently belong if they follow the line of the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands)?

Mr. Rowlands: I understand that, but there is a greater danger if we return to the instability of the old order when other nation states begin to play politics in and around those conflicts. It is better to consider the issue in the greater community terms that I have described. That is why I strongly support our contribution to the United Nations and its role.

I hope and believe that, in the context of Europe, we will be able to create a new European order. Yugoslavia came perhaps too soon with regard to such developments and institutions, but let us hope that we will be ready to handle such issues better in future.

6.24 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): It might be for the convenience of the House if we were to conclude the debate at 7 pm. A number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak and, for that reason, I do not intend to speak for longer than 15 minutes. Therefore, I will not answer all the points that have been raised and I hope that the House will forgive me for that.

May I begin by echoing what my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates) said about three very distinguished speeches by three right hon. Members who will be retiring at the end of this Parliament. Between them, they muster more than 120 years of service. We will all miss the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), the Father of the House, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery). They have illuminated this debate and we have discovered some strange things: I did not use to believe that my right hon. Friend the Member for Pavilion was a founder member of the Peasant party. I hope very much that those three right hon. Members will continue to participate in the political debate in this country—and perhaps from another place.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) on focusing on this subject and giving the House an opportunity to debate it. The issue is very grave. We are all extremely relieved that there is now a cease fire in place in what was Yugoslavia. However, we must recognise that it is very fragile and that it has been breached. Consequently, we must recognise that it could break down and that fighting could recommence in a pretty disastrous manner.

Very broadly, the United Kingdom Government, the European Community and the United Nations have a twin-track policy, the first element of which is to encourage the parties to participate in the negotiations under the chairmanship of my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Carrington. The House believes that that conference is an important contribution to the solution of the problems in what was Yugoslavia. The second track is that we strongly support the deployment of a peace keeping force. That is essential, and I very much welcome the Security Council's decision to deploy such a force.

I will try to respond to several questions which have properly been raised during the debate. First, I want to refer to a very important question raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford and echoed for my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire. They wanted to know about the level of the United Kingdom contribution to the peacekeeping force. The answer is that we have not yet reached a conclusion.

The United Nations has made it plain that it has no present need for infantry. We are considering how we can help to provide support troops in the form of a contribution by specialist troops in an area in which we have particular expertise. Exactly how we might respond will depend on further discussions with the United Nations secretariat and on the advance party which will arrive next week. There will be 20 British representatives in the advance party.

Among the issues that will have to be considered are the security arrangements for any British contingent. We will reach a conclusion after the advance party has reported. It follows that I cannot respond to the detailed questions from my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire because the decision has not yet been taken.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford asked the very important question whether the involvement of the European Community assisted. I believe that it did, in a number of important ways. First, and perhaps most obviously, the monitors were deployed and they had an important role to play. They were very courageous and, as the House will know, a number of them died. Secondly —again, my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford picked up this point—the trade sanctions that we imposed concentrated the minds of the participants in the war.

Thirdly, and most important of all, we made it plain on many occasions that the European Community in particular and the international community in general would not accept the forcible alteration of frontiers. That fact, which was impressed upon the minds of Mr. Milosevic and Mr. Tudjman, has had a very important impact on the thinking of the leaders of those two republics.

I understand the argument of those who have suggested that our recognition of Croatia was premature. The House will know—I make no secret about it; nor did my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary—that we were very cautious about the process of recognition of Croatia, because we believed that it would remove one of the sanctions on President Tudjman. For that reason, we pressed caution upon our colleagues within the Community between August of last year and January of this year. However, by January of this year, it became plain that many states within the Community were determined to recognise Croatia. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent suggested that the position by then had become inevitable. The right hon. Gentleman was right; it was inevitable. It was right to do it at that time, and we would have gained nothing by withholding our own recognition. On that matter I am extremely glad that the right hon. Gentleman supports the position of Her Majesty's Government.

The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) suggested that we did not make sufficient use of financial leverage that the European Community had over Croatia, Serbia and the other republics. I do not think that that is correct. We have and have had financial leverage which we have used. Perhaps I might remind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we suspended the trade advantages that what was Yugoslavia had in its dealings with the European

Community. We reinstated them in so far as they related to republics which co-operated with the work of the United Nations and the European Community, and we have, of course, future relations. The House will see that we shall move more swiftly towards association agreements with regard to Slovenia than, for example, with regard to Croatia, unless it is clear that Croatia is going to respond quickly to the chapter 2 requirements in my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Carrington's draft treaty.

I now respond to a question that was advanced by the hon. Member for Swansea, East in respect of the monitors. I have already said that I believe that they have made an important and brave contribution. It is not our intention to withdraw them. It is our intention that they should stay for some time ahead—we cannot say quite how long—and that they should operate in those areas where the United Nations peacekeeping force is not operating.

A number of right hon. and hon. Members have referred to the Kosovo. Again, that matter was raised by the hon. Member for Swansea, East and by my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris). It is an extremely serious issue. As the House knows, the Albanians form a substantial majority in the Kosovo—more than 90 per cent. I agree with what right hon. and hon. Members have said to the effect that the political and human rights of Albanians in the Kosovo are of great importance and must be addressed within the context of the peace conference.

I can assure the House that that is the formal view of Her Majesty's Government, and I know it to be the view of my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Carrington. I know, too, that it is the collective view of Ministers within the Community.

Mr. Norris: Will my hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Hogg: I would rather not give way, as I shall be very strict with myself, and I shall sit down, almost regardless, at the end of 15 minutes.

Bosnia was referred to by hon. Members, most notably by my right hon. Friend the Member for Pavilion. He asked rhetorically whether we recognised Bosnia. That is an extraordinarily difficult question, and the argument is properly balanced. My right hon. Friend summarised the arguments with clarity and fairness. On the one hand, if we recognise Bosnia, there will be the substantial risk that the Serbs will fight. On the other hand, if we do not recognise Bosnia, we will, in a sense, neglect the fact that we encouraged them to hold a referendum to determine their view, and what would be the view of the Croats and the Muslims who clearly want independence and have so declared that wish by a substantial majority? It will be extraordinarily difficult to withhold recognition for any extended period. We must focus on questions that are addressed to keeping the peace in that part of what was Yugoslavia.

As I have been talking about Bosnia, it might be helpful if I say something about Macedonia, which has also been mentioned by right hon. and hon. Members. Again, we need to proceed cautiously, but we must bear in mind the views of the Badinter report. In effect, Mr. Badinter reported that there was no good reason why Macedonia should not be recognised. The Greeks are very concerned about that recognition. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point urged those considerations with great clarity and with his normal elegance, and he has a considerable point.

However, it will be very difficult to withhold recognition of Macedonia for an extended period. It is important to try to reconcile the conflicting interests of Greece on the one hand and Macedonia on the other hand. That can be done, and we need to try to do it.

Another important issue that has been raised is Serbian rights in Croatia. That point was addressed by my right hon. Friends the Members for Castle Point and for Pavilion. It is absolutely central to the matter. The rights of the Serbs in Croatia are of critical importance. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point was right when he reminded the House of the history of the second world war. That matter plays an important part in the draft treaty prepared by my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Carrington. The House will know that chapter 2 of that draft treaty provides for autonomous status for the Serbian regions within Croatia.

It is absolutely essential that we all bend our collective efforts and wills to trying to protect the rights of minorities, and for those purposes, Serbian minorities in Croatia. That is a duty for us all. We must continue to impress upon President Tudjman the fact that, unless he agrees to do that and to comply with the requirements contained in chapter 2 of that draft treaty, he will find that relations with the European Community—and, indeed, with the rest of the world—are very much less cordial than he would otherwise wish them to be.

I have given myself a 15-minute time limit; I have nearly reached the end of it. I apologise to those right hon. and hon. Members to whom I have not been able to give a considered response. That is due not to discourtesy but to lack of time. I conclude by thanking my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford for giving us an opportunity to consider such an important issue.

6.37 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): I also congratulate the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) on the excellence of the report that was produced by his Committee. Although I agree with the sentiments that were expressed by the Minister, I must say that I am at odds with him in respect of his belief that we were correct in recognising Croatia. I believe that it was a very great error. The main motive that led the Government to recognise Croatia was the need to have the support of the Germans for what we required under the Maastricht treaty. That was an undesirable feature of a policy which, until that point, had been rightly even-handed.

When I came back from Yugoslavia last August, I reported to my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). I allowed Ministers to see what was in the report. We were more or less in agreement. Indeed, I received a letter from the Minister saying that he agreed with most of what I said. I said:

> "recognition of the independence of Slovenia and Croatia should be withheld. One might get away with recognising Slovenia, but the Serbs in Croatia would regard this as a sell-out as far as they are concerned and full-scale civil war would be almost inevitable."

I regret that we gave way to the Germans. I have a lot of time for Mr. Genscher. He has been forthright and wise

[Mr. Robert N. Wareing]

in his foreign policy towards the Soviet Union in the period of its break-up. But I remind the Minister that I tabled a question on 20 February

> "To ask the Secretary of State upon what principles he will base his policy towards Bosnia-Herzegovina after its proposed referendum on 28th February."

In part of his reply, referring to the guidelines adopted by EC Ministers in December, the Under-Secretary said that the state would have to

> "guarantee the rights of minorities; respect the inviolability of frontiers except by peaceful agreement".—[*Official Report*, 20 February 1992; Vol. 204, c. *227*.]

None of us would disagree with that, but none of those principles appertained to Croatia.

Indeed, the Badinter report made it clear that the arbitration commission was unhappy about the situation in Croatia. It said:

> "Regarding Croatia, the Commission has concluded that:
> —the constitutional law of 4 December 1991 does not cover in their entirety all of the points in the draft Convention of 4 November 1991, in particular those included in Chapter II, article 2C under the heading 'special status';
> —it is consequently incumbent on the authorities of the Republic of Croatia to add to the constitutional law . . .With this reservation, Croatia satisfies the required conditions."

I maintain that on 15 January we were forced into recognition by pressure from Germany. I believe that we recognised Croatia because of Maastricht and not through the independent will of our Foreign Ministers.

Since then, in a well-respected Croatian newspaper, Zagrebacki Vjestnik, Miroslav Krec wrote on 12 February 1992:

> "Growing dissatisfaction is becoming evident on the part of people of Moslem, Serbian, Montenegrin and other nationality (including Croatian), who are becoming increasingly vocal 'foreign citizens' as they pursue rights lost overnight in the very Republic in which many of them were born.
>
> How does one explain to an ever increasing number of dissatisfied people who these days queue for hours for the right of citizenship, that overnight they have become permanently resident foreigners in the Republic of Croatia, even though they were born in Croatia and spent their whole lives in Croatia?
>
> This is how many people in Croatia are being treated according to the Law on Croatian Citizenship and who, as a result of its provisions, are unable to preserve their basic human rights: they are unable to obtain a Croatian passport, their property rights are unresolved and they have no right to vote—even after 40 or 50 years of life and work in Croatia".

That is the situation as seen by a Croatian writer in a respected newspaper in Croatia today.

There are many well-justified fears that there are yet to emerge in Croatia many more extremist opinions even than that of Franjo Tudjman. In some instances, schools have been renamed. One school has been renamed in honour of Mile Budak, Foreign Minister in the Ustashe Government during the second world war—a Government, incidentally, who were on the opposite side to us in that confict.

The Minister must see that the final remarks of his speech this evening are given full force. The Croatian Government must be told that human rights infringements —for infringements they are—must be put right and that we are not content simply to regard Milosevic as the worse of two criminals, so to speak. I believe that both Milosevic and Tudjman have a considerable amount to answer for.

Those of us who have known Yugoslavia over an extended period—in my case since the early 1960s—know full well that, despite all the difficulties of living under the communist Government, the Yugoslav regime was one of the more liberal in eastern Europe. There was some freedom of speech. I spoke to Milovan Djilas when I was in Yugoslavia in August. He was saddened by what was happening even though he was a leading dissident in the Tito years.

The great danger in eastern Europe now is a rise of nationalist leaders. It may be a more considerable danger than what went before. Such nationalist leaders know that, by playing the old-fashioned nationalist card and harking back to before not the second but the first world war, they can harness opinion in their name.

Kosovo has been mentioned. I agree with what the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) had to say on the subject. Milosevic made his name by exploiting Serbian nationalism against the majority of the people in Kosovo province. There is a danger in giving Macedonia recognition. It is a true that the present Government in Macedonia seem a perfectly responsible, respectable Government with no territorial ambitions, but once party politics enters the scene in a free and independent Macedonia, who knows whether a Tudjman or Milosevic might not be lurking in the wings? Such a person might see a possibility of gaining power in his country by exploitation and by extending his eyes across the frontier into Greece, Albania or Bulgaria.

It was in our interests to stand by Yugoslavia. Way back, when I visited the Minister in the Foreign Office the year before last, I said that we should promote Yugoslavia's interests as a future member of the Council of Europe and suggested that we should have a special association treaty, and so on. Such suggestions tended to be ignored in those days. Perhaps we were more concerned about what was coming up in the Gulf.

I pay my respects to Lord Carrington for what he has done and is doing in the peace conference. I hope that the peace conference and the European Community can bring the peoples of Yugoslavia together again in some loose form of confederation. To have nationalities springing up all over the place giving encouragement to groups in other parts of eastern Europe, and even in western Europe is highly dangerous to peace in the world. It is in our interests to seek to put the pieces together.

6.47 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Like many others, I am privileged to take part in the debate because almost certainly it will be the last occasion when my right hon. Friends the Members for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) and for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) will speak in a foreign affairs debate in the House. We are all conscious of that.

I am particularly pleased to follow the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing). I have long been aware of his deep interest in and knowledge of Yugoslavia. I agree with his concluding words. If I may say so to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), who speaks for the Liberal Democrats, the view expressed by the hon. Member for West Derby was what my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr.

Howell), the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, had in mind when he spoke of the dangers of states splitting up into small units.

To those of us who are interested in the development of the European Community a multiplicity of independent small states will pose a particular problem. If they are all eager to enter the European Community, it will pose a major challenge.

I quarrel on one point with the hon. Member for West Derby. He said that our Government's recognition of Croatia and Slovenia was somehow a deal with the Germans to ease the way at Maastricht. I am sure that that is not the case. We and the rest of the European Community were bounced by the Germans into recognising Croatia. It was premature recognition. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State rightly said that we had adopted a cautious approach to recognition. But in the last period of our caution we were stampeded and we had no alternative if we wanted to maintain a unified European Community line. The Secretary of State used almost those words to the Select Committee.

I share the fears of many hon. Members who have spoken that, although it is right for a United Nations force to go into Yugoslavia, it will be a long time before it withdraws. Consider the Cyprus example. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford, the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, said, it is nearly 30 years since the United Nations forces went into Cyprus.

The use of United Nations forces often takes the pressure off the need for a settlement between the two warring factions in the area. I am afraid that that will be the case in Yugoslavia. The force will probably take the political heat out of the situation, we and the world community will quickly become bored with the subject and another United Nations force—with Britain rightly participating in it—will be left there for many years, possibly for decades. I do not think that that is a good solution.

Finally, as I am aware that other hon. Members wish to speak, let me say that although the debate has concentrated on Yugoslavia, the report by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs went wider, and it is a pity that we have not had time to debate some of the other huge issues. Perhaps it is worth pointing out that, when we were planning and deciding to carry out the report last summer, intense fighting had not broken out in Yugoslavia, the coup had not taken place in the Soviet Union and nor had its break-up.

As the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) said, the great rush of events that we have witnessed in this Parliament and in the past year have been exciting, but they have also been challenging and dangerous. I do not think that anyone has mentioned the fact that, even though there has not been a large migration from certain parts of eastern Europe, that remains a danger. It could and probably will happen in time, and it will provide us with an enormous challenge, especially in the European Community.

6.52 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I am aware that other hon. Members want to speak, so I shall keep my remarks brief by focusing on one issue which has been mentioned during the debate—the implications of the crisis and the series of events for the attempts of the European Community to develop a common foreign and security policy. One thread of argument has run through the debate, implying a criticism of the Community in those attempts, and saying that what has happened with regard to Yugoslavia represents a failure on the part of the Community. I wish to argue strongly against that imputation.

The most remarkable aspect of the approach of the various countries of the Community towards the events in Yugoslavia is the way in which they have bent over backwards to maintain a united and common approach to the problem. They have tried to march in step when tackling the problem. Why have the various European countries done that, despite the obvious tensions? We have all mentioned the German angle, Germany's influence and its attitude to the recognition of Croatia. Despite that, there has been an attempt to maintain unity. Why?

First, it has been recognised that all efforts to alleviate the problem would have been fruitless without that sort of common front. The only way in which European countries may have a positive influence on the situation in Yugoslavia is by maintaining their unity and by operating through the Community. By so doing, each country has had a much greater influence than it could have had individually.

The second main reason for an impetus for a common approach was simply to avoid the real danger that, if countries took different approaches, smaller quarrels and conflicts could have merged into greater conflicts between the countries of western Europe. Surely that has been the historical pattern in Europe, especially in the Balkans. If the great powers—as they used to be called—begin to pick and choose different sides in a conflict which is restricted or localised to the Balkans, a small conflict may be magnified into a more dangerous dispute between larger countries. We see the prospect of that happening in Yugoslavia, in the dispute over the recognition of Macedonia. The Greek Government, acting from a purely national perspective, take one view, which other countries in western Europe find difficult to accept and to acknowledge.

A common approach by the European Community on tackling such problems is the only way in which we can have a positive influence on the resolution of those difficulties. The lesson to come out of the Yugoslav crisis is not the failure of a common foreign and security policy in the Community but the urgent need for one.

6.56 pm

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): In the one minute which I shall allow myself, I must welcome the observation of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State when he made it clear that the British Government regard the settlement of the plight of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo as an essential part of the settlement for the former Yugoslavia. Having visited Kosovo in December, I know that their plight is desperate and is not to be underestimated. That is the forgotten region of Yugoslavia, and the irony is that that is probably because they have so far desisted from taking violent action against the Serbians, who have dominated them so ruthlessly for so many years. My hon. and learned Friend's remarks were most welcome.

[Mr. Steve Norris]

In my experience, this has been the best debate of the past two Parliaments. To date, every speech has been of superb quality and, like hon. Members on both sides of the House, I have found it stimulating and enjoyable.

6.57 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I shall also speak briefly. One of my constituents is trapped in Yugoslavia and her parents telephoned me today. I have raised the matter with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and I hope that every conceivable effort will be made to protect her and to get her and her children out in extremely difficult circumstances.

It seems that there is at least one ray of hope in this tragic situation. In fine speeches, my right hon. Friends the Members for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) and the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) looked back to similar situations in 1940, but the position now is different. We have the advantage of the European Community and the United Nations, in its new mode.

I do not believe in a federal Europe. Some of the problems in Yugoslavia are a result of that form of federalism, which does not work. Now, we are in a completely different situation from that in 1940. Although there may be a background of German influence, none the less there is a probability—I hope a certainty—that we can combine national fervour with real democracy, and thereby help to mitigate the consequences of human nature.

6.59 pm

Mr. David Howell *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the right hon. Gentleman have the leave of the House to speak again?

Mr. Howell: With the leave of the House, I wish to thank right hon. and hon. Members for the way in which they have received the report.

In the debate we have had the benefit of wise minds and long memories, and we should not be too surprised that they have disagreed with each other except in the one conclusion that has been generally agreed: we must support the UN as it goes into the terrifying situation to stop the killing. If we can wish the UN forces godspeed in that effort, our debate will have been worth while.

The debate was concluded, and the Question necessary to dispose of the proceedings was deferred, pursuant to paragraph (4) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates).

Northern Ireland

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

7 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Brooke): I am very glad that we are having this debate today. It is taking place at the request of the leaders of three of the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland and is of a somewhat different nature from our usual debates. Normally, they take place in connection with a particular piece of legislation or in response to events in the Province. On this occasion, we have a welcome opportunity for a wide-ranging and perhaps more reflective debate. I propose to keep my remarks relatively brief, but it may assist the House, if I give a general appraisal of the Government's general approach.

It is a paradox that, despite the vicious terrorist attacks which occur in Northern Ireland, numerous studies over the years have shown the Province to be among the most socially stable and law-abiding communities in the western democracies. There are strong local communities and a long tradition of good neighbourliness. Northern Ireland people are known for their work ethic and their strong Christian values. Northern Ireland has achievements in the industrial, agricultural, academic, medical and other spheres of which it can justifiably be proud.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): The Secretary of State has referred to the incidents of violence that have occurred. He will be aware of the massive car bomb that exploded in my constituency this morning. He will know that that caused extensive damage to many properties in the heart of the commercial centre of the town. They will have to be demolished. However, I am pleased to tell him that the Union flag, although somewhat tattered, still flies on its flagpole in the centre of the town.

In that spirit, the traders will rebuild their businesses. Will the Secretary of State assure my constituents that they will receive not just interim compensation, as I trust they will, but will be assisted to get back into business even from temporary premises as quickly as possible? Will he also instruct the appropriate authorities to cut the red tape so that my traders are able to get back into business?

Mr. Brooke: I intend to refer to that event later, but I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman's specific questions which relate to compensation and help to get back into business. The Government have already reacted to the bombing in Lurgan. Fourteen loss adjusters and a team from the Northern Ireland Office were on site this morning to ensure that people have the advice to make claims, which will be processed as quickly as possible. In the Province, there is a tradition of rapid response to such situations. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to say that.

I was referring to the achievements of the Province. Northern Ireland has the lowest rate of infant mortality in the United Kingdom and one of the highest rates of success in renal transplants. We lead the world in certain neurosurgical techniques. In mathematics, Northern Ireland children at 11 and 15 out-perform their counterparts in England and Wales. They get better results more generally at A-level and contribute to the highest level of participation in higher education in the United Kingdom where, again, success at national level attends them. The uptake of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme is higher in Northern Ireland than in England and Wales, as is charity giving. Levels of indoor sport participation are the highest in the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland pioneered the vertical take-off jet, the modern farm tractor, the ejection seat, the portable heart defibrillator, the four-wheel drive and the pneumatic tyre. I am told that tonic water was also invented there, to the benefit of sobriety throughout the world.

At the same time, overlying those attributes are the stresses of which we are all aware, arising from the fact that Northern Ireland is a divided society. Perhaps the most fundamental structural problem in Northern Ireland is how to create the conditions where all sections of the community can live together in harmony. If that fundamental issue can be addressed successfully, it would lay a firm foundation for lasting peace in the Province. Much has been achieved in recent years to reduce historical suspicions and to address the sources of tension between the two main parts of the community. All of us who are familiar with Northern Ireland know that, in many of their daily activities, people from different parts of the community live, work and play happily side by side. I agree with those who say that, in Northern Ireland, diversity can and should be a source of strength and not weakness.

In this context, I should like to pay a warm and unreserved tribute to the people of Northern Ireland from this Dispatch Box. They have, for the past 20 years, had to withstand the most vicious terrorist campaigns waged by extremists on both sides of the community. Throughout that time, they have remained firm and resolute in their determination that those who use violence shall not have their way; their courage is a signal to us all. It is, moreover, a direct message to the terrorists themselves: the community has rejected and stood firm against them. After more than 20 years, the terrorists are absolutely no nearer to achieving their objectives.

There can be no doubt that, for their part, the Government will continue to resist the actions of the terrorists. Those who perpetrate the sort of attacks which occured in Belfast and Lurgan last night, and in County Armagh yesterday have nothing to offer. Their aim is to get us to set aside our democratic principles and for themselves to dictate the future of the Northern Ireland people. Quite simply, that is not going to happen. It is a fundamental duty of Government to ensure that their citizens' lives are protected, and that their rights to liberty and security are safeguarded.

To this end, we pursue a security policy which is robust, flexible, and based firmly on the fundamental principles which underlie any civilised society—respect for the rule of law and for the rights of individuals. Our policy is intended to bring a permanent end to terrorism. That is our first priority: to end violence and create the conditions in which a just, peaceful and prosperous society can develop.

In keeping with that policy, the Government have not hesitated to ask Parliament to enact, and renew, legislation which is essential if the security forces are to have the powers they need to deal firmly and effectively with the threats posed by organised terrorism and to tackle the menace and the weapon of terrorist racketeering. Nor have the Government hesitated to provide material support to the security forces. Recent additions to the strength of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the deployment of many additional soldiers are tangible examples of the Government's commitment.

The security forces, in turn, work with unparalleled determination, bravery and professionalism to apprehend terrorists, to deter their attacks, and to bring criminals to justice, before the courts. I pay tribute today to the men and women of the police service and the armed forces, and to the important role played by the judiciary, courts and prison staff. The security forces have considerable successes—which are all too easily forgotten, or never even noticed.

For example, who remarks on the vigilance which led to the discovery of a bomb, similar to that which caused the tragedy at Teebane, behind a hedge near Strabane a few days later? What lives and livelihoods have been saved by the large finds of terrorist munitions in Belfast in January and by the discovery of a 300 lb bomb at Forkhill in February?

All this is evidence of the relentless pursuit of terrorists, cross the whole of Northern Ireland. That work goes on, tirelessly and unceasingly. It must and will be conducted impartially, professionally and with respect for the important safeguards which exist in the legislation for the rights of individuals. The Chief Constable and the General Officer Commanding are determined to achieve the highest standards and to encourage the confidence of the entire community in their respective forces; and to stand between the community and the gunmen until terrorism has been finally ended.

I referred in my earlier remarks to the fact that Northern Ireland is a divided society. I said that the most fundamental structural issue facing any Government was how to close the community divisions. Those divisions have, to an extent, been reflected in economic and social disparities. Members from both sides of the community have felt that their political interests have been overridden in the past. The nature of the divisions raises the issues of constitutional status and personal and national identity.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that, at Question Time last Thursday, a former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), said that the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic had sought to bring on to the agenda the Government of Ireland Act 1920, which goes to the heart of the status of Northern Ireland, about which the right hon. Gentleman is speaking? I do not know whether today the Secretary of State wishes to deal with the issue, perhaps fleetingly, but his remarks were considered by many in Northern Ireland of the Unionist tradition to have been almost deliberately obtuse. Will he take this opportunity to make it clear that the agenda will not be changing, that the backcloth that he painted for talks on the Northern Ireland situation still have Northern Ireland fully within the United Kingdom and that its place in the Union is not to be jeopardised?

Mr. Brooke: I made it clear in my answer to the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) that my statement to the House on 26 March 1991 was the basis for the talks, and the hon. Gentleman will recall the reference to the place of the United Kingdom which I made not only on that occasion but on the previous occasion on 5 July 1990. I confirm that.

[Mr. Brooke]

References to the Government of Ireland Act have been made in connection with articles 2 and 3. The two measures are of a different order, in the sense that the Government of Ireland Act reflects the legal reality that Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, whereas articles 2 and 3 are in the nature of a territorial claim. The present status of Northern Ireland is underpinned by article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. As on previous occasions, I welcomed the Taoiseach's confirmation that articles 2 and 3 would be on the table.

As I was saying, I referred in my earlier remarks to the fact that Northern Ireland was a divided society. The nature of the divisions raises the issues of constitutional status, to which the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) referred, and personal and national identity, giving the problem an international as well as a domestic character. The communal divisions on those fundamental issues have, tragically, found some expression in terrorism.

At the heart of all those issues lies the need to tackle Northern Ireland's political problems. The requirement is to address the constitutional, economic and social grievances which perpetuate divisions and allow room for terrorism. At present, locally accountable and democratic institutions of government are almost entirely absent. As the House will know, the Government's objective is to seek to transfer greater political power and responsibility to locally elected representatives in Northern Ireland on a widely acceptable basis. If there is to be genuine reconciliation, different shades of constitutional political opinion must be accommodated in the political process.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I do not think that any of my hon. Friends would disagree with anything that my right hon. Friend has said. Even so, does he constantly bear in mind the fact that there are constitutional issues and problems north of the border, in Scotland, which are as deep-rooted and long-lasting and which could become as nasty if the Government did not bear that in mind when contemplating changes to the constitution for any part of the United Kingdom? All parts must be taken into account.

Mr. Brooke: I am glad, in response to my hon. Friend, to say that the Government are aware of the issues he raises, and they have recently been addressed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I shall draw the attention of the Secretary of State for Scotland to what my hon. Friend has said.

The Government have also taken the view that no political accommodation in relation to Northern Ireland could be stable and durable if it addressed only internal arrangements for the government of Northern Ireland. That is why, with the support of our partners in dialogue, including the Irish Government, we have sought to construct a basis for political talks which could address, as part of the same process, relationships within Northern Ireland, including the relationship between any new institutions there and the Westminster Parliament; relationships among the people of the island of Ireland; and relationships between the two Governments.

Any such process was always bound to be difficult to establish. However, it has the enormous advantage that it can address all the relevant dimensions of the political problems of Northern Ireland, and I believe the various advantages of that have been widely recognised.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Is there any reason why the Government should not set up an inquiry into the structure of local government in the Province without recourse to the Anglo-Irish Agreement or to consultation with Dublin? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the local government structure is at present very deficient and has been deficient for many years? Does he agree that that would be at least one political step forward that we could take in the meantime, while we are awaiting a general election or the start of the talks?

Mr. Brooke: I shall come to the possibilities of talks starting afresh in the near future. I have, in previous exchanges with my hon. Friend, said that I thought that the issue of local government was likely to come up in the context of such talks.

In short, as the party leaders acknowledged when I met them on 27 January, the talks process launched last March has considerable potential. It provides a realistic route towards a comprehensive political accommodation which could be of benefit to everyone, except the gunmen. All the constitutional political parties involved have something to gain from the talks process and the people of Northern Ireland have the most to gain.

I will not rehearse the history of the political talks. I should however, like to pay tribute to the Northern Ireland parties for their willingness to develop the political dialogue, not just over the past two years, but in the period immediately preceding my tenure of office, when my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State for Defence was Secretary of State. My hon. Friend the Minister of State has facilitated the process throughout.

When the talks ended last July, I said that, in my view, they had laid a firm foundation for the future. Since then, I have had further discussions with the party leaders and the Irish Government to see whether we could agree a return to the negotiating table. When it appeared, a few weeks ago, that that was unlikely, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister invited the party leaders to discuss the issues with him. As a result of that meeting, they agreed to see whether a way round the obstacles could be found.

I am sure that the whole House will have been heartened by their statement last Friday that, subject to receiving written confirmation of the positions of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, they could see no obstacle to the resumption of talks as soon as possible. I understand that the necessary assurances have now been given. I shall be discussing this with the Irish Foreign Minister, Mr. Andrews, tomorrow, in the expectation that substantive talks will begin very soon.

It is not always recognised that elected representatives of the two parts of the community in Northern Ireland work together and amicably, both in this House and in the European Parliament, on a wide range of issues affecting all the people of the Province. My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence and I have recently benefited from a discussion of security issues with the four party leaders, and I have this week had a further productive meeting with them to discuss employment creation.

I believe that the formula that we have agreed between us provides a sound basis for tackling the issues. It ensures that all the relevant relationships are taken into account; that any party can raise any matter which it considers relevant, including constitutional issues; that nothing can be agreed in any one strand until there is agreement on all three strands as a whole; that there can be no change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland as a part of the United Kingdom without the consent of a majority of its people; and that a new and more broadly based agreement or structure could emerge from the negotiations.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Many hon. Members welcomed the statement made in Scotland last week by the Prime Minister in which he said that he would defend and support the Union between Scotland and England. On the subject of the Union, may I ask the Secretary of State to say that he will defend and support the Union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland?

Mr. Brooke: My position in the context of the Union is well known to the House. I think that the Prime Minister made it clear when speaking in Scotland that it was in the context of Scotland that he was making his remarks.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): The right hon. Gentleman should be correct. I listened to the Prime Minister and he mentioned the Union between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. That needs to be emphasised tonight.

Mr. Brooke: I took the precaution of reading my right hon. Friend's speech in detail——

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Did the right hon. Gentleman agree with it?

Mr. Brooke: I always agree with my right hon. Friend. In terms of the substance of the speech and the issues he was addressing, he was essentially addressing the Scottish issue in what he said.

Sir John Farr (Harborough) *rose*——

Mr. Brooke: Because this is a short debate, I must make progress. I will give way to my hon. Friend, but I must be careful of the interests of other hon. Members.

Sir John Farr: As our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave a forthright message the other day in Scotland about the Union and the importance of voting for Conservative Members of Parliament in Scotland, will my right hon. Friend say something to the 11 or 12 Conservative candidates who will stand in Northern Ireland at the next election?

Mr. Brooke: This debate is ranging more widely than I had expected when I described it, at the beginning of the debate, as "wide-ranging". I assure my hon. Friend that we all look forward to the first running of Conservative candidates in the Province for many years. They will give all their opponents a good run for their money. Many of us look forward to meeting hon. Members who are present in the House tonight in the context of the hustings that may be with us shortly.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh) *rose*——

Mr. Brooke: It would be churlish not to give way to the hon. Gentleman, but, after that, I must get on with my speech.

Mr. Mallon: Is there some reason why a Conservative candidate is not running in the constituency that includes South Armagh? We feel utterly deprived of such influence.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) knows that my ancestor represented Armagh and that the ancestor of the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), represented Newry. During our time in the Northern Ireland Office, our interest in the seat has been for the welfare of their spiritual descendant, with whom we would not personally wish to interfere.

The past few years have seen the development of a close relationship between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. That has centred around our joint experience of operating the Anglo-Irish Agreement, to which the Government remain fully committed. The relationship has brought benefits to both countries in terms of economic and social development, co-operation in the fight against terrorism, and commitment to political progress in Northern Ireland. I am confident that the constructive relationship can be further strengthened in the months ahead.

I shall not seek to predict the nature of any new agreement that might evolve from future talks, but I believe that the pursuit of that agreement will be substantially assisted by our close relationship with the Republic of Ireland. I commend the Irish Government's constructive interest in the talks process and regard as helpful the Taoiseach's recent confirmation that, so far as their own involvement in new talks is concerned, everything will be on the table for discussion, including articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution.

Security co-operation is a vital component in the Anglo-Irish relationship. The threat posed by terrorism is never predictable and we must continuously review and refine cross-border co-operation to keep on top of that threat. But terrorism must never be allowed to dictate the agenda. There is important work to be done in developing the social and economic structure of Northern Ireland. Here too, close relations with the Republic of Ireland are valuable. That is not something Governments can achieve alone. It is also for individual companies and private organisations to recognise the benefits that can be brought about by closer co-operation and to take the necessary steps to bring that about.

For their part, the Government are determined to continue strengthening the economy of Northern Ireland, tackling unemployment, targeting areas of social need and rooting out discrimination wherever it may occur. Such measures are doubly important. They help to redress greivances which, in the past, have helped to sustain terrorism in Northern Ireland; they also provide the basis for the prosperous and balanced society to which we all aspire.

This Conservative Government have a proud record of economic achievement in Northern Ireland. Few people who last went to the Province in 1979 would go back now and say that it has not been transformed for the better. Of course, Northern Ireland has not been immune from the worldwide recession, but it is a sign of economic confidence in Northern Ireland that—unlike the old pattern when recession always hit Northern Ireland hardest—Northern Ireland has weathered this one better than almost any other region of the United Kingdom.

[Mr. Brooke]

Unemployment has risen by proportionately much less than the United Kingdom average and is still much lower than in the Republic of Ireland. Our economic development strategy is leading to the regeneration of many of Ulster's towns and cities. One only has to look at Belfast and the large amount of private investment that it has attracted to recognise that. The newly privatised Shorts, and Harland and Wolff, are being turned around from loss-making burdens on the taxpayer to thriving private enterprises trading successfully home and abroad.

They are in the process of being joined in the private sector by Northern Ireland Electricity, giving the people of Northern Ireland their first chance to have a real stake in that industry. Earlier today, I announced the sale of the four power stations. Not only does that represent the successful achievement of a major part of the Government's privatisation plans, but it is yet another significant vote of confidence in Northern Ireland and its economy.

Three leading international energy companies have made major investments in purchasing those stations. Each has wide experience in the energy industry and can be expected to introduce new technologies and make the electricity industry much more efficient and competitive.

It is particularly exciting for the people of Northern Ireland at long last to have the prospect of natural gas being brought to the Province. We have been seeking ways of diversifying our heavy dependence on oil, and the sale of Ballylumford has provided the opportunity to achieve that. In addition, it will lead to much cleaner emissions and open up the opportunity for more consumer choice. It would not have happened without privatisation.

The investment being made by employees and managers in Coolkeeragh is also an indication of the confidence being placed by local people in the local economy. I believe that they have made a good decision and I wish them well.

A major part of our industrial strategy is to invest in the Northern Ireland work force. In that context, equality of opportunity and equity of treatment are, of course, priorities for the Government. One of our major policy priorities in terms of public expenditure is our initiative for targeting social need.

I have set out the Government's approach across the whole range of challenges facing Northern Ireland—political, social and economic development, as well as security. For it is only in tackling all those issues that there is hope of bringing to that troubled part of our country lasting peace and prosperity. There are, I know, those who say that there can be no hope—that the problems are so intractable that no end to the conflict is possible. I continue to be sustained by the sure conviction that one day the violence will cease. That is, I know, the heartfelt wish of the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland. It will remain among the highest priorities of this Government.

7.27 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): We are now moving into what appear to be the final days of this Parliament. We are all disappointed that the problems of division, campaigns of murder and destruction continue to afflict Northern Ireland and spill over into the rest of the United Kingdom. We all hope that the next Parliament will see greater progress towards the peace that everyone yearns for.

This debate is therefore timely. It is an opportunity to take stock of the lessons of the past and to look towards the future.

I join the Secretary of State in saluting the people of Northern Ireland, and those concerned in the administration there, for their steadfastness in past years. All sections of the community are to be admired for their determination, so far as possible, to maintain the natural pattern of their lives. Perhaps the main lesson to be learned from the past 22 years comes from that determination—the futililty of violence.

It is clear that no paramilitary organisation will attain its objectives through violence. The IRA has only succeeded in increasing the determination of the people of Northern Ireland, this country and our neighbours in the Republic to work together for a peaceful settlement. It is isolated in a cul-de-sac of its own making. Similarly, loyalist paramilitaries have only succeeded in discrediting their own cause and revolting the communities that they claim to protect.

The lesson is clear and must be understood: no one can shoot or bomb his way to the conference table. No democratic state can allow terrorism to succeed. The only way to attain political objectives is through political means —argument and persuasion, not violence or coercion. Only when the gunmen of both communities come to understand those fundamental realities will they be in a position to offer anything constructive to the people whom they claim to defend.

The Opposition are firmly committed to an intelligent and accurately directed anti-terrorist policy. Anyone who believes otherwise, whether a Tory Prime Minister or a terrorist, is deluding himself. Whatever arguments may exist over the specific policies designed to defeat terrorism, there can be no division over the common objective. I am glad that the Prime Minister is present to hear that.

I do not intend to apologise about the existence of such policy disagreements; they are quite normal and legitimate in any democratic society. If terrorism ever caused us to lose our critical faculties, that would be a sad and bad day for democracy.

We believe in a security policy focused on the paramilitaries rather than one that treats entire communities as if they were guilty. The prime victims of the paramilitaries are the communities on which they inflict themselves. They inflict terrible cost on the people whom they claim to protect. It is not sensible to categorise such communities as hostile and drive them into the arms of their self-proclaimed defenders.

The paramilitaries must be actively pursued, charged, tried and put behind bars. The rights of the citizens must be protected, in particular, the right to freedom from the fear of death and mutilation, and the right to be protected from arbitrary encroachments by the servants of the state.

There is sometimes a tendency to set freedom and order in conflict with each other. That is a mistake; the two are inseparable. While we must take every reasonable measure to overcome terrorism, we must also keep clearly in our minds the need to preserve civil liberties. Violations of civil liberties provoke grievances and enhance the credibility of the paramilitaries, thus bringing about precisely the sort of situation that must be avoided. Nothing is more damaging to the terrorist cause than the state demonstrating itself to be the real defender of human rights. Ultimately, of course, however successful the operations of the various police, Army and intelligence agencies may be, on both sides of the border and on the island of Britain, terrorism will be eliminated only when its underlying causes are addressed.

The need to put in place political arrangements that can command the consent and respect of the vast majority of citizens in Northern Ireland is urgent and pressing. Only then can Northern Ireland hope to approximate to a normal western European society.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I endorse all that my hon. Friend says about combating terrorism. Although the Provisional IRA—one set of terrorists who have operated for the past 20 years—claim to speak on behalf of the Irish people, when they stood in elections in the Irish Republic they received less than 2 per cent. of the vote. That is hardly a mandate and, even in Northern Ireland, their supporters remain a minority within the nationalist community.

Does my hon. Friend agree that, not only is it necessary to preserve civil liberties in combating terrorism—which we must certainly do to protect people's lives—but it is important to retain international support in Europe, the United States and the Republic of Ireland? What the terrorists want, above all else, is for us to act in such a way that they gain political ammunition and support in order to further their evil cause.

Mr. McNamara: My hon. Friend's comments are wise. The argument that he advances is one of the primary reasons for not, as has been suggested, introducing internment without trial.

I was talking of the need for political arrangements that command the consent and respect of the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland. That is the task in which successive British and Irish Governments, and the political parties in Northern Ireland, have so signally failed—although, God knows, they have tried frequently enough. However, that is not an excuse to give up trying or to adopt a policy of mere containment; it must be for us, as democratic representatives, an incentive to redouble our efforts to negotiate.

The Secretary of State has, with the support of the Opposition, been working towards that goal. I am sure that he is disappointed that he has not made more progress, but I think that he can take some comfort from the fact that the two Governments and the Northern Ireland parties appear to be closer to the conference table than at any time since the mid-1970s.

The Opposition welcome the forthcoming meeting between the party leaders and the Secretary of State. We hope very much that it will lead to further substantive talks, and that strands two and three will be opened at the earliest possible date.

It would be unforgivable if the limited agreements which have been made so far were thrown away. The people of Northern Ireland, of the Republic and of Britain expect their Governments and their political representatives to make determined efforts to negotiate a settlement acceptable to all. The present opportunity should not be lightly cast aside.

Strictly speaking, the Opposition are not a party to the talks. Nevertheless, the political situation and the latest opinion polls mean that there is a legitimate expectation that the Opposition should make clear what their intentions would be in the event of their forming a Government.

For the Opposition, the Secretary of State's statement of 26 March 1991 provides the essential framework for talks in which all aspects of the relationship between the two major communities in Northern Ireland, between Northern Ireland and the Republic and between Britain and Ireland can be discussed.

The Leader of the Opposition has made it clear that, if talks are still continuing when the election is called, a Labour Government will reconvene the talks on exactly the same basis as they had been taking place before the election. We will honour any agreements on the talks made before the election between the parties and the existing Governments, and will expect the other participants to do the same.

Mr. John D. Taylor: I think that the issue of which the hon. Gentleman is talking is important in the context of Northern Ireland discussions. To clear up any misunderstanding, can he confirm that he fully supports the leader of the Labour party, who said, as quoted in *The Irish Times* last week, that, if the talks were reconvened, Irish unity would not be the objective of the Labour party at those talks?

Mr. McNamara: I have said that our aim will be on precisely the same basis as the talks being undertaken at present—on precisely the same three strands. The hon. Gentleman will have to wait until later in my speech, when he might receive further information on that issue.

It would be an insult to the intelligence of the participants in the talks if we were to pretend not to have our own views on the future of Northern Ireland. Those views are a matter of record, as are those of both Unionist parties, the Alliance party, the SDLP and Her Majesty's Government.

We believe that the long-term future of Northern Ireland lies in unity with the rest of the island. At the same time, we recognise that change in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland would, and could, occur only with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland. That is why we support the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and article 1 of it.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition made clear last week the role that a Labour Government would play in the conduct of negotiations. A Labour Secretary of State would not be there to impose his own agenda upon the talks; he would be there to play a positive role in facilitating and promoting agreement between the participants. Since a Labour Secretary of State would be looking for agreement, by definition there would be no question of imposition of any kind, and, in the words of the Secretary of State in his statement to the House of 26 March 1991, which he repeated today:

> "It is accepted by all the parties that nothing will be finally agreed in any strand until everything is agreed in the talks as a whole".—[*Official Report*, 26 March 1991; Vol. 188, c. 766.]

The Labour party's concern is to establish effective political arrangements which place the three relationships to be dealt with in the three strands of the talks on a new, forward-looking and successful footing. We will use our best endeavours to bring the talks to a successful conclusion, for we shall not be found wanting in our determination to overcome obstacles.

[Mr. McNamara]

While talks are continuing, the responsibilities of government will not go away. In particular, the economic and social deprivation of the Province must be tackled. Progress towards the single market also makes urgent the need to prepare the economy of Northern Ireland for the new environment. There is no time to spare. Northern Ireland is already on the geographical margin of the European Community; we must ensure that it is not relegated to the economic margins.

The hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) deserves some credit for his efforts to carry on a more realistic industrial strategy than that carried out by his colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry. I trust that he did that without their knowing what he was up to. I hope that he will not take this personally, but he has been restricted by the requirements to conduct his economic policy on a sort of need-to-know basis—for Northern Ireland eyes only. It is an industrial policy that dare not speak its name. I will say no more, as I do not want to embarrass him while he is sitting so close to the Prime Minister.

I have one outstanding objection to what the Secretary of State said this evening. He claimed certain benefits from selling off Northern Ireland Electricity to various private interests. I cannot but think that he is pillaging Northern Ireland electricity consumers to cut income tax in Britain before the election. Given how lacking in investment Northern Ireland's economy is, selling off one of its prize assets to try to bribe the Government's way back into government presents a most unhappy epitaph for what has been a rather distinguished career in Northern Ireland industry for the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North.

Mr. Brooke: I recall that the Labour party opposed the privatisations that we effected both at Shorts and at Harland and Wolff. No observer in Northern Ireland would deny that both companies are significantly stronger and that one of them has much higher employment as a result of privatisation.

Mr. McNamara: I hope that, at the end of next year, we will be able to say that all the Northern Ireland electricity companies are employing exactly the same number of people—or, indeed, that they will be employing more of them. If that happens, it will contradict experience in this country, where, under the privatised electricity companies, prices have risen enormously. Only today I had a letter from an industrialist in my constituency telling me that electricity prices for his factory are to rise by 16 per cent. —under Yorkshire Electricity. If that happens in Northern Ireland, the fruits of privatisation will prove to have gone bad.

The Labour party, on the other hand, is prepared to proclaim its policies from the roof tops. We will invest, modernise and train, and insist that goods are exported in the knowledge that there will be whole-hearted commitment on the part of the Government to furthering the interests of industry in Northern Ireland. Industry is not a dirty word to us: it is a basis for a sound economy —*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Wiltshire, North should not sit there chittering away. I have paid him a compliment this evening—although it may cost him his job. It would be churlish not to acknowledge how much industry the hon. Gentleman has brought to Northern Ireland, but the tragedy is that so much of it is service industry. What we really need are productive industries for the service industries to service.

We are also convinced that it is now time to act on the wasted oportunities for cross-border trade and co-operation——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): Jobs is jobs.

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Gentleman, who represents a constituency in the south-east of England, should tell that to all the service industry employees in his constituency who are losing their jobs, which in turn will result in his losing his seat.

Mr. Mallon: Before we all become too bland in the interests of harmony, is it not a fact that, if we are to find a solution to this problem, there are hard decisions to be made which can be made only by the British and Irish Governments? There is no way around that. It is nice to know that we are good at indoor sport and that everything will improve on the socioeconomic front, but it would be a shame if we left this debate without the people listening to it here and at home hearing some response from both sides to how the Governments will deal with those fundamental problems. It is not enough to get the Northern Irish parties to participate in consultations; they can go only so far. It is only the Irish and British Governments who have the power and authority to make the fundamental decisions, and we should like to hear a little more about that.

Mr. McNamara: I am not quite sure whether my hon. Friend means the political sphere or the trade and industry sphere. If the former, I thought that it was covered in the agreement made in March. That is the third strand of the talks—and the second, under which the Government of the Republic will sit down with the parties from Northern Ireland. If my hon. Friend is talking about questions of trade between the two parts of Ireland, and the roles of the parties in that, he anticipates my next paragraph.

The Labour party is convinced that it is time to act on the wasted opportunities for cross-border trade and co-operation. It is increasingly recognised that levels of trade between the north and the Republic are scandalously low. It is not just a question of wasted opportunities: this failure means a real loss of jobs and prosperity throughout the island of Ireland.

If the two parts of Ireland do not take the opportunities, other EC states will. If the Republic does not exploit markets in Northern Ireland, the Germans or the Dutch will. If Northern Ireland does not exploit the market on its southern doorstep, the French and Italians will; if we have a Labour Government and more efficient industry, even Britain will. We live in a much more open and competitive world than before, and we can no longer barricade ourselves behind our prejudices and our fears.

We also believe that it is time for an end to the Euro-begrudgery that has hindered Northern Ireland's prospects in the European Community. The Government must take the lead in exploiting the potential of the Community. An active approach is necessary to ensure that Northern Ireland gets its fair share of EC expenditure.

We must encourage the public and private sectors to look outwards and to get to grips with the reality of life in the Community. The Northern Ireland centre in Brussels is badly needed; it is a highly welcome initiative which deserves the full backing of all parties in Northern Ireland and in this House.

This debate takes place at crucial moment for the future of Northern Ireland. There is now a chance of escaping from the fratricidal conflict of the past quarter of a century. There have been too many disappointments for us to be entirely confident about the future or about the developments that we want. Nevertheless, whatever pessimism of our intelligence exists, all democrats must reaffirm the optimism of the will to succeed. As democratic politicians, we must be optimistic.

7.47 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) referred to the fratricidal conflict of the past 25 years. It is not new in the history of Ireland, however. That history presents a sickening catalogue of horrific atrocities. Long before Northern Ireland was created, long before the Dublin Parliament was dissolved and we had a united Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, long before the Tudors ever came to Ireland, and long before the Normans, century after century witnessed innocent blood shed and anguished tears. All this can be seen on every page of the history of Ireland: it is not new.

Sad to say, evil men can look back at history and justify their evil deeds by what their forebears did. Every country in the world has had dark deeds of which it is rightly ashamed, but there is something particularly gruesome about the furtive assassins who have stalked—usually in the dark—the towns and fields of Ireland; and they usually shoot in the back or plant a bomb and detonate it from a safe distance. Their accursed successors carry on this trade of death, mutilation and destruction. My cousin, an innocent woman and devoted wife and mother, was murdered by the Provisional IRA because she shared my name.

Like all my Unionist colleagues from Northern Ireland, I have received death threats from the IRA. The accusation against us is that we are Brits and should be put out of Ireland. My forebears tilled the land in Ireland from the mists of time, but no doubt Mr. Gerry Adams is a newcomer, a descendant of some English settler or perhaps a British soldier who came to Dublin. Republican terrorists bring shame to the cause they espouse, and they will be condemned in the years to come.

I was deeply emotionally touched when I heard a message sent by the widow of one of the Protestant workmen killed with seven of his Protestant colleagues outside Cookstown on 17 January in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea). Within days, in an act of so-called retaliation, Roman Catholics were slaughtered in Belfast. The Protestant widow, in the midst of her own overwhelming grief, sent a message of sympathy to a newly widowed Catholic. The terrible atrocities catch the headlines throughout the world, to the great delight of the IRA because, of course, all terrorists live on publicity. I hold deep in my heart and mind that simple poignant message of Christian kindness from that Protestant woman to a Catholic woman. We have seen many similar acts, and they certainly stand out against the darkness of the campaign of terror.

It is time for the people of Ulster to realise what they are facing and to release themselves from the bondage that terrorism has created. People should not be duped into hating each other for the love of God. From the bottom of my heart, I appeal to those who are governed by prejudice and hatred to open their minds to truth and love. For 20 years, I have been arguing in the House against religious apartheid in education, because I believe that, if people in Northern Ireland communicated more, Protestants and Catholics would see that the others are not the ogres that they are made out to be by the terrorists who pretend to represent them.

The good people whom I have the honour to represent in the House—men and women, mothers and fathers, business men and workers on the factory floor—all believe, as I fervently believe, that there is richness in diversity. Therefore, let us all shun the terrorists and actively support the forces of law and order so that peace triumphs at last.

One may say, as I have said and as I have heard said at the Dispatch Box, that good will one day triumph over evil, but it needs a helping hand. The only way to defeat terrorism in Northern Ireland is to ensure that the security forces have the full and unequivocal support of every law-abiding person in Northern Ireland.

I ask the Dublin Government to abandon their claim to the territory of Northern Ireland, a claim which legitimises the Provisional IRA campaign of terror. The constitutional politicians ought to work in partnership to resolve the problems that trouble the Province. For instance, there is a need for jobs for the unemployed and especially for school leavers and university students. There is a need to protect and provide for the elderly, who form the most vulnerable section of our community. We need to ensure better hospital and social services, to provide more homes, improve existing homes and protect Northern Ireland's environment. Above all, there is a need to improve the quality of life for all, regardless of religion or politics.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I challenge the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's constitution legitimise terrorism. On the contrary, a republican tradition that is entirely constitutional and opposes terrorism defies terrorists. No means of arguing that the partition of Ireland is unfortunate and that a united Ireland might be better for all its people other than by espousing terrorist organisations would strengthen such organisations. The hon. Gentleman's argument is quite wrong.

Mr. Kilfedder: The hon. Lady says that I am wrong and I say that I am right. I shall leave it at that. I direct the hon. Lady to what has happened in Europe, where some countries claim the territory of another and where there are religious and racial disputes. If the Dublin Government abandoned their claim, it would cut the ground from under the feet of the Provisional IRA and would help to unite the people of Northern Ireland, which is what we need.

As the Speaker of the last Northern Ireland Assembly, I sought, as did most of those who participated in its proceedings, to make it a success. I sincerely desired to make the Stormont Parliament building a symbol of a new, forward-looking, progressive Ulster, and I think that my hon. Friends who were in the Assembly will confirm that there was a good and friendly atmosphere. I pay

[Mr. Kilfedder]

tribute to all those who worked in the Assembly. It showed that co-operation is possible and can be productive; we had some excellent reports from the scrutiny committees. If the Assembly had not been scuttled, it would have progressed to create political stability in the Province.

Mr. Mallon: This is an important debate, and people in the north of Ireland are looking crucially at it. What is the basis of the hon. Gentleman's party's policy that he would recommend to the House as a means of solving the problems that face us?

Mr. Kilfedder: I have been excluded from the talks. If the hon. Gentleman wants to hear my contribution, he should ensure that I participate in them. For years I have urged talks and I believe that if the SDLP had gone into the Assembly we would have made political progress. But it is no use looking to the past. I do not want to rake over the past, because we could spend hours, days, weeks or months arguing about it and accusing each other. We have to look to the future, and I think that the people of Northern Ireland, expect us to do that.

I pray that the talks will lead to political progress in Northern Ireland, and I pay tribute to the Prime Minister for his initiative. He attended at the beginning of this debate and people in Northern Ireland will realise that he made a point of being here for the opening speeches. He is certainly a caring person who is acutely and extremely compassionate.

The fact that there is a Conservative candidate in North Down does not alter my views about the Prime Minister. To be frank, the Conservative candidate does not espouse Conservative policies. He attacks the talks and accuses the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland of encouraging the IRA to kill people in Northern Ireland by holding the talks. I think that only one other organisation supports the Conservative candidate on that line, and that is the Provisional IRA.

I do not mind what political arrangement is arrived at as a result of the talks, whether it is devolution or executive, administrative or total integration, as long as we have political stability, which will provide a happy and prosperous future for the next generation and for generations yet unborn.

8 pm

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): Like everyone else, I welcome the debate. It gives us the opportunity to discuss in depth the serious problems that we face. It is the first time in the life of this Parliament that we have had such a debate.

In this context, over 3,000 people have lost their lives in Northern Ireland, and the population is 1·5 million. Three thousand is the equivalent of 100,000 on this island. I do not think that I exaggerate if I say that, if 100,000 had lost their lives in Scotland, England and Wales in community violence, the subject would have been debated every day by a packed House. I could draw my own conclusions from the fact that the situation in Northern Ireland has not been debated in the House in that way, and the fact that, when it is, only a few are in the Chamber to talk about it. I shall not draw those conclusions, because they are extremely political and some people might not want to agree with them, even though they should think about them.

As I have said, 3,000 have lost their lives and about 20,000 have been maimed. One of the worst things that has happened—it is one of the greatest indictments of us all, and I include everyone who is involved in the problem —is that in Belfast, which is the most churchgoing city in western Europe—that includes those on both sides of the religious divide—it has been necessary to build not one wall but 13 to protect one section of a Christian people from another and to separate them from one another. That is where I want to begin.

The reason for indictment is simple: our attitudes, and especially our past attitudes, have built them. If we are serious about trying to solve the problem, as opposed to playing party politics, and throwing out the outdated slogans of the past—those slogans formed part of the attitudes that built our walls—we must all commit ourselves in this debate to speaking for the people of Northern Ireland when we get to the negotiating table. We must be prepared at the talks to re-examine our basic attitudes to the problems. It is those attitudes that have brought us to where we are. That is the challenge that we face in the talks.

As I have said, I welcome the talks. I welcome the fact that, for the first time during the existence of the problem, all aspects of it will be on the table for discussion, with all the relationships that are involved. We shall be talking about our relationships within Northern Ireland and relationships between North and South and Britain and Ireland.

I recognise that, in agreeing with strand 2, the Unionist political leadership is saying that it is willing to take seriously the arguments that is advanced by some of us that that it is a central factor in dealing with a solution to the problem. I do not underestimate the fact that that shows political leadership. The Unionist leadership is willing to discuss north-south relationships with the Dublin Government. That is, in a sense, in keeping with its tradition. Craigavon talked regularly to the people in Dublin in attempts to reach agreements with them. In 1938, shortly after the 1937 constitution was passed, one of Craigavon's great quotes was:

> "We cannot forever live apart."

In today's world, no group of people can live apart.

It is obvious that the relationship between Unionist people and the rest of the island is central to the problem we face. I say that because, in 1912, when the House voted democratically for home rule for Ireland, the Unionist people felt that they could not live with it. That reflected their relationship with the rest of the island. When the Stormont Parliament was set up, the Unionist Government excluded the nationalist population, by and large, from any say in how the place was run. They did so for the same reason: fear of links with the rest of the island. They opposed the Sunningdale agreement for the same reason: they feared assimilation with the rest of the island. That is why they have opposed the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I may be reading the Unionists incorrectly, but that is my perception of Unionism. I would welcome being told where I am wrong when we get round the table. I hope and believe that our dialogue will be deadly serious.

Until that relationship is sorted out, nothing will work. When I say "sorted out", I mean to the satisfaction of Unionist people as well as to the satisfaction of the rest of the people of the island. That is why we propose that, before there are talks with the Dublin Government on how we shall live together on the island, an agreement should be reached that any agreement should be endorsed on the one day by means of a referendum within each part of the island.

That reassures the Unionist people that, when we say "agreement", we mean it. That undermines the extremists who use guns, because, for the first time ever, the people of Ireland as a whole will have spoken. That will be the basis for lasting peace.

The walls that I mentioned are a challenge to us to rethink past attitudes, and I shall address Unionist Members on what I regard as theirs. I shall refer also to what I regard as our past attitudes. Unionist people have always stated that their objectives in Ireland are to protect, maintain and develop their own identity and their differences, and I do not quarrel with that. I would strongly support their aim to protect differences, because every society is richer for that. I quarrel not with their political objectives but with their traditional methods of protecting their identity. As we see it from our side of the community, the Unionist people have always decided to protect their own identity by holding all power in their own hands and excluding other people. They can trust only themselves.

If we analyse areas of conflict in other parts of the world —not only in Northern Ireland but in the middle east and South Africa, for example—we find that mentality. In effect, it is we, ourselves, alone. That approach obviously excludes others. In the end such a mentality is bound to lead to conflict.

There is another way. Again, it is simple and straightforward. Our experience of history—and the Unionist people's experience—should teach Unionists that their real strength and, at the end of the day, their only strength lies in their own numbers and their own people. They must stand on their own feet, and negotiate their own relationships and agreements with those with whom they share a piece of earth.

I believe that the Unionist mentality—the belief that they can trust only themselves—reflects their fear that the rest of the island wishes to subsume them, or indeed to wipe them out: that feeling is, of course, reinforced by the IRA campaign. Let me quote what should be a Unionist slogan from John Hewitt, the well-known Northern Irish poet, which expresses the deep anxiety felt by the Unionist people. He said:

> "This is our country also—nowhere else—and we shall not be outcasts in the world."

I agree with that. I think that the objective of my side of the community should be to reassure the Unionist people that, whatever approach is adopted to a solution of the problems, we have not the slightest interest in making them outcasts.

The Unionists should think about that as well, however. In many parts of the world, their image has become very negative: most people know what they are against, but not too many know what they are for. That is not in keeping with the strength of the Unionist tradition. The development of a siege mentality tends to dry up the creative roots.

Let us consider the history of the Protestant tradition in Ireland. The Protestants contributed 11 presidents to the United States of America, which surely demonstrates the creativity of their tradition. The United States constitution was drafted by Irish presbyterians who had been driven out of Ireland by intolerance.

Mr. Trimble: Ulster presbyterians.

Mr. Hume: Ulster presbyterians, yes. They had been driven out of Ireland by an intolerance that their Catholic neighbours also faced at the time: it was the establishment —the ascendancy—that was intolerant. When they went to their new land, they decided that they would not repeat the experience that they had left behind.

The American declaration of independence was printed by John Dunlop, a presbyterian from Strabane; the first Secretary of the American Congress was a presbyterian from Maghera. Those people recognised that the answer to the problem of difference was not to wipe it out: they knew that difference was not a threat, but an enriching thing, and that the essence of unity and stability for any society, anywhere in the world, was the acceptance of diversity. They knew that it was wrong to treat those with whom we differ as a threat.

On the cheapest coin in America—the cent—can be found the message of the people's wisdom, written by Ulster presbyterians—"E pluribus unum". I invite their present-day successors, and members of the same tradition, to take a good hard look at their philosophy, and to apply it to the problem that we face in today's Ireland. "E pluribus unum"—from many we are one. The essence of our unity as a people depends on acceptance of, and respect for, our diversity.

The nationalist tradition must also do some rethinking. We have had handed down to us the traditional view that Irish unity is ours of right, because the majority of people on the island want it. That position is based on a territorial view of nationalism; but I believe that a piece of earth without people, in Ireland or anywhere else, is no more than a jungle. It is people who matter. My party has said consistently that, when we talk of unity, we are talking about people. On the island of Ireland, we have a divided people. We shall not unite those people by force or by violence; we can unite them only by agreement.

The territorial view of unity is based on the notion of assimilation or coercion rather than agreement. That traditional view of unity has been reinforced by the IRA campaign. This week, I issued a challenge to the IRA in the form of a public statement. I said, "Let us leave aside the moral aspect of what you are doing—killing human beings for political purposes—because those are clear. Let us consider your campaign from a purely military point of view. Three thousand people have died. Of those 3,000, 435 were British soldiers; the rest were the people of Northern Ireland—civilians, and members of the RUC and the UDR. Seventeen hundred were innocent civilians." Of those 3,000, 239 were IRA members, and 144 were killed by the IRA—in accidents or executions.

My question to the IRA is very straightforward. Leaving morals aside, how does it justify a military campaign whose victims are its own people? Ninety per cent. of the victims of the loyalist and Provo campaigns in Northern Ireland are the people of Northern Ireland.

I do not refer only to those that have been sent to their graves—another innocent man was sent to his grave yesterday. The current campaign has put on to our streets armed troops composed mostly of working-class people from British cities who do not understand our problem. They are searching young people on a regular basis, and that causes community tensions. The troops would not be there if it were not for the IRA campaign. If the IRA wants them off our streets, the simple answer is to stop the

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campaign. Moreover, the image that has been created is preventing inward investment, which means that we cannot employ our young people.

Surely there is no military justification—as I have said, I am leaving aside the moral aspect—for a campaign whose victims are our own people, on every front. As I did earlier this week, I invite the IRA to look at its founding fathers. In the GPO in 1916, Pearse and Connolly sent a message to their followers: "Lay down your arms, lest you bring too much suffering on your own people." In asking IRA members to lay down their arms, I am asking them to follow the lead of some respected members of the republican tradition.

As for the loyalist paramilitaries—85 of whom have died—they tell us that their reason is revenge. Revenge is not the solution; in a divided society, the doctrine of "an eye for an eye" leaves everyone blind.

As I have said, we must re-examine our past attitudes, but where do we go from there? Our problems in Northern Ireland are not unique in European or world history. Most countries have backgrounds of historic national conflict, tension with neighbouring states, or internal differences of language, religion or national identity. The lesson learned by such countries has been that difference itself need not be a problem. The issue for those seeking stability and harmony in those countries was not the elimination of difference and diversity, but their accommodation. They learned that there was no peace, no stability and no security in seeking political arrangements which reflected and respected only one tradition and one set of values. Instead, stability, and the best protection for any tradition, lay in creating political consensus, with structures which neither privileged nor prejudiced the position of any tradition. That is the message for all of us in Northern Ireland.

That message is strengthened by the fact that today the people of Northern Ireland are part of a European Community that has agreed to move towards closer union. Most of the debates about the Community—we heard some today, in parliamentary questions to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—are about money, economics and so forth. Little is said about the real reason why the united Europe was built, and the idealism that built it. However, Northern Ireland is not the only area of conflict that should study how that happened; every area of conflict in the world should study it.

Fifty years ago—or 47 years ago, to be correct—the nightmare that was intended to last a thousand years ended. The second world war ended. For the second time this century, millions of people had been slaughtered. People had been slaughtered throughout the previous centuries, too. At that time, if someone had got up and said, "In 50 years' time we shall have a united Europe—yet the Germans will still be German and the French will still be French," that person might have been locked up. But that goal was achieved. How? The answer is simple but profound. People said, "Difference is not a threat. The answer to difference is the accommodation of difference." They agreed to create institutions which respected diversity yet which allowed them to work their common ground, which was economic. In short, they agreed to spill their sweat together and not their blood.

By creating institutions that respected their diversity, and working their common ground, which was economic, they created circumstances in which by working together, they eroded their prejudices and differences and grew together at their own speed towards a new Europe, which will continue to evolve even after what was decided at Maastricht is put into practice.

The lesson for us in Ireland is the same. Let us build institutions in the north of Ireland which respect our differences, but which allow us to work our common ground, which is considerable. Let us, too, build institutions by agreement between both parts of our island —institutions which allow us to work our common ground and, by doing so, to break down the barriers of prejudice and distrust, the fruits of which—results, rather; I should not call them fruits—have been such tragedy in the past.

I have no doubt that, if we reach such agreements and vote for them, as I suggested earlier, by working together over the years, we shall erode our prejudices and grow together at our own speed, in two or three generations, into a new Ireland built on respect for diversity—an Ireland built by its people working together.

I do not think that it will be easy for us to reach such agreements in the current talks, but in the meantime, while we are doing so, let us get working on the common ground anyway, in order to break down the barriers of distrust between us. The common ground is obvious. We are one of the areas with the highest unemployment in the whole of the new European Community. Why do we not work together to tackle that, and, in doing so, turn our disadvantages into advantages?

All over the world, there are people who tell us that they are proud of their Irish heritage. The Irish, both of the north and of the south, are the biggest wandering people in the world—we are a bigger wandering people than the Jews. The most recent census in the United States showed that 42 million people declared themselves to be Irish. The same is true in Australia and Canada—and many of those people have made it in business, politics or whatever.

Why do we not use that card, as some of us have already done, making contacts with people in senior positions in the United States, and asking them to use their influence? We say, "Okay, so you want to help Ireland. A pint of Guinness on St. Patrick's day is all very well, but how about some real help, such as considering some investment?"

As we play the green card in such places as Boston, I believe that our Unionist friends could play the orange card in places such as Toronto. The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) could use the links which his political and religious tradition has with the southern states of America. Let us get together and harness those energies in a positive rather than a negative sense, to bring development to our people. We are not asking people for charity, because we have something to offer. We are offering them a foothold in the biggest single market in the world, and we speak the same language.

While we are talking, and trying to build confidence and trust in our people, let us work the common ground together. Let us spill our sweat and not our blood. Let us at last give hope to our people. All of us who know the problem know that we will not solve it in a week or in a fortnight, but if the people see us engaged in strategies that lead in the right direction, they will stand behind us.

8.26 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Out of courtesy to the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), I shall respond to some of the points that he not unreasonably made in his speech. However, I should like first to take a few minutes at the beginning of my speech to educate those who are in some danger of destroying their credibility by parroting clichés and buzz words which are so obviously inaccurate.

We have a mission in life to rescue those in what are commonly called the chattering classes, and some people in the news industry who seem to have lost the power to do their own thinking. Due to low intelligence or bone idleness, they have somehow or other become programmed, and they absorb the superficial ideas of others as shallow as themselves, so it is hardly surprising that the same catch phrases pour out, as if from a word-processor gone mad—catch phrases such as, "find a solution", "get into dialogue", and "sit round the table."

The hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), who was here earlier, reminded us this week that the Northern Ireland party leaders, with all the many admitted faults, are rather better at such things than the party leaders in Great Britain. We heard confirmation of that at Prime Minister's Question Time today.

The chattering classes try to mislead honest folk by deliberate distortion of facts, not realising that they are engaged in an orgy of self-contradiction. Last autumn they asserted that the Secretary of State was wasting his time, because no progress could be made this side of a general election. That was five months ago, and the right hon. Gentleman will remember the identities of those who said such things. Being a charitable sort of character, I did my best to save them from their folly. At my party conference on 28 October 1991, I said:

> "I get impatient with soothsayers who predict that nothing will happen this side of the general election. I reject utterly such pessimistic chatter."

Now, five months later, those same people are blaming the three Northern Ireland parties in this House, and perhaps a fourth which, we hope, will survive the general election.

Mr. Kilfedder: Many thanks, Jim.

Mr. Molyneaux: They blame those parties for proving them wrong and, like the distinguished 19th-century figure who, on learning of the death of a rival, asked, "I wonder what he meant by that," modern opinion formers also have to grub around for motives for actions that have proved them wrong. It does not seem to occur to them that it might be possible that the three of us—or the three and a half of us—who lead the parties in this House have a degree of integrity which our critics lack. Truly, a sense of inferiority must be a terrible affliction.

Our motive is not a hidden agenda but one which, I know the Secretary of State will agree, was the encouragement given first by the Prime Minister, especially at the meeting in Downing street, and subsequently in other forms. We voluntarily undertook to engage in quiet, calm deliberations, and the result was agreement last Friday, achieved—as the hon. Members for Foyle and for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) will agree—in exactly 50 minutes. The second significant contribution came from the Leader of the Opposition, who, like the Prime Minister, underwrote the process and readily gave an assurance that a Labour Government would honour any agreement for a framework designed before the general election.

The House will realise that our motive was simplicity and honesty itself. It was to improve co-operation and to seek and to strive, secure in the knowledge that the Prime Minister and the alternative Prime Minister of the United Kingdom would be joint guarantors of any practical agreement resulting from our deliberations.

I am by no means discounting the contribution of the Secretary of State or of the Minister of State during those patient endeavours. I know that they accept—as we do—that certain endeavours can be underpinned only by those who bear the ultimate responsibility in our nation. We intend that the meetings planned for next week will be real and businesslike. Responsible elements in the news industry—fortunately, they are in the majority—have a vested interest in our success. Their contribution will mean forgoing photo calls, chat shows and phone-ins of the type which provide opportunities for trading insults which can sometimes be as lethal as the armalite.

A further incentive to make full use of the time that remains is the fact that the constitutional affairs of the United Kingdom are in a state of flux, and that subject will not go away. In the new Parliament, decentralisation of powers will be the main debating point. The Northern Ireland parties in the House have considerable experience, and we believe that it would be very useful for the rest of the United Kingdom to have the benefit of our up-to-date thinking on that subject, perhaps in the form of an agreed blueprint or at least a paper setting out the pluses and minuses of given models. For that reason, we are keen to make all possible progress before the general election is called, when, as agreed, the inter-party talks will cease. However, that should not mean a halt to drafting activities by the participating party teams, some of whom will be thankful that they are not going to be front-liners in the election campaign.

We have a duty to warn against efforts designed to mislead the general public in Northern Ireland and in the rest of the United Kingdom into believing that we are engaging in peace talks. I know that the Secretary of State and the Minister of State fully understand—and, I think, support—what I am saying. Today, inter-party tensions are lower and cross-party co-operation is better than at any time in the past 20 years, but yesterday, a lorry driver was murdered in County Armagh and today—as we have heard—the centre was torn out of the town of Lurgan in the same county which has suffered so much so often.

The brutal reality—we would be deceiving people and failing in our duty not to say this—is that, even if we prove to be 100 per cent. successful in our talks, the violence will remain undiminished. It would be equally dishonest to raise expectations too high, as I am afraid was the case last spring. The fact that we can engage in civilised dialogue does not mean that fundamental differences can be made to disappear overnight.

Sometimes talk of solutions can be divisive and usually irresponsible. I am not attributing those qualities to the contribution of the hon. Member for Foyle. He has—not unreasonably—sought confirmation of our attitudes. If I may say so, he is in some danger of thinking of Unionism in the narrow sense when he talked about our Unionist or Protestant identity which, he said, excludes all others.

The hon. Gentleman may not have noticed, because his responsibility is to run his party, that when I became leader

[Mr. Molyneaux]

of my party in 1979, I was determined to aim for the broad church concept. When he and I shared a platform almost a year ago addressing the 28 primates of the Anglican communion in the constituency of the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady), I explained my attitude. I said that I regarded it as my duty to provide positive leadership for what I called the greater number of Ulster people—Protestant and Roman Catholic alike—who wish to remain part of the United Kingdom.

The hon. Member for Foyle will remember that on that occasion, when I was asked why I used the term "the greater number" I explained that it was to avoid using the word "majority", which could be interpreted as the Unionist majority or the Protestant majority. In other words, I was going for the greater number of citizens who regard themselves and want to go on regarding themselves as citizens of the United Kingdom, who include what Father Faul called the 80 per cent. of Roman Catholics who would not vote for a united Ireland.

On another occasion, the hon. Member for Foyle may have thought that Father Faul's concept was perhaps a bit narrow. I think that possibly 25 per cent. of his fraternity might support a united Ireland by vote, but I hope that the hon. Member for Foyle can take some comfort from the fact that my party has grown in strength despite making it clear that we stood for Unionism in the broadest possible sense—membership of this bigger unit of the United Kingdom—and that we were a party open to all people regardless of their religious affiliations.

I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is comforted—I hope he is—by the fact that, for 12 years, I have been elected annually by the 800-strong Ulster Unionist council which was fully aware of the views that I have just expressed. With all our faults, we have not turned inward as ethnic groups in eastern Europe and even in mother Russia tend to be doing at the present time—a development which all hon. Members will deeply regret.

I inserted that section in my speech because I desperately wanted to avoid the failure that would result if we attempted to fight old battles or even entered into the real discussions with any misunderstanding between us.

We may patiently work out an accommodation which will enable us to live and work together within Northern Ireland and, we hope, find another accommodation providing for peaceful co-existence with our neighbouring nation south of the frontier. Both those accommodations would fit into what Mr. Haughey perceived to be

"the totality of the relationships within these islands".

That phrase is endorsed by the then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

The pity of it is that that broad noble concept was torpedoed and recklessly damaged by the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, because it focused the entire energies of the two sovereign nations on six small counties in the entire British Isles. In the not too distant future, we must choose a much wider and more generous structure.

I end with a suggestion which may startle some people. I suggest with very great respect that the British and Irish Governments should commence preparatory work as soon as possible after the election on a new British-Irish agreement to replace and transcend the one which has failed and which, worse still, continues not only to keep the children's teeth on edge, but to maintain tension where tension should not exist: between the citizens of Northern Ireland.

8.41 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I shall be brief because this is an Irish debate and I do not want to stop any hon. Members from the Province from speaking. However, as a Scot, I have a great interest at this time in the constitutional situation which affects the whole of the United Kingdom. I believe that opportunity often arises out of adversity.

We face difficulties in Northern Ireland. No one who has watched the past 20 years evolve or who has been a Member of this place over the past few years can fail to realise the enormous problems facing my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Northern Ireland Office who, over the years, have tried to find solutions to intractable problems. I would never criticise what Conservative Ministers have done over the past 13 years.

One of the problems in Scotland is that, if one tries to find solutions in isolation from United Kingdom constitutional problems, one often creates bigger problems than one set out to solve. The time has come to consider the whole of the United Kingdom and find constitutional answers suitable to all the United Kingdom.

We should not forget that 83 per cent. of the population of these islands lives in England. You will notice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I did not say that they are English. Like everyone else, we recognise that many people from Scotland, Ireland and from parts of the former empire and the Commonwealth live in England. People living in England have a deep interest in the well-being and continuance of our United Kingdom. They want to see it functioning adequately and properly and to see removed from it the tensions that exist in Northern Ireland and, sadly, also in Scotland.

We can find answers to those problems only with the kind of good will demonstrated by the coming together of the Northern Ireland parties. I hope that we can find good will like that in Scotland. Anyone who imagines that we can find a solution that is acceptable to everyone has not lived with the Scottish or Northern Ireland dimensions. If he had, he would not talk such absolute rot.

There is no way in the west central belt of Scotland that the Conservative party can expect to form an administration at local government level. However, we do not suggest that there is something wrong with the structures or that we should have a say in the running of administrations there because we are a minority. Similarly, there are parts of the United Kingdom where the Labour party is not represented at local level or even at parliamentary level. We do not suggest in those circumstances that Labour should control such administrations.

We should consider this as a unique opportunity which should be grasped, after the general election, to consider the constitutional arrangements within the United Kingdom and find answers that can be made to work throughout the United Kingdom. As a Scot, I am aware of the difficulties and real demands for separation. Those demands are not imagined, and we must address them. We can address them adequately and properly only by considering the constitution of the United Kingdom and by maintaining the Union. I yield to no one in my defence of the Union, because the benefits to all parts of the Union have been far greater than the sum of its different parts. It would be foolish for anyone to pretend otherwise.

The United Kingdom will be worth anything as an entity only while it is united. Divided we are nothing. Even in this great new modern Europe about which we have been talking, let us not be unrealistic: it is only because the United Kingdom speaks with the voice of the United Kingdom within Europe that we mean anything. Divided we would mean little.

That is why, within the context of Europe and in the context of the problems that we face in the constitutional parts of the United Kingdom, we should consider this to be a unique opportunity. That is why I wanted to participate in the debate. I speak as a Unionist to fellow Unionists. I speak unashamedly on behalf of the United Kingdom. As everyone knows, I regularly appear here in my native dress because I am unashamedly a Scot as well. That is why we must find the answers that suit all of us.

8.47 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I will shortly be taking part in my fifth general election. In the previous four I was regularly, and without fail, asked by the public about my view and my party's view of the affairs of Northern Ireland. One of the depressing aspects for me of those past four elections is that, frankly, I was not able to offer a solution to those questioners. At the time, no one else could offer such solutions. Even more depressingly, the public in Great Britain have tended to accept that there was no solution and that we could only carry on muddling along as best we could and as we have.

It is a shame that there are not more hon. Members in the House for such an important debate on Northern Ireland. However, no one can have failed to be impressed by the two speeches from the two party leaders in Northern Ireland who come from very different historical traditions.

Mr. Kilfedder: There were three such speeches.

Mr. Carlile: I do apologise. There were three speeches from party leaders from Northern Ireland. We heard three speeches from the leaders of parties in Northern Ireland from very different historical perspectives. We have heard comments from those different perspectives from which we can draw encouragement. I feel great respect for what was said by those leaders tonight.

It may just be that the British public will have greater expectations in the forthcoming general election when they ask questions about Northern Ireland. It will be difficult, because it is always difficult in such discussions, not to answer in platitudes and not to use cliches about conciliation. However, although it is a word that has been rejected from time to time in the House, conciliation is now possible in Northern Ireland. Indeed, I should like to add my great regard for the Secretary of State, who has played a considerable part in the effort that has been made in recent years. He cannot get everything right—he is not perfect. He was once the chairman of the Conservative party, and that is clear evidence of his imperfections. However, in Northern Ireland, he has achieved a good deal in moving towards that conciliation which the British public are now beginning to expect.

I should like to say a brief word about the position of the Churches and religious leaders from the perspective of somebody who represents a seat in Great Britain but who takes an interest in Northern Ireland. Church leaders have, of course, a very important moral role, although I believe not a political role, in the affairs of all countries, whatever the religion, creed, sect, or part of a religion. The responsibility of leading the polity is the responsibility of politicians. Politicians can cross religious divisions. I particularly congratulate politicians in Northern Ireland, sometimes representing small parties in difficult circumstances, who make it their business and their determination to cross those religious divides.

Many of us feel concerned from time to time by the effect of religious fervour on objective political judgment. That is why politicians have a far greater role to play than religious leaders.

We must also recognise that terrorists are criminals. An insight into the criminal mind is not easy to gain, because criminals come in so many different guises. There is no more sinister criminal guise than that of the terrorist. We must recognise that it is a vain hope that, even if politicians manage to reach a settlement of those extremely difficult issues which nobody should underestimate, there will be no more terrorists. There will still be some terrorists. Unfortunately, we must accept that there will be madmen who will regard it their business and their mission to continue terrorist activities. That will not mean that political discussions have necessarily failed. We will simply have to continue to try to isolate the terrorists, to reduce their effectiveness, to ensure that they are the most unpopular people in the community and, above all, to ensure that they are effectively policed, hunted down and brought to justice.

The irony which the terrorists never seem to realise is that, far from driving the British Government and the British security forces out of Northern Ireland, they have actually increased with every outrage the participation of the United Kingdom Government in Northern Ireland.

There must be a next stage after the Anglo-Irish Agreement. That stage must include investment and steps dramatically to reduce unemployment. It depends upon there being an agreement which, while fully recognising the constitutional facts, builds upon opportunities not differences. Some hon. Members believe that the next stage after the Anglo-Irish Agreement necessarily involves strengthening Dublin's role. That is not necessarily so. Hon. Members who signed an early-day motion two days ago, attacking the leader of my party, show a miserable misunderstanding of what is meant by a next stage. They now bear a great responsibility to demonstrate to the House that they, too, believe in conciliation and do not intend to obstruct that process. We look forward to hearing that message from them tonight.

Other measures can be taken for Northern Ireland. The improvement of the legislative process is needed. For example, the electricity privatisation legislation, which was of considerable importance to the people of Northern Ireland, was passed with minimum debate and with no opportunity to vote or to amend it. Of course there is a need—it goes almost without saying—to give the people of Northern Ireland an opportunity for legislation affecting them to be properly debated.

I return to the point at which I started. Many hon. Members who do not represent Northern Ireland constituencies yet who are in daily contact with members of the public in the Great Britain part of the United Kingdom have great expectations—possibly unrealistic

[Mr. Carlile]

expectations—of the talks which are currently starting. We wish them well. We hope that the public will begin to discuss those issues as if the outrages which have taken place occurred not in some distant part but in a part of our own country, as much a part of our own country as Wolverhampton or Welshpool. It is only when the public examine the issues on that basis that they will give the message to all politicians from all parties in Northern Ireland that they want them to succeed and that they expect them to succeed.

8.56 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Because I represent all of Northern Ireland in another place, I stood today in the heart of Lurgan and I saw the damage that was done —an estimated £5 million—worth. The heart of Lurgan is destroyed. It came home to me particularly because the church in which my parents were married was also damaged today. As I stood in that special place for me, I wondered what the end would be. I also stood in Adelaide street today, in the city of Belfast, where £1·5 million of damage was done.

The House likes to hear things that please. I have been here for 22 years. It has never been my policy to say in the House anything different from what I say at home. I do not come here with a different face. I do not come here to say something that will please people. I come here to tell what my constituents demand that an honest representative says. I must say it tonight.

There is a perception in Northern Ireland—I know that my colleague the leader of the Ulster Unionists shares this view—that the Government, indeed, successive British Governments, have not the will to win the battle against the IRA. As a result, there is a feeling that one day the "Brits" as my constituents call them, will leave. Until that fear is laid to rest, the people of Northern Ireland cannot have confidence that the terrorists will be done with and that this Government or any Government who follow them have the will to defeat terrorism. Until that perception comes through, there will not be confidence in Northern Ireland.

I was recently reading what I said to the opening conference of the last talks, which are now dead. We are to have new talks. I said to the Secretary of State:

> "It is a fact that needs to be put clearly on record that the majority of the Unionist population in this Province is not really convinced that Her Majesty's Government has the will to win the battle against terrorism. Until that will is demonstrated, not just in condemnatory and graphic descriptions of the IRA's atrocities but by definite action which will strike at the very heart of terrorism, the majority of the population will not be prepared to put faith in the Government or grant to it trust and confidence. In short, "Actions speak louder than words." Why is it, people ask, that so soon after an atrocity like Glenanne—

the blowing up of a UDR centre—

> "the security forces can have a successful strike?"

That was in the village of Coagh, where IRA men on a murder mission were brought to justice and there were killings.

> "When the people see an effective security policy being pursued by the Government then and only then will the Government have the response of confidence from the people."

We have the same thing now. We can simply change Glenanne to Teebane and Coagh to Coalisland. The same thing is repeated.

I am sorry that we do not have time to go over what we put to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister said, "I will not go into a hidey-hole. You can come back and I will give you a reasoned response to the proposals that you have put to me on the security front." We will welcome the opportunity to go back and talk as soon as possible about the proposals that we put to him.

The Government and the House must realise that the people who are doing the killing, bombing and murdering, those people who yesterday shot a man and killed him when he was driving a lorry, do not care about political talks. Does anyone in the House think that because John Hume, James Molyneaux, Ian Paisley and John Alderdice sit at a table, the terrorists will stop their killing? Let us disillusion ourselves. Let us come down to hard facts. Those people are not interested in politics, democracy or life. They are interested in carrying on criminal activities of the vilest sort.

Every time that it seems that something will stop the terrorists in their tracks, someone comes up with a proposal to give them oxygen. Reference has been made to clergy in the debate. Clergymen recently said that they would talk to the IRA. We will soon have a proposal: "Why not have them at the table? They are better at the table than away from it." We shall have a galaxy of people coming forward on a great rescue mission. By so doing, instead of discrediting the terrrorists, such people give them credibility. They will bring them to some conference table, if not the conference that the Secretary of State is convening.

As I said in the talks, no amount of political talking will deal with terrorism or the terrorists of Northern Ireland. Anyone who understands anything about republican terrorism knows what happened in the Irish Republic. After the treaty, the Republic faced the same situation. There was civil war. It was bloody: father fought son, and son fought brother. There came one man, called Kevin O'Higgins. He had the task of getting cosmos out of chaos. He did it, but he was butchered. He did it because he knew how republican terrorism operated. If the terrorists had thought that they could gain by the gun, they would have kept to the gun.

De Valera led the irregulars. He had one of his colleagues, Michael Collins, massacred. Close comrades, who had fought the British, fought one another. That terrorism was put down because there was a resolution, a determination and a will to do it. After that, peace came to the south of Ireland. There was a resurgence of IRA violence, but de Valera put it down in the same way.

Someone will have to grasp the problem of terrorism. Someone at the Dispatch Box—it does not matter which party they belong to—will have to show that there are enough guts, determination and resolution to deal with terrorism and to show terrorists, once and for all, that they cannot succeed. Terrorists do not believe that at present. They think that they will succeed and they are receiving encouragement from certain parts of the community.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): In his opening speech, the Secretary of State said:

> "Terrorists are no nearer achieving their aims."

Does my hon. Friend agree that that is not because successive Governments have taken action? The Anglo-Irish Agreement helped the aims of the IRA. It is because of the fortitude of the good people of Ulster in their stand and their resolution against the IRA. That is why we are not on the Dublin road tonight.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The determination of the Ulster people is certainly the main factor in this business. The people on the streets of Lurgan and on Adelaide street today—sweeping up the glass, boarding up their windows and putting up signs saying "business as usual"—are the people who are keeping Ulster going. That is because they are fighting for the hearths, their homes, their families and their future, and I must emphasise that.

There seems to be a desire in some parts not to face up to the issues that we must face up to. When the leader of the party of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) visited Northern Ireland the other day, he castigated the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and myself but not in the language that the hon. and learned Member used in the House tonight, where it can be answered. The leader of the Alliance party called us all sorts of names at his conference, and included the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) in his comments. If the Unionist leaders wanted to do anything else, the Unionist people would remove them. They would not be here. There have been many Unionist chiefs without indians in Northern Ireland.

I am only here because the people put me here. In a few days' time, they will have the opportunity to say, "You don't come back." I represent the genuine views of those people.

The talks took place because, immediately after the previous general election, the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley and I went to see the Secretary of State for Energy, who was then Chief Whip, to discuss the possibility of having talks. We went on month after month. The talks started here and went on to Stormont. We met the heads of the civil service and the previous Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and we went on and on. We were told by our people that we were fools, and they said, "Give up and forget about the talks." The leader of the Alliance party poured cold water on those talks and told us to forget them.

The present Secretary of State started to say things. We have recorded everything that he said. The right hon. Gentleman said that we would have talks and that there would be no dilution of United Kingdom sovereignty or damage to the status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. He said that to Bangor chamber of commerce, in the constituency of the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder). The Secretary of State added:

> "Northern Ireland will not cease to be part of the United Kingdom without the consent of a majority of the people who live here. That has been the position in British law for forty years and it is reinforced by Article One of the Anglo-Irish Agreement."

That is very interesting. I see that the people who support the agreement wanted to undercut even what they tried to sell. It was a bogus sale. He also said:

> "Majority desire for change in the status clearly does not exist at present and seems unlikely in the foreseeable future. That is the reality which I believe all constitutional politicians in Northern Ireland in practice accept."

That is the reality that the Taoiseach of the Irish Republic will have to accept. There can be no going back on that.

In his pilgrim's progress through Ulster, the Secretary of State went to the Methodist college on 6 December 1989. He said:

> "We have all to face the facts as they are now. The central political fact is that a clear majority of the people of Northern Ireland wants to remain part of the United Kingdom. But it is also a fact that a minority would like to see Ireland united and the border removed. How do we resolve this fundamental difference? I accept that it is fundamental. The only way the matter can be decided in a democracy is to respect the wishes of the people. Their decision by a majority, to retain the Union, is entirely clear. Northern Ireland will remain part of the UK, unless and until there is a change of mind—and I see no sign or prospect of that in the foreseeable future. I believe passionately that the wishes of the people of Northern Ireland must be upheld."

The Secretary of State was spelling out what the facts meant. I believe that that is illuminating to a person who believes in the constitution of my Province and its legitimate right to exist. Ministers and the Leader of the Opposition point to the Anglo-Irish Agreement as if it were Ulster's constitution. The Ulster constitution does not rest on the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which never became an Act of Parliament.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, on a number of occasions, we have had exchanges along the lines to which he has referred. They were in the context of remarks which were made by the Taoiseach of the Republic of Ireland. In alluding to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, I was binding in the de facto recognition of the Government of the Republic of Ireland of the constitutional position in Northern Ireland.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I accept what the right hon. Gentleman says, but the House should not rest our constitutional position on anything in the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The Secretary of State also said in the House:

> "Although the constitutional question has often seemed central to matters in Northern Ireland, I turn to it now in the hope of putting it to one side. We regard the position as clear. Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom in national and international law. It is part of the United Kingdom because that is the clear wish of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland. There will be no change in the status of Northern Ireland unless and until a majority of the people there want it. That seems unlikely for the foreseeable future. I believe that most in this House, and I number myself among them, would wish to see the Union continue, but the principles of democracy and self-determination mean that the people of Northern Ireland must themselves be the final arbiters. By virtue of its constitution, the Republic of Ireland has since 1937 also claimed sovereignty over Northern Ireland. We do not accept or recognise that claim, which has no basis in our law or, equally important, in international law. That claim is, I know, seen by some in Northern Ireland, and in other parts of this country, as a major stumbling block to the development of constructive relationships. I do not regard it as helpful. Nor, however, do I believe that it should be a major preoccupation—for this reason: the Republic of Ireland has accepted, through the Anglo-Irish Agreement, that the status of Northern Ireland could be changed only with the consent of a majority of its people. In short, through that binding international treaty it has shown that it, too, supports the right of the people of Northern Ireland to self-determination."—[*Official Report*, 5 July 1990; Vol. 175, c. 1140.]

That was the right hon. Gentleman's interpretation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Meanwhile, the hon. Member for Foyle has said:

> "the harsh reality is that whether or not . . . Unionists . . . have the academic right to a veto on Irish unity, they have it as a matter of fact based on numbers."

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

So we can conclude tonight that the talks are not about the destruction of the Union but about getting a settlement in Northern Ireland, and, when that settlement has been achieved, about getting the relationship between new structures in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. They are now based on the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and I am sure that the Secretary of State is sick and tired listening to Unionists say, "We want an alternative to, and a replacement of, the agreement." We have never said anything else and that is why we are at the talks. Let that be clear to hon. Members in all parts of the House. We are at the talks because the Government said, "We shall consider an alternative to, and a replacement of, the Anglo-Irish Agreement."

I appreciate that, when Governments sign treaties, they continually say, "We shall hold to them." But I remember a Minister stating in the House, "We shall never change the poll tax," and a short while later it was changed. The ordinary people feel that there should be a higher degree of honesty. They believe that, when somebody says that he will not change something, he will stand by that decision. Unfortunately, politicians do not do that. I have not met many politicians in my 22 years who have not made changes.

My hon. Friends and I have laboured the point, but I do not want anyone to be under any illusion about why we are there. We must deal with the entanglement of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. We cannot escape from that, and I am prepared to face it head on.

How can one have a neighbourly relationship if a neighbour claims one's property? Living next door to me is a neighbour who used to be a prominent member of the Alliance party. I do not know whether he went down the Damascus or some other road, but evidently he has fallen out with that party. He used to say, "Ian, you have a very fine lawn mower. Will you lend it to me?" I said I would lend it to him with pleasure. On another occasion he remarked, "I notice that you have an electric hedge cutter. I would like to cut my hedge, if you would lend it to me," —and I was willing to lend it to him.

If he looked over my hedge and said, "I own your house. I am going to put you, your wife and family out of your home," he would not borrow my lawn mower or hedgecutter again. There is no need for hon. Members to take a pious view about that. My reaction to such a state of affairs would represent a fact of life. The fact of life is that we have a Berlin wall, and it was not built by Ulster Unionists.

Let us get the matter straight. I have heard a strange history of Northern Ireland and what the people of Northern Ireland did to the nationalists when Stormont was founded. I was never a part of a Government in Stormont so I cannot be blamed for what the Government did there. I was leader of the opposition when Stormont finished, so I was on the opposition benches.

The Unionists appointed their members to a Council of All Ireland. The south refused to appoint anyone to that Council of All Ireland. If the nationalists had come to Stormont at the beginning, they would have had just the same privileges as anyone else elected to that House, but they chose not to come to the old Assembly.

Hon. Members need not hold this House up as a paragon of virtue, because we took a stand on the Anglo-Irish Agreement and this House voted for us to be thrown off every Committee of the House.

Mr. Hume: Does the hon. Gentleman know which is the second city of Northern Ireland? He may call it a different name from me, but he knows where it is. Will he explain how, for 70 years, a third of the population ran that city, despite the fact that they had only a third of the vote? How could that have been done fairly?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I had nothing whatsoever to do with that, as the hon. Gentleman knows. I was not even living at the time—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman wants to talk about discrimination, I shall talk about it. Let us look at the facts. We have heard a lot tonight about history and hon. Members have said that nothing should be imposed. Was not the Anglo-Irish agreement imposed on us? The hon. Member for Foyle need not point his finger at the Front Bench, because he encouraged the Irish Government.

Some Northern Ireland voters have told me that there was a time when they did not need the Unionists. But now that they are in trouble, they come back and say that they want us. I was surprised that the spokesman for the Liberal Democratic party, the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery, said that he did not know what to say at the election, because at the last election we had that glorious Anglo-Irish Agreement that was meant to settle everything and give us peace, stability and reconciliation.

There has been a rising tide of slaughter, with 33 deaths this year alone, since the agreement came into force. What has the agreement brought? The fact that we are debating this matter tonight proves that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is a failure. Many hon. Members have told me that, if they had to vote for the agreement again, they would not do, so because it did not do what was promised.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Does my hon. Friend recall that, during the visit of the leader of the Liberal Democrats to Northern Ireland, he chose to create an atmosphere that would not be conducive to talks by bad-mouthing every Unionist Member he could find? He said that he wanted to sustain the life of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, failed though it has, and—more than that—that he wanted to build on it. Does my hon. Friend agree that to build on foundations that have been proved to be unsteady would not be a wise course for anyone to take?

Rev. Ian Paisley: It is even more unwise to build on foundations that are rejected by the electorate.

The Unionists played the democratic card. They resigned their seats and fought an election. They brought 250,000 people on to the streets and kept them in order. What did the House do? Hon. Members snubbed their nose at them and said, "We do not care, we do not need you." They will find that they will need the Protestant people and every law-abiding Roman Catholic and Protestant if they are to deal with the trouble. The Secretary of State knows that the trouble could get seriously out of hand and, instead of talking to elected representatives, he might find that gunmen had replaced them. He had better make up his mind whether he wants democracy or the rule of the gun to stand in Northern

Ireland. It is a serious matter, as anyone from Northern Ireland knows. That is why we asked for the debate, and joined others in doing so.

We are told about the wonderful united Ireland that we are asked to consider——

Mr. Mallon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Rev. Ian Paisley: No, I shall not give way as I want to make this point.

When Ireland was divided, what was the proportion of Protestants in the Irish Republic? Some 10·4 per cent. of the total population were Protestants. In 1926, the proportion fell to 7·4 per cent.; in 1936 it was 6·6 per cent.; in 1941 it was 5·7 per cent. Between 1911 and 1926, the numbers of the Protestant faith fell by 106,000. From 1926 to 1936, that figure dropped by a further 26,233. However, the number of Roman Catholics rose by 22,651. In 1961, Protestants represented 3·7 per cent. of the population. That figure has decreased and is now less than 3 per cent. What does that mean? It means that the Protestant population in the south of Ireland has decreased by more than 70 per cent. It is no wonder that Protestants in Northern Ireland are fearful when they discover that fact, which has to be faced.

The Roman Catholic population in Northern Ireland is increasing. When I entered the House, a Tory Minister said to me, "It is all right—the birth rate will take you all into a united Ireland." He said it as though Protestants did not also breed. We will not remove the problem simply by talking about the birth rate or by changing the electoral system of voting.

The electoral system of voting was changed and our councils were done away with, as was Stormont. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said that it would be the end of the Irish problem when Stormont was dissolved, but it was only the beginning. On that day, I said that what we had experienced was a mere Sunday school picnic and now we would see the real release of evil.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery sent his friend over to Northern Ireland. I was interested to see what he said. The spokesman for the Liberal Democrats, Lord Holme, said:

> "It is very welcome that the Dublin Government seems to be prepared to contemplate amendment of Articles 2 and 32 of the Irish constitution.
>
> The challenge to Unionist leaders is to work out what they are prepared, amongst their equally cherished beliefs, to surrender in return".

That is an immoral, criminal and illegal claim.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Rev. Ian Paisley: No, I shall not give way as I want to put it clearly on the record tonight that the spokesman told me that was to surrender the Union because the immoral—

Mr. Alex Carlile *rose*——

Rev. Ian Paisley: I will not give way.

My Unionist friends and I have to give up our cherished inheritance. Those were the sort of men that were sent over to Northern Ireland by the Liberal Democrats to tell us to surrender that.

Rev. William McCrea: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way to one who has not had the opportunity of speaking in the debate. Instead, I have had to listen to interference from those who had the chance to speak and should have used it to speak sense.

Does my hon. Friend understand the fears of the Protestant community? In recent days, a part-time member of the UDR was the subject of an attempted murder by four IRA personnel in the county of Fermanagh. One of them was shot by the UDR man and three were arrested in the Irish Republic. I have been told that one of the three—up on an attempted murder charge—has been released by the Irish Republican authorities on £20,000 bail, yet that same person is being sought for the murder of Gillian Johnson and the attempted murder of one of my constituents. That is the kind of justice that we can expect fom Dublin.

Rev. Ian Paisley: All we have to do is look at the sad saga of extradition. I have with me a list of all the extradition cases that have been refused. We were promised great co-operation, but I can give my list of refusals to the House. We are dealing with hard realities. I have put proposals, and I will put more proposals to the conference when it meets. I believe that it should meet. We must face up to these issues, but we will get nowhere if we sweep things under the carpet.

I will not ask a foreign state in any plebiscite to decide how I live as a citizen of this United Kingdom. I say that my country has a right to say how I live. No foreign country will tell the majority of people in Northern Ireland how they should live. The Anglo-Irish Agreement which was imposed on us has failed.

If we have the will, we can get an agreement. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley has talked about a larger agreement that takes in the whole of the United Kingdom. Hon. Members must realise what we have gone through in Northern Ireland. We have already shown the former Prime Minister our list of matters to discuss: she admitted that it was a good one. We are anxious to have them discussed.

The House should remember that it was the Dublin Government who brought our deliberations to an end by holding a meeting on 16 July. That got us nowhere. Perhaps this time common sense will prevail, perhaps wisdom will prevail, and perhaps we will get a settlement.

9.32 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I apologise to those who have been here since 7 o'clock but who have failed to get a chance to participate, especially the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), who has tried vainly to catch the Chair's eye and who has sought to play both ends against the middle by wearing green and orange.

I apologise too to the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), who is an old friend of mine. He was my opponent the first time I fought a parliamentary election, in 1970. He holds one record that is to his credit: I polled more votes in 1970 than I have polled in the three elections since then, all of which I won, but he beat me in 1970 by 30,000. I wish him a happy retirement, and I am sorry that he has failed to catch the Chair's eye on what is possibly his last opportunity to speak in such a debate.

I also apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), who did not manage to speak in the debate. I am sure that the House, like me, looks forward to his future contributions on Northern Ireland affairs.

[Mr. Jim Marshall]

I pay my respects to the Secretary of State, and I am sorry that he missed our debate on Tuesday. The right hon. Gentleman may have read my valedictory tribute to him on Tuesday.

Mr. Brooke: I read the hon. Gentleman's account. During that summer I saw 10 hon. Members at cricket grounds around the country. He was the only Labour Member I saw, and I shall always remember him for it.

Mr. Marshall: I am pleased to hear that. I was about to say as a final valedictory that, if he wants to attend Grace road during the coming cricket season, I shall be prepared to pay his entrance fee and that of his son if his son still entertains an interest in cricket.

I thank the Secretary of State for opening the debate in the thoughtful and sincere way that has characterised his stewardship of the Northern Ireland Office. He said that the debate would be wide-ranging and reflective. That is an apt description of the speeches by my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux).

I am a little sad that the concluding speech by a Member from the Province showed the problems and difficulties that any British politician will face in seeking to reconcile the differences between the two communities in the Province. It also showed the great hurdles that we shall all have to jump if we are to bring lasting peace to that unhappy part of the United Kingdom. I hope that, at some time in the future, we shall hear a spokesperson for the DUP who offers hope rather than despair, who looks to the future rather than to the past and to the time when both communities will be reconciled and working together rather than living in the divisions of the past and seeking to perpetuate them into the future.

I agree with the Secretary of State about the achievements of the people of the Province. He mentioned science and education and I thought that he was about to mention rocketry and the first Irishman on the moon. The list of achievements that he brought to the attention of the House shows the great contribution that people in the Province have made not just to the United Kingdom but to the welfare of the world. I echo the Secretary of State's tributes to the security forces. On these occasions, we have always given our support and praise to the security services, and we shall continue to do so in the remaining weeks of opposition. When we form the Government after the next election, we shall be in a better and more positive position to give the security forces real assistance and help.

I also agree with the Secretary of State about the divisions in the community. He spoke about the difference of views on constitutional issues and about different national aspirations. He said that those differences introduced an international context to Northern Ireland. He was wise to make that point and, although he went over it quickly, its significance was not lost on me. Later in his speech, he linked it to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. His analysis that the differences introduce an international context is correct. When Labour forms the Government, we shall continue to see the problem in those terms and to seek to introduce a solution which takes that context into account.

The hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) gave a pessimistic view of Irish history. I do not share his general pessimism, although I fear that he may be right in one specific area—that he will not get a chair at the talks, although I am sure that he was not expressing pessimism in that narrow personal context. I reinforce the view expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) that the hon. Member for North Down is not correct when he says that articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution legitimise the IRA. Nothing legitimises the IRA, and we have to make that clear beyond peradventure.

In a thought-provoking speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle was surely right to emphasise that diversity can be enriching rather than divisive.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley—I am feeling faint, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall suspend the sitting for five minutes.

9.40 pm

Sitting suspended.

9.45 pm

On resuming—

Mr. Marshall: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, that that was the only way in which I could attract a full House!

I was about to comment on the contributions of other hon. Members, but, in view of the lateness of the hour, I fear that I cannot do so. Let me simply put on record Labour's position, which will mean reiterating many of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara).

In opposition, we have continued to support policies that seek to achieve peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, and we shall pursue the same objectives when we are in government. Like other right hon. and hon. Members, we share the anger and the anguish that arise after each terrorist outrage, and we pay tribute to all those in the Province who seek, in the face of all the difficulties, to lead normal lives.

I say to all the people of Northern Ireland that terrorism will not succeed. No terrorist group can bomb, kill or maim its way to the conference table. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North has made it clear that we support the Secretary of State's three-strand approach to the talks. We look forward to reactivating those talks after the election, and to using all our best endeavours to reach a successful conclusion.

9·47 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I am grateful to the hon. Members for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) and for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) for their kind remarks about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I have worked with my right hon. Friend throughout his time in his present post, and I look forward to working with him in government in the future; I found their remarks gracious and appropriate.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North began by making it clear that violence was futile. This morning, I—like the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. I. Paisley)—stood in the middle of the high street in Lurgan. The hon. Member for Antrim, North said that the heart of Lurgan was damaged. In one sense, it was appallingly damaged: 150 yards of shops on both sides of the main street will probably have to come down. Yet, in another sense, the heart of Lurgan was not damaged. The people were in their shops, the fishmonger had set up a stall and the pub bore an "open for business" sign. People were going about their business.

Violence is futile. I could not help making a contrast between two events. I had been chairing discussions in Parliament buildings between representatives of the four constitutional parties about briefings that we all agreed should take place. I went from that constitutional political activity to the high street in Lurgan, and the contrast was extreme—the one giving hope, and building a better future for the Province; the other bringing despair, destruction and desperation, going nowhere. In Lurgan I said, as others said before me—both Opposition spokesmen have said it today—that no one shall bomb his way to the conference table. I repeat that in the House tonight.

The security policy that we pursue has to be a security policy within the rule of law. The hon. Member for Antrim, North said that there is a perception that the security policy is not effective. I totally absolve him of the charge, but he knows that sometimes that phrase is used as a euphemism, meaning that we should let the security forces go out and kill whomever they fancy killing—anyone against whom they have suspicion. That would reduce the security forces to the level of the terrorist, and we shall not permit that to happen, because we are a Government, a Parliament and a country of the rule of law.

We shall not allow that to happen for a second reason, too. To allow it to happen would be to destroy the confidence of the community in the security forces. Confidence in the way in which the security forces do their job is not an optional extra, or a veneer that one adds to try to get through difficult situations from time to time. If the community cannot have confidence in the way in which the security forces act within the law, the community will not be prepared to offer the security forces its support, and thus the security policy itself will be undermined.

I am happy to reaffirm to the House our commitment to the security forces. I accept the point made by the hon. Member for Antrim, North—that some people have a perception that we are not committed, and that we do not have the will to win. I look him in the eye from this Dispatch Box and tell him that I have the will to win. We have the will to win, no matter how long it takes. This House has the will to win.

The hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) said, "I am a Brit,"—and he is. But he was saying something more profound when he used those words. We hear spokesmen for Sinn Fein saying, "We want the Brits out," and that phrase gets applied to the security forces and to British Ministers—even to me, although I was born in the Belmont road. But the phrase misses the point, which is that it is not we who constitute the British presence in Northern Ireland. It is the people who constitute that presence, and will continue to constitute it until such time as they democratically choose to change their minds—if ever that day should come.

The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) talked about peace walls, and pointed out that there were 13 of them in Belfast. I am now in my seventh year as a Minister in the Northern Ireland Office, and one of the things that has struck me over that time is how easy it is to erect peace walls and how difficult it is to get rid of them. There is no mechanism in Northern Ireland to review peace walls and to decide that their time has gone. They tell us something about the insecurity of the Province. Walls exist not only in bricks and mortar but in hearts and minds. They offer security—there is no doubt about that—but eventually they imprison. They prevent new ideas, new thoughts and new relationships, and they prevent people from observing the changes taking place around them. I make no partisan point, because everyone can be imprisoned behind walls.

Mr. Kilfedder: The Minister will recall that I referred to the fact that for 20 years I have led the opposition to religious apartheid in education, and I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate him on the support that he has given to the cause of integration.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. If we can persuade without threat our young people to grow up unburdened by some of the mythology that affected us as we were growing up, the prospects for the Province will be brighter.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) stressed two points. He said that he thought that the Secretary of State and I agreed with him, and I confirm that we do. The talks are not peace talks, and he was right to stress that. He was right to stress it because it is true and also because otherwise, they would lead to expectations in the community and in the nation which cannot be fulfilled and which may potentially be counter-productive as a consequence.

The right hon. Gentleman was also right to say that the inter-party tension among politicians in Northern Ireland is lower now than possibly at any time in the past 20 years. That is a tribute to him and his colleagues, to the hon. Member for Foyle and his colleagues, to the hon. Member for North Down and to the hon. Member for Antrim, North and his colleagues.

It is a pity that more people do not visit Northern Ireland. It is also a pity that more hon. Members do not visit Northern Ireland and do not attend these debates because if they did, they would learn the truth of what I am saying, but they would also learn to salute the courage of the Members of Parliament for Northern Ireland who in their daily lives face threats and pressures which the rest of us, thank God, do not have to face.

Violence in Northern Ireland can stop tomorrow. It will stop the day the terrorists realise that they cannot win, that they will not win and that they will not be permitted to win. They cannot be permitted to win, because, if they were, the nature of our democracy would be fundamentally changed in the process.

Security policy alone will not be enough. It is the combination of security policy and political, economic and social policy, together with the resilience of the people of Northern Ireland, which will make the difference.

We look forward to more talking, to talking before a general election and to talking after a general election. I am hopeful about the talks but they must be characterised by a willingness on the part of everyone involved to explain what they mean, what they stand for and what they aspire to, and by a willingness to listen to what others mean, aspire to and want to see achieved. There should also be a willingness to accommodate the views of others, to make hard choices and to balance the short term against the long term and against the ultimate safeguard that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.

I have confidence in this Government's contribution and that of the Irish Government, to that process. The

[Dr. Mawhinney]

events of the past 12 months have massively increased and concentrated my confidence in the leaders of the political parties in Northern Ireland to contribute constructively to that process.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Mr. Speaker *then proceeded, pursuant to paragraph (5) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates), to put the deferred Question on supplementary estimates, 1991-92 (Class II Vote 2).*

Resolved,

That a further sum not exceeding £27,939,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges that will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1992 for expenditure by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on grants and subscriptions etc. to certain international organisations, special payments and assistance, scholarships, military aid and sundry other grants and services.

Mr. Speaker *then proceeded to put the Questions which he was directed to put at that hour, pursuant to paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 53 (Questions on voting of estimates, &c.) and the Order [28 February].*

ESTIMATES, 1991-92 (NAVY) VOTE A

Resolved,

That during the year ending on 31st March 1992 an additional number not exceeding 75 all ranks be maintained for Naval Service.

ESTIMATES, 1992-93 (NAVY) VOTE A

Resolved,

That during the year ending on 31st March 1993 a number not exceeding 65,400 all ranks be maintained for Naval Service.

ESTIMATES, 1992-93 (ARMY) VOTE A

Resolved,

That during the year ending on 31st March 1993 a number not exceeding 165,645 all ranks be maintained for Army Service, a number not exceeding 121,000 for the Individual Reserves, a number not exceeding 79,600 for the Territorial Army and a number not exceeding 6,970 for the Ulster Defence Regiment.

ESTIMATES, 1992-93 (AIR) VOTE A

Resolved,

That during the year ending on 31st March 1993 a number not exceeding 88,620 all ranks be maintained for the Air Force Service, a number not exceeding 19,350 for the Royal Air Force Reserve and a number not exceeding 2,800 for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

ESTIMATES EXCESSES, 1990-91

Resolved,

That a sum not exceeding £418,563,447·96 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to make good excesses of certain grants for Defence and Civil Services for the year ended on 31st March 1991, as set out in House of Commons Paper No. 224.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 1991-92

Resolved,

That a further sum not exceeding £3,031,401,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges for Defence and Civil Services for the year ending on 31st March 1992, as set out in House of Commons Paper No. 226.

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the three resolutions this day relating to supplementary estimates 1991-92 and estimates, excesses 1990-91 by the Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. David Mellor, Mr. Francis Maude, Mrs. Gillian Shephard and Mr. John Maples.

CONSOLIDATED FUND (No. 3) BILL

Mr. Francis Maude accordingly presented a Bill to apply certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund to the service of the years ending on 31 March 1991 and 1992: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 101.]

Shipping Industry

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

10.1 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I have spoken in a number of debates on the British shipping industry, and I am particularly pleased to be able to address the House tonight again on that issue which is of considerable importance to my constituency of Dover and to Deal.

Dover has a long history as a port and my constituents have a strong interest in our local and national shipping industry. Currently, Dover's port and ferries provide employment for about 7,000 people, of whom 70 per cent. are residents of Kent. Many live in Dover and Deal and in the adjoining area. A number of seafarers also live in my constituency and work on British ships which sail from other ports in the United Kingdom. The House will be aware that our local ferry industry in Dover has been a tremendous success story, with ever-increasing numbers of passengers and freight tonnage carried between this country and the continent.

However, the current position of our national shipping industry causes my constituents considerable concern. The importance of our shipping industry must surely not be in question. It is important for trade. Our nation has lived by its skills at trade for many centuries. Our balance of payments surplus from shipping is currently about £2·5 billion, with gross earnings of £4 billion. It has also been estimated that that balance of payments surplus could be considerably increased; many in the shipping industry believe that it could be increased to £10 billion over a period with increased investment in British ships.

Our shipping industry is also important for defence. We have seen two wars since the Government have been in office—the Falklands and the Gulf wars. The British merchant marine had important roles to play in both wars in supporting our forces.

We also expect that, in future, if our forces are required to go into action again—of course we all hope not, but from a practical point of view we must be ready for the worst—mobile forces will probably be required, and out-of-area forces in particular. In the circumstances, we must be aware that the British merchant marine will have an even more imortant role in supporting our forces than perhaps it had in the past. Our shipping industry is also important for the transport of passengers as well as goods. We, especially we in Dover, must recognise that not all goods can go through the channel tunnel when it eventually opens. Therefore, our shipping industry, in particular the port and ferry industry in Dover, is vital to the national interest.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) will appreciate that my constituents in Larne depend very much on ferry services between Larne and Stranraer, and they are equally concerned at the reduction in the British fleet. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that something must be done urgently so that we can introduce more young people into shipping and ensure that they have proper training right through to officer level?

Mr. Shaw: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is a vital industry for the nation and for his constituency as well. The industry needs to recruit a considerable number of young people to make sure that we have sufficient officers and ratings in future. It is through large numbers of young people joining the industry that we will make sure that Britain is again a leading seafaring nation, with modern ships and well-trained young people crewing them. The hon. Gentleman shares my concern about the decline in the number of ships and tonnage. We should consider the reasons for that decline.

It is certainly wrong for some hon. Members to say that the Government are responsible for the decline in the British merchant marine. The decline started well before the Government came to office. The start of the 1970s saw the beginning of the decline in the British merchant marine. The reasons for that are not only that Britain's share of world trade was declining but factors beyond our control, such as decisions made in the United Nations, supported by British Governments and by many other Governments.

Those decisions affected the extent of cross-trading. In consequence, developing countries ensured that their own shipping fleets had an increased share of world trade and trade from their shores. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development code on shipping brought into being a group which resulted in many developing countries trying to obtain 40:40:20 ratios for trade, whereby 40 per cent. was reserved for the developing countries and only 20 per cent. was to be allocated to cross-traders. Of course, Britain has expanded its merchant marine over many centuries, based on cross-trading.

Also, during the 1970s the Soviet and communist nations expanded their merchant marines with considerable subsidies, and built unprofitable ships which would not succeed in any market-oriented economy. In consequence, our shipping fleet faced considerable competition.

The British merchant marine was also not helped by the United Kingdom economy in the 1970s. The economy did not go through a very good phase. There was a lack of economic growth and, therefore, a lack of growth in trade, which did not help our merchant marine.

The then Labour Government took desperate measures to build subsidised ships. We had the curious situation that several ships were built in British shipyards only to be sold under subsidy to Poland and used by the communist regime in Poland to undercut British ships in the markets in which our ships operated. All that, combined with convenience flagging and some ships built under subsidised tax regimes in overseas countries, meant that our merchant marine had a difficult 1970s. It is no wonder that the decline has continued.

It is also worth noting that the 1970s was a bad decade not only because there was a significant decline in the merchant marine but because, in the 1970s, British Governments did not address safety problems as they should have been addressed. Therefore, it is particularly pleasing that, in their Merchant Shipping Act 1988, the present Government introduced safety measures which have pleased all my constituents who work on our ferries in Dover. Indeed, in Britain our ships are now much safer than many foreign ships which call at our ports. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will address that issue in his reply.

The decline in our ships in Great Britain has also led to the problem referrred to by the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs). There is a reduced number of ratings and the number of people entering the industry in recent

[Mr. Shaw]

years has not been at a level that will sustain a satisfactory number of officers and ratings for the decade to come. I am pleased that the recruitment of officers has recently stabilised, but I urge the Government carefully to consider employment in our shipping industry and to come up with policies that facilitate training and improve the numbers of people who enter our industry in the years ahead.

One should also draw attention to the many measures taken by the Government which have been helpful to the shipping industry. The economic growth that we have seen in the 1980s has resulted in considerably improved standards of living in Britain. In consequence, our industry has expanded in terms not only of exports but of imports. To the shipping industry, both exports and imports are of particular importance.

Economic growth has brought more trade which at least has meant that the decline in our shipping industry has been less sharp than it might have been. Of particular interest to Dover has been the shift in the Government's policies from direct to indirect taxation and lower rates of income tax. Lower rates of income tax have led to increased use of Dover ferries. After every reduction in income tax, there has been a considerable expansion in the number of passengers travelling on Dover ferries.

I am also pleased to draw attention to the fact that the present Government have helped seafarers in the taxation of their overseas earnings. Section 45 of the Finance Act 1991 is particularly welcome to seafarers because it gives them better relief in certain circumstances against taxation of their overseas earnings. The new safety measures to which I referred earlier have increased the public's confidence in our ferries and our shipping industry. By increasing public confidence, we ensure that more use is made of the ferries between Dover and the continent.

However, I should also mention one measure that has not been helpful. It is the Treasury's idea of fiscal neutrality. The Treasury has been too theoretical in its approach to capital allowances. Perhaps the computer model that it uses does not sufficiently consider the risk factors involved in investing in British industry, especially the shipping industry. If risk factors were taken into account in the Treasury model, the cash flow cost of a ship would be considered more carefully in relation to the risk that the shipowner had to bear. The cash flow cost of a ship is borne up front, yet the tax relief is spread over many years—far too many. The tax relief needs to be reconciled more closely with the cash flow cost on day one.

Our shipping industry is even facing problems from our European Community partners. Evidence is emerging that some EC countries are abusing the principle of a level playing field and giving considerable benefits to their shipowners and seafarers. Those countries are encouraging their shipping industries unfairly when compared with the British shipping industry. Some EC countries, and some European countries outside the EC, have been giving some form of subsidy, through reliefs on payroll taxes and on the equivalent of our national insurance.

The Department of Transport should carefully monitor what those countries are doing and should set up a monitoring system in close co-operation with the General Council of British Shipping and employees' representatives so that we can ensure that British shipping is not unfairly prejudiced by the actions of other EC member states.

The Government should also consider other measures to support our shipping industry. We must have more investment in the industry, and we must remember that investment is determined by profitability and cash flow. A careful examination must take place to ensure that the industry is profitable and has a positive cash flow. That is how we can ensure that more jobs are created in the industry. A return to economic growth in this country is clearly crucial. We must ensure that that growth results in considerable investment in shipping.

We must take firm action against convenience flagging. We should not allow ships to be flagged under foreign registers, and we should try to bring many ships back on to the United Kingdom register. We should also prevent ships from being flagged soley for tax reasons in overseas registers. We should not hesitate to use safety regulations to prevent subsidised and unsafe foreign-flag ships from using our ports.

Also, we should encourage the Treasury to adopt the tax measures that I mentioned earlier, and to introduce a more favourable capital allowance regime. I strongly support a 25 per cent. straight line write-off, which would ensure that British ships had a tax write-off over four years. That would reconcile the need for cash flow and tax allowances to be more closely aligned.

I would also support an examination of the question whether it would be appropriate for the employer's national insurance contribution to be restricted in the same way as the employee's contribution. The employer's rate of national insurance should not continue at the same rate after the employee's contribution levels off.

Those measures are small in total cost, but they are important and should be considered. If they cannot be considered in time for the Budget next Tuesday, they should remain on the agenda for early action if the Treasury finds that the economy and Exchequer finances allow early action to be taken.

10.19 pm

The Minister for Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) on securing an Adjournment debate on this important subject. Those of us who know my hon. Friend are aware that he has taken considerable interest in this subject during his time in the House and that, on many occasions, he has lobbied Ministers about it.

I shall do my best to respond to the points raised by my hon. Friend. However, he is aware that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will make a statement next week and it is not for us to try to anticipate what may form part of that statement. A number of my hon. Friend's suggestions relate to fiscal matters, but obviously they are matters for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

As the Minister with responsibility for shipping, I can say that the Government fully recognise the important contribution that is made to our country by the British merchant fleet and by the men and women who serve within it. On the one hand, that fleet provides an economic contribution to the country from trade and invisible earnings and, on the other, it can be called upon to play an important strategic role in our national defence.

Given the constituency of my hon. Friend, it is not surprising that he dealt at length with the role of the ferry companies. I am tremendously impressed at the way in which those companies have improved their services. Nowadays, travelling on a ferry is like going on a mini-cruise. That bodes well for the future of the ferry industry, which will face competition problems.

My hon. Friend said that we are especially reliant on shipping as an island nation, and that is well known to us. We are reliant on it not only for trade, but for the carriage of passengers, particularly to the continent. There is no doubt that the channel tunnel will offer strong competition to the ferry operators. It remains to be seen how they will adjust to that competition, but it is clear that the major operators are already planning for the future with newer, larger ships and by offering improved facilities both on board and on shore. There is no doubt that the traveller —the consumer—has already reaped the benefit of that competition.

We should be proud of the status that we hold in the maritime world. If one looks beyond the headline figures of United Kingdom registered tonnage, it is obvious that Britain is still a key player in the shipping industry. In total, British individuals and companies have an ownership or management interest in ships totalling some 41 million deadweight tonnes—or six per cent. of total world tonnage. In addition, the City is home to many international shipowners as well as an important centre of maritime insurance. I doubt that that would continue to be so under any other than a Conservative Government. It is important to remember that when considering our future as a maritime nation and the future of our maritime industry.

The headquarters of the International Maritime Organisation is located in London. It now has 136 states as members. The IMO is a highly respected international body, responsible for maritime regulation. The siting of the IMO in London demonstrates Britain's continuing high standing within the maritime world. The IMO has made great progress in creating safer and cleaner shipping lanes throughout the world to the benefit of ship owners, seafarers, manufacturers, consumers and the environment.

I am proud to say that the United Kingdom has taken a leading role in those initiatives and has been prepared, where necessary, to take a very firm stand against the less rigorous attitudes which certain IMO members are sometimes tempted to adopt. We are, for example, currently and forcefully arguing against the suggestion that some countries may wish to dilute the provisional agreement, secured last year, to phase in new stability regulations for existing roll on/roll off passenger ferries. Those new regulations arise, of course, from the investigations carried out into the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster. To ignore the results of those investigations would be to show a completely unacceptable disregard for the safety of ferry passengers.

My hon. Friend should note that we cannot rule out the possibility of taking unilateral action on this front if satisfactory agreement cannot be reached at the IMO. I hope that that goes some way towards convincing my hon. Friend of the seriousness with which the Government take the whole issue of safety. We would not want to do anything that discriminated against British flagged vessels, so we would be looking at all vessels operating in British ports. The Government do not underestimate the importance of the shipping industry.

We appreciate that the size of the fleet has declined in the recent past. As my hon. Friend suggests, there are many reasons for the decline. Changing trading patterns, the emergence of new shipping powers, and the development of new, more sophisticated technology have all played a part. Nor is the United Kingdom alone in having been affected by those changes. Since 1981, the European Community as a whole has seen a decline of about 50 per cent. in gross registered tonnage.

At the same time, the industry is still recovering from the worldwide slump which prevailed for most of the last decade. That was a time of falling freight rates and over-capacity, partly caused by the subsidies which were poured into shipbuilding and encouraged investment in uneconomic tonnage, as my hon. Friend ably pointed out. Conditions have now improved, but fierce competition has led to major rationalisation in the industry. A number of companies have diversified into more profitable areas and some shipowners have left the industry completely.

Competition remains fierce, but a joint Government-industry working party which reported in late 1990 concluded that the British shipping industry was "now lean and fit" and prepared to meet the challenges of the coming years.

I have spent some time putting the position of the merchant fleet in context. I do not apologise for that. When people speak about the declining British fleet, it is too often forgotten that the British shipping industry remains vigorous and forward-looking,

It is essential that that message is stressed time and again, for we shall not get people to go into the industry if we hear nothing but doom and gloom and prophecies about things going wrong. A more forward-looking attitude, with a more confident case being put across, is welcomed by the industry. We are not complacent. We recognise that the continued decline of the United Kingdom register must have wider ramifications, and we have taken a number of positive steps to try to reverse that trend.

I mentioned earlier the joint working party which met in 1990. Its task was to examine the current state of the industry and to identify ways in which the competitiveness of British shipping could be improved. It reported its findings in September 1990, making five major recommendations which we and the industry are pursuing.

Good progress has been made. We have already introduced simplified procedures for the type approval of ships equipment. We have also consulted widely on officer nationality, and I hope to come forward with regulations very shortly.

On cabotage, the House will know that we have fought long and hard in the EC to bring about the liberalisation of coastal trade. We will continue to press the case, and we hope that it can be resolved during the current Portuguese presidency. If not, I assure my hon. Friend that, when the United Kingdom assumes the presidency later this year, the subject will be very high indeed on our agenda. It has been on the agenda for far too long. It is time it was off the agenda and agreement reached.

Other recommendations need primary legislation to amend the Merchant Shipping Acts. It is our firm intention to come forward with legislation at the earliest suitable opportunity.

[Mr. Patrick McLoughlin]

Action on training is mainly for the industry. A training task force has been created to identify future manpower needs and to ensure that those needs are met. At the same time, the Government continue to offer financial assistance with the costs of training officer cadets and providing experienced officers with higher qualifications. The scheme has been extremely successful, increasing annual cadet recruitment from a serious low of 162 in 1987—I accept the point that my hon. Friend made about that—to more than 500 at the end of the last academic year.

The joint working party looked primarily at the economic aspects of the shipping industry. I briefly alluded to the defence role of the merchant fleet. That is a vital area which we have not overlooked. We all know what a vital role was played by our merchant ships at the time of the Falklands crisis, and I cannot pay too high a tribute to the skills and courage of the British seafarers who manned those ships.

It is understandable that concern should be expressed about the size of the fleet having declined since then. Hon. Members can, however, be assured that we monitor the fleet's capability to support our armed forces in times of crisis. My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary announced that we were undertaking a thorough review of the subject. This has been a complex task, not least because of dramatic political changes that have occurred internationally. I assure my hon. Friend, however, that the subject is being given the full and careful consideration that it deserves.

Another subject that my hon. Friend raised was the growth of the so-called "flags of convenience". Those registers can and do offer an easy way out for shipowners who are, in some cases, prepared to compromise on safety matters in order to cope with increasing costs and competition. There is little doubt that the safety records of those vessels cannot compare with those on the United Kingdom register, and the matter is of considerable concern.

We have publicly condemned the low standards which some registers are content to apply and have called for action to address the problem. For example, the more rigorous use of port state control would go a long way towards improving the safety record of the international shipping industry, particularly if it were combined with effective sanctions. Port state control has already been used to good effect in the United Kingdom. We are the only nation that consistently exceeds the agreed target figure of inspecting 25 per cent. of foreign vessels visiting our ports. In 1990, we inspected 34·4 per cent., and we have set ourselves an internal target of not less than 30 per cent. a year. I look forward to that record continuing.

It has also been suggested that we should refuse access to British ports to vessels that do not meet the same standards as our own. Such an idea may seem radical and clearly needs further thought. However, although we fully support the importance of maintaining a liberal shipping policy, we consider that freedom of access to national waters must be backed by compliance with proper safety standards, and we are committed to ensuring that that principle is given practical effect.

I realise that many countries offer wide subsidies to support their national shipping industries. But it is clear that such policies have the negative effect of distorting the market and of encouraging investment in unprofitable areas. We have seen evidence of that in the 1970s and 1980s, when investment grants led to overtonnage and many of the problems from which the industry is only just emerging today.

Instead of matching subsidy with subsidy, we should prefer to see such distortions removed so that companies can compete on equal economic grounds. My hon. Friend should be assured that we are continuing to press through the appropriate bodies—the EC and OECD—for the removal of subsidies and unfair aids to shipping.

I give my hon. Friend an undertaking that we shall look carefully at monitoring the points that he asks us to monitor, and I shall write to him in the near future.

The motion having been made at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-nine minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 6 March 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Human Organ Transplants

9.35 am

Mr. John Hughes (Coventry, North-East): I wish to present a petition. I fully support the aspirations of the petitioners, who are predominantly from the Coventry area. About 5,500 citizens have signed the petition. This test of public opinion reflects the findings of annual surveys carried out by the British Kidney Patients Association, which show that the majority of British adults —72 per cent.—are in favour of legislation of the sort that is widely accepted in Europe. It applies in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. There is a crying need for similar legislation in Britain. To those who might object, I suggest that they see themselves not as donors but as recipients. At some time any of us could be in need of a transplant.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House, in the circumstances, will take immediate steps to enact legislation that will protect patients' rights and permit surgeons to remove organs for transplantation in conditions specified by the Act of Parliament, except where the central information and records unit of the Department of Health indicates that an individual has clearly declared otherwise.

Your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Crime (Cornwall)

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I have been presented with many signatures and petitions and the one that I seek to present is in a form that is suitable for Parliament. It was assembled after the community of Perranzabuloe—especially the senior citizens thereof and those from other areas—suffered from shock, outrage and fear as a result of daylight attacks—handbag snatching with force—resulting in hospital treatment in some instances. This happened at Malpas, Truro and Perranporth. Police and ambulance personnel were required to attend the scenes of the crime.

For this reason the petitioners pray that the House calls upon the Home Office to provide the excellent Cornwall police with more support and to ensure that there are more community police officers on the beat to help reassure shocked people and children that our streets are safe.

To lie upon the Table.

BILL PRESENTED

HUMAN ORGAN TRANSPLANTS (AMENDMENT)

Mr. John Hughes, supported by Mrs. Alice Mahon and Mr. Dave Nellist, presented a Bill to amend the Human Organ Transplant Act 1989 further to provide for the circumstances in which an organ may be retrieved from a dead person for the purposes of transplant; to require the anonymity of the donor and the recipient; to define death for the purposes of that Act of 1989 as the total and irreversible loss of brain function; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 13 March and to be printed. [Bill 110.]

Commonhold and Leasehold Reform

9.38 am

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I beg to move,

That this House calls for the early introduction of commonhold as a means of effecting necessary reforms in leasehold and freehold tenure.

I feel especially fortunate to have been lucky in the lottery. I drew first prize and thereby gained the opportunity to present to the House for debate a subject which is of great national importance. At the same time, it is of great constituency concern for many Members on both sides of the Chamber.

A motion in similar terms was proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) almost a year ago, on 8 March 1991. The need for leasehold reform is a recurring theme in the House, and it has been with us throughout this Parliament. There is a need to regularise the relationship between landlord and tenant and between leaseholder and ground landlord and it is necessary to consider how these relationships can be improved by the introduction of the device of commonhold. In what might be the last occasion on which to debate private Members' business in the House, it is opportune to raise this matter. I hope that it will be viewed as a matter of great urgency and that it will have priority on the agenda in the next Parliament.

I pay tribute not only to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington, who has tenaciously and relentlessly pursued the matter during his time in the House, but to his predecessor, Sir Brandon Rhys Williams who, throughout his time in the House, also made the issue one of his particular concerns.

The matter has particular links with particular constituencies. My constituency of Dulwich has a large amount of leasehold tenure, where the ground landlord is a large landed estate. Over the years, the matter has become one of enduring concern. My predecessor, Sam Silkin, although of a different party, pursued the matter in the House, and previously his predecessor, Robert Jenkins, a Conservative Member, did the same. The matter is therefore not party political, but one of great concern, because we want to ensure that the law relating to leasehold is reformed and regularised.

All sides of the House recognise that there is something wrong in the relationship between the leaseholder and the ground landlord. There is, perhaps, something rotten in the leasehold law. That is why I am grateful that the Minister for Housing and Planning gave a commitment on 4 March that legislation would be introduced to allow long leaseholders to extend the term of their lease, with a provision to allow acquisition of the freehold interest. That builds on the earlier commitment by the Minister on 12 July 1991 that commonhold tenure would be introduced into the legislative programme. I was somewhat disappointed that it was not included in the programme for this Session, but, realistically, we understand that such a complex matter, with so many unintended implications, must be comprehensively considered. We must get it right; we cannot take a chance on bodging it. Therefore, it is appropriate that the matter should be considered at the beginning of a new Parliament.

I am glad that those welcome commitments have been given, because they give a sharper focus to our debate this morning. In some ways we are now pushing at a opening door and we can pinpoint where particular proposals can be most effectively applied. Why is there a need for change? Anyone who has had dealings, whether professionally, as a representative of local government, as a Member of Parliament or as a tenant, recognises that there is a deficiency in the current leasehold law and, therefore, a problem in the relationship between landlord and tenant. The law does not meet the needs of those whom it exists to serve.

I can cite one or two examples of that. In an ideal world, a lease is a contract between landlord and tenant—an agreement entered into voluntarily on equal terms by the parties concerned, to their mutual benefit, each recognising his obligations and accepting his rights under that agreement. In theory, it is an equal exchange. However, in many instances that is not the case and there is great inequity and inequality in the status of the two parties to the contract. I will not go into the matter in any detail, but I know of a number of cases where, for the long leaseholder, the interest that he has is the interest in his own home—an asset involving financial, emotional and personal investments. One of the most traumatic experiences must be any damage or threat to one's home. Landlords often view the contract as a simple commercial transaction. The property is an asset—an investment on which a return is sought. Therefore, it cannot be said that the contract relationship is one of equality, because there is a disparity of interest that could lead to conflict.

This may be an appropriate time to declare an interest. The House should be aware, if it is not already, that I am the chairman of a board of governors that looks after a charitable foundation—the Wellcot Educational Foundation. It has its assets in landed property in inner London. In that sense, I am a landlord, although it is a voluntary activity for which I receive no remuneration. My responsibilities allow me to view the position from both sides.

Over the years, I have received representations about the need to retain the integrity and the completeness of many of the large landed estates, to which the proposed legislation might be a threat. It has been argued, with great conviction, that there is a need in certain areas to have comprehensive management to ensure that the architectural integrity of the buildings concerned, which are often of great distinction, is maintained.

It is recognised that many of the large estates have been innovators in town planning and that they have made a substantial contribution to conservation. The charm and the beauty of my Dulwich constituency can largely be attributed to the good stewardship, sympathetic understanding and sensitive development of the estate's governors of Alleyns College of God's Gift, who are the managing agents and ground landlord for much of that area.

Recognising the distinguished service and responsible stewardship of many of the landed estates in the past should not obscure the fact that there is now a crying need for change. By way of comfort to those responsible landlords, I say to them that they will have to accept change, but they have nothing to fear from the proposed legislation. There is a need to adapt to changing social need, and landlords have done that over the ages. With reasonable recompense, there is an opportunity to redeploy those assets in some other directions.

Although responsible landlords have little or nothing to fear, the rapacious Rachman-like landlords have every reason to be apprehensive. Many hon. Members have had experience of such landlords, but their racket has been rumbled and their game is up. The proposed legislation would do a great deal to ensure that responsible landlords can continue to exercise proper control and concern over their estates, but the irresponsible landlords will be rooted out.

What are the problems; what is the mischief; what are the elements that we are seeking to change? It concerns mainly flats but also houses. I refer to the problem, which affects hundreds, if not thousands, in my constituency, that arises in respect of the lease—having a term of perhaps 99 years—that is taken up by a person in their 20s when he or she is first beginning to earn. Throughout that person's working life of 40 years, the lease gradually diminishes, so that what was once a rising asset and an investment begins to fall in value. The property, on which the leaseholder once hoped to capitalise, in planning for his or her retirement, becomes an unmarketable asset. A lease with no more than 60 years to run is unsaleable, because it is unmortgageable by any prospective purchaser. A provision to extend leases so affected would go some way to mitigating that problem.

There is the attendant problem of the landlord's responsibility to repair, maintain and service the structure of a block of flats and its common parts, including the surrounding land, gardens and garages. That is a constant source of concern, friction, stress and anxiety. The irresponsible landlord often exploits that aspect in devious ways, perhaps by neglecting to meet his obligation under the covenants of the leases. He may not only allow the property to fall into disrepair but impose a service charge to finance a maintenance fund that makes payments that are disproportionately high in relation to the work undertaken.

Frequently, such work is not put out to open tender but is placed with the landlord's own sub-contractors, with all the opportunities for quasi corruption that that presents.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): The House has addressed that issue on more than one occasion, and was able to close several gaps in that particular racket. I am interested to know whether others have appeared since the days when I was a housing Minister.

Mr. Bowden: My hon. Friend has made a distinguished contribution to landlord and tenant issues since the first day that he entered the House. Overt corruption has been stamped out, but it is difficult to prove that necessary work commissioned by the landlord, but for which tenants will pay, has been contracted at the cheapest price or even at a competitive price. That presents an opportunity if not for corruption then for a form of internal payment that does not represent open market, value for money of the kind that is in the tenants' interest. Such practices may fall short of criminal behaviour, but they are not an open book. We seek to draw public attention to those loopholes, in the hope that provisions can be devised to close them.

Excessive management fees and service charges, and landlord neglect, are frequently obscured by complex leases. Long ago, I trained as a lawyer, but many of the leases that have been shown to me read like double Dutch. One cannot help but conclude that the drafting lawyers not only used an antiquated and unnecessary form of words, but made a deliberate attempt to kick dust in the eyes of the prospective tenant, and that there was a deliberate intention to obscure the landlord's obligations and the prospective tenant's rights.

An element in commonhold reform should be the introduction of a simple and readily understandable form of words that the layman can comprehend, which clearly sets out the occupants' obligations and rights.

In the relationship between landlord and tenant, the cards are often stacked against the latter. It is often an unequal and inequitable relationship, and one which requires fundamental reform. It is no longer sufficient to tinker on the fringes of landlord and tenant law. The relationship between the long leaseholder and the ground landlord served a purpose in the past, and may have an enduring role to serve in future—but in its present form, it is not one which best represents the association between the occupant of a flat and the person or persons responsible for its maintenance and that of the common parts, including the building's roof and foundations.

Earlier this week, my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning outlined in a written answer a move towards enfranchisement, by abolishing the artificial, rateable value hurdle in the way of leaseholders wanting to acquire their homes. A large number of leaseholders throughout the country will have an opportunity to acquire the freehold interest that they were artificially denied under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. That is a step in the right direction.

Sir Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): Will that provision relate to houses as well as to flats?

Mr. Bowden: Yes. The rateable value of £1,500 is applicable to London properties. I believe that the figure outside London is £750. Subject to consultation, the removal of that hurdle will allow occupants of properties under a long lease to acquire the freehold.

The next stage is to allow tenants who are anxious about the diminishing term of their leases and the threat that presents to their futures an opportunity to extend their leases or to acquire the freeholds, with the ultimate objective of the introduction of commonhold. That system of tenure flows automatically from the tributaries of lease extension and enfranchisement. To use the political idiom of the day, commonhold would serve as the leaseholders charter, offering rights and guarantees that are extended by charters to other aspects of our lives.

The nature of commonhold is often debated among those ideologues who think of angels dancing on the head of a pin. I may have erred in referring to it a moment ago as a form of tenure. Commonhold is a legal device which allows individuals who enjoy the freehold occupancy of a residential unit jointly to own a commonhold interest, with responsibility for all the duties and obligations, but also enjoying all the rights, of a ground landlord. It is not so much the creation of a new form of tenure as a way of supporting existing leasehold and freehold tenure in a regularised, sensible scheme.

There is a need for a standard form to be defined and recognised from the beginning. It should not be left to the individual draftmen of professional firms to draw up what they think is appropriate to meet these needs. Far be it from me to ascribe deviousness to draftsmen, but it is possible to benefit one party rather than the other.

With the introduction of commonhold there should be established a commonhold commission. It would be a

[Mr. Bowden]

regulatory body with the duties of administering commonhold arrangements, of advising in any circumstances where they were being considered and of adjudicating when any dispute arose. Without such a safeguard, it would be impossible to ensure that the commonhold scheme would have universal application, which is desirable, and universal understanding, which is essential.

I fear that what I have said so far may have sounded like rather dry, academic theorising. The case is best illustrated by three examples from my constituency. Earlier I mentioned the management of the estate of Alleyn's College of God's Gift and particular developments that were introduced in the 1960s. Some fine blocks of flats of seven or eight storeys, containing 20 or 30 highly desirable, small dwellings, are involved. There is responsible tenant occupancy. The tenants occupy on long leases and there is a great deal of corporate concern through residents' associations and leaseholder associations. Whatever the good faith and good will on the part of the estate's governors, there is, if not conflict, certainly friction arising from the nature of the landlord-tenant relationship, to which I referred earlier.

Commonhold would provide tenants with the opportunity not only to extend their leases, which in most cases run for 60-plus years, to make them a more marketable asset, but to take responsibility for the management and maintenance of the blocks. They would be individual freeholders of their flats with a joint responsibility for carrying out the duties of the management of the block as a whole. That is clearly desired by the vast majority of the occupants of Lowood court, Raleigh court and Drake court. They, and others, are recognisable names of residents' groups that wish a greater say in the control of the management, maintenance, decoration and general care of their home which they regard as their freehold right.

The friction is reflected on a wider front. I am fortunate in having a constituency with a large number of professional people who are able to share their expertise for the benefit of the community as a whole. Three active, well-informed amenity societies are the Dulwich Society, the Dulwich residents' association and the Dulwich Village preservation society. They have all participated in the debate and have taken a view about any change in tenure that is needed and any change in management that commonhold would offer to occupants in the area. Those bodies represent broader interests than do individual tenants of a block and they commend the commonhold principle for the legislative programme.

There are developments in the private sector and there is significant involvement by the London borough of Southwark. The commonhold provisions would be of great benefit if applied to one of its responsibilities. There are two blocks known as Dawsons Heights. They dominate the landscape rather like the totalitarian buildings of eastern bloc countries. They have a commanding view of London. They were developed in the 1960s and are occupied by a remarkably lively group of tenants, some of whom, but by no means the majority, have exercised their right to buy under the Government scheme. They are, therefore, long leaseholders, whereas the remainder are direct tenants of Southwark council. They have sought to take advantage of the provision in the Housing Act 1988 for tenants to choose their landlord and opt out of the landlordship of Southwark council. They have taken up the tenants choice scheme early on and run with it. Over the past two and a half years the negotiations have been slow, largely because of the efforts of Southwark council to put obstacles in the way of the tenants exercising that choice.

I am delighted to say that on Wednesday I had the opportunity of showing the estate to my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning. He met several tenants who made it clear to him that they wished to proceed. I hope that the negotiations will now take wing. The Samuel Lewis Trust is the preferred choice as landlord. It has been given what is called approved landlord status and is to be considered as the alternative landlord in a ballot. The management of the negotiations is in the reputable hands of the Paddington Churches housing association and I hope that a ballot will be held at the end of the year. This provides an opportunity for tenants who are not long leaseholders to show that they want to change their landlord. At the same time, if commonhold was thought to be an appropriate way of holding the freehold or harmonising leasehold, freehold and tenants interests on such an estate, it would work well for such mixed occupancy.

On a much smaller scale, in Dunton court, a block of 20 flats, 18 or 19 tenants have exercised their right to buy. They are outraged that they are called on to pay heavy sums to Southwark council for reserve and maintenance funds for work that is not being done on their leaking roofs and rising damp. In those circumstances there is an excellent, easy opportunity for the long leaseholders to take on a commonhold interest together, making provision for any remaining tenants but ensuring that they, rather than a remote, indifferent, inefficient bureaucracy, look after their interests.

I allude to another example which represents a different aspect of the problem. Ruskin Park house was built by the London county council to a higher standard and, in the terms of the times, was intended to be a block for professional people. In the early stages of the right-to-buy scheme—in the 1960s and early 1970s—the tenants of Ruskin Park house exercised that right in good measure. About 75 per cent. of the flats in that block are now owner occupied. I was about to say that the management of the block was organised on rather novel terms—it was certainly novel when it started.

The Greater London council—the successor to the LCC—retained the freehold interest. The owner-occupiers formed a housing association—I believe that their status is that of a non-charitable housing association—and took a long lease on the whole freehold interest which, in turn, was subject to sub-leases for owner-occupiers. The GLC took sub-leases for the people who remained tenants and offered weekly or periodic tenancies to their tenants. Therefore, the GLC was originally the ground landlord —the freeholder—which had granted a long lease to the Ruskin Park housing association which, in turn, granted subsidiary long leases to individual occupiers. In the case of those who remained tenants, a subsidiary long lease was granted in similar terms back to the council, and the tenants' position remained unaltered.

A management committee held shares in the proportion of one share per flat. When I was the Dulwich member of the GLC, I sat on that management committee and exercised my vote for the number of shares—not a block vote in the pejorative sense, but limited to representing the flats still occupied by GLC tenants. When the unlamented GLC was dissolved, one of the effects of that dissolution was the decision by the London residuary body not to transfer the freehold interest to the head lessee—the Ruskin Park housing association, as would have been right and proper. Instead, it transferred it to the London borough of Southwark. That, alas, has been one of the enduring concerns that have plagued this development.

The development was innovative and displayed all the best elements of management self-help, but under the present arrangements it has fallen between two stools. The opportunity provided by commonhold would be a way to solve that problem. When the Housing Act 1988 was in Committee I raised that issue several times and the then Minister for Housing, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) acknowledged that something had to be done. I believe that something can be done with commonhold tenure.

By using examples from only one constituency I have tried to illustrate three problems that affect many people and which need to be resolved. The reforms of leasehold enfranchisement, extension of leases and commonhold would be steps in the right direction. However, there are a number of questions still outstanding which would need to be resolved in Committee. One of the most crucial is whether, if commonhold is thought to be desirable, it should be by voluntary agreement or involve an element of compulsion. I know that that will be a matter of controversy and that is why I raise it this morning. I have my view, but I accept that other people may have different views. I would start with the principle that, as the original arrangement between landlord and tenant is in theory reached through contract, any change should be by agreement. I am enough of a realist to know that if it is left to voluntary arrangements by agreement between the parties, there might be expressions of goodwill and support but little action. That was very much the case with the right-to-buy scheme. It was left to local councils to implement voluntarily if they wished, but it was not until it was made a right for tenants that it became effective. Therefore, there must be an element of compulsion. Compulsion might encourage ground landlords and their long leaseholders to get together in the spirit of co-operation. Without that, I do not think that the scheme will take off.

That leads to the question of proper compensation in such circumstances. Valuers will disagree, depending on whom they are representing, whether it should be the open market value, modified open market value, market value reflecting marriage values, or any other ramifications or whether it should be decided according to a statutory formula. I raise this issue without offering an opinion, but it must be considered at an early stage. Unless there is reassurance and clarification about the basis on which compensation would be given, there might be objections which might be misinformed.

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): My hon. Friend will know from experience that in tranferring an asset from one owner to another, if the marriage value is not taken into account his constituents and others will make very large tax-free capital gains almost immediately if they wish to sell their property thereafter.

Mr. Bowden: I accept my hon. Friend's point. I in no way promote the idea of commonhold or the element of compulsion which it might bring to deliberately do down the landlord or to give an unexpected bonus to a tenant. It should realistically represent the value of the property so that some tenants do not make a killing and beneficiaries of a charitable trust do not suffer. There should be a professional and realistic valuation which would solve the mischief and problems inherent in the present system. Responsible landlords have little to fear from the financial consequences of the scheme, although they will have to adapt. It might be less attractive to and, indeed, might scupper some of the activities of irresponsible landlords.

We must also consider what happens when a number of residents wish to have a commonhold arrangement but others object. One can easily imagine that if it were necessary to have 100 per cent. unanimity in order for all residents to have commonhold, very few schemes would take off. There is bound to be one objector to any arrangement who might thwart the wishes of the vast majority. Indeed, I envisage an unscrupulous or devious landlord ensuring that there was one or more such persons in occupation to object. I am interested in the concept, which I believe came from Mr. Edward Nugee, QC, of qualified unanimity, which is a smart way of saying majority. It is necessary to have a decision on whether there should be commonhold tenure or a commonhold arrangement which is based not on complete unanimity, but on a majority vote by those affected. From my reading of the answer given earlier this week by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning, a two thirds majority would be considered acceptable support to trigger off the commonhold arrangements.

Sir Donald Thompson: There is another group of housing about which my hon. Friend may not know. In the north of England, there are houses that were built by benevolent employers with 999-year leases at £1 a piece. They can now be used by unscrupulous landlords to squeeze tenants who pay only £1 a year each. That must be dealt with in forthcoming commonhold or leasehold reform.

Mr. Bowden: I fully agree with the principle of my hon. Friend's suggestion. I hesitate to make any observations about the detail, because I do not have the facts of the case. The landlord's role is thoroughly honourable and socially useful. As I said when I declared my interest, I have been involved in that role. In defending that position and in speaking with pride as a landlord, one must recognise that there are unscrupulous landlords who must be rooted out and identified as such. They must not be allowed to prosper and flourish as many have.

The legislation will be complex. It will not be easy to understand and it will take time to ensure that it goes through the House properly. The legislation must be comprehensive and it cannot be hurried, although it is a matter of urgency. I commend the proposals to the House and I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to ensure that they are high on the agenda of any new Parliament.

10.21 am

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): I warmly congratulate the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) on introducing the debate, which interests me and many other hon. Members. The issues of commonhold, leasehold reform

[Mr. Tom Cox]

and a greater say by tenants in service charges are long overdue for consideration. It is regrettable that after 12 years of Conservative Government, we have the debate in the closing days of this Parliament when for many years —the hon. Member for Dulwich referred to four hon. Members who, like him, have been involved in the issue —there have been calls for changes in legislation.

Leasehold is a London issue and, as the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson) explained, it is a problem in other areas. I refer to two blocks of flats in my constituency. Ducane court is a large block of flats containing 600 properties with 800 to 1,000 residents. There is a smaller block of flats called Moira court. Both give examples of the issues to which the hon. Member for Dulwich referred.

If ever a group of tenants has suffered the abuses of despicable behaviour by landlords and their agents, it has been those who live in Ducane court. I quote briefly from a letter from a lady who lives in Ducane court. She says:

> "I have lived in Ducane court for 50 years and under the present regime of ineffective management agents, of which our landlords are directors which I believe is outside the law, I have watched this block deteriorating year by year."

Many other residents have made similar comments to me over the years in which I have tried to work with them. I have had countless meetings. I have had meetings here with junior Ministers in the Department of the Environment on the specific issues of the behaviour of the landlords and their agents, and of the service charges that were repeatedly charged to those men and women.

The great problem was that one could never get a detailed breakdown of how the charges were arrived at. The agents once decided that there would be a three-stage improvement programme for the property. The residents did not object to that, but they objected to the fact that before the first stage had been completed, the agents demanded money for the second stage. The residents came to see me and said that they did not know what the total cost would be for the first stage because they had not been given accounts and the work had not been completed. They told me that they were now being pressurised by the landlords and their agents who said, "Do not worry about the cost. Do not even worry about when the first stage will be completed. We are interested in payment for the work for the next stage." The landlords could not even tell my constituents when the work would be carried out.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): Is the hon. Gentleman prepared to name the landlords? I do not ask that in a mischievous spirit, but because the behaviour he describes sounds so similar to the behaviour of some freeholders in my part of London that I wondered whether they could be the same landlords.

Mr. Cox: That is a fair question. I am not reluctant to give the name. However, the people who then owned and were responsible for the property have long passed from the scene. Other people now run the property. I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman who the people involved were, because they have moved on. I am sure that many hon. Members can give similar examples. Such behaviour undoubtedly causes great bitterness. The hon. Member for Dulwich talked about commonhold and we must also consider services charges.

I have received letters from constituents who live in the blocks of flats and from other constituents who are aware of the commonhold proposals. They want to know what would be involved in the legislation and how they would be affected. We need to hear a little bit about several issues. Whichever party wins the next election, there will be support for legislation to be introduced quickly. People will decide that they are interested in such a scheme, but they will feel that they need to know certain basic points before they commit themselves to voting in support of commonhold.

As I understand it, two thirds of those eligible to vote on the introduction of a commonhold scheme will have to support it. There can be many different types of tenancies within a large block of flats. I shall be interested to hear the Minister's thinking on that. I accept that he may not be able to go into great detail at this stage, but those who come to us—their Members of Parliament—will want some basic guidelines. In the same block, there will be people with leases and people who are renting their property. In Ducane court, for example, some people have been renting for many years and may wish to know where they would stand under a commonhold policy. Some people live in sub-let properties and some own their properties. How would that breakdown of tenancies affect the two thirds majority proposal?

I received a letter from a gentleman which illustrates the kind of difficulties to which the hon. Member for Dulwich alluded:

> "When one gets to 80 and with about 30 years to go on the lease of this desirable studio—husband and wife sharing, living on pensions and savings, no relatives to leave the property to anyway—one is not very enthusiastic for spending more money."

He is obviously talking there about spending more money on buying the leasehold. As a resident in a block of flats, that gentleman would clearly be eligible to vote for or against the introduction of commonhold and no doubt we can all understand and accept that he would have good reason for not wanting to vote for commonhold at this stage in his life. There are many elderly people living in such properties who may be interested, but would wish to know exactly what sort of sums would be involved. That information will be crucial to those interested in such schemes.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: That matter has been examined in the context of a block of flats in my constituency which the tenants wished to purchase from the Church Commissioners. The whole block was bought by the tenants who then became landlords and those who did not want to buy their own flat became tenants of the new tenant organisation. Similar arrangements could apply in respect of commonhold.

Mr. Cox: The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting comment and I hope that such provision can be incorporated in any legislation.

I come back to the question of cost because that is what we are talking about. Another letter that I received says:

> "I am very much in favour of commonhold being obtained for the above building, provided it is not too expensive."

We will be told that repeatedly.

Suppose that a majority of residents has voted in favour of commonhold. How will the market value be determined? Many of the properties have been neglected by agents over the years and some of them are in a very poor condition. Will that be taken into account in determining their market value? I could quote many further letters, but I will not, because I am sure that many other hon. Members present will have received similar correspondence. Suffice it to say that these matters are of great concern to people in my part of London.

The residents in a large block may be very diverse. They may include professionals and elderly people who would not want to be involved in the management of the new commonhold. What criteria would the Department apply in relation to the management of such properties? In many cases large groups of properties may be involved and the legal aspect may be complicated. There is also the question of financial accountability—how money will be spent in the day-to-day maintenance of the property. The property will sometimes also need to be surveyed.

The management committee would presumably be made up principally of residents. Will there be certain legal requirements necessary to qualify for commonhold of which a potential management committee will be made aware before it decides whether it is in favour of commonhold? We are talking not only about cost but about complex issues of which many people have had no experience. Recently, I received a letter which said:

> "One would need to be absolutely sure of the competence and representative stature of the management committee to supervise the introduction of the scheme and see to its day-to-day running."

Those are what I would describe as the gut issues affecting people who are interested in the introduction of commonhold. They will want some guidelines concerning the day-to-day management and how that would operate in legal terms.

I hope that whichever party wins the next election will regard the introduction of commonhold legislation as a priority. Can the Minister assure us that civil servants at the Department are already starting to put together draft legislation? I hope that we shall not be told after the next election that the Government have to go out to consultation. Hon. Members on both sides of the House know what people want: they want action to be taken to protect their interests and an opportunity to express their concerns. They want to be listened to, and they seek redress for the injustices from which they have suffered for so long.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I endorse everything that my hon. Friend says about the urgency of ensuring that commonhold legislation is introduced. Does he agree, however, that it is important that any Bill should include measures to deal not just with flats held on leasehold but with whole houses held on leasehold? As I understand it, there are at present two exceptions to the ability to enfranchise and to take the freehold. That cannot be done if the rental value some time ago was too high or if the rateable value is too high. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important that both those criteria should be wiped from the exceptions to freehold enfranchisement and that we ensure that people in my constituency and in Hackney, for example, can purchase the freeholds of their properties?

Mr. Cox: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. The great benefit of debates such as this is that we have an opportunity to introduce other aspects of the legislation that is needed and my hon. Friend has done just that. I hope that, after 9 April when a change of Government comes about, the Minister then responsible for that legislation will take note of the points that have been made.

What will happen if a two thirds majority of the tenants in a block of flats is not arrived at? I hope that any legislation will be tough on the abuse of service charges and that the dubious landlords who, sad to say, still exist, will be deterred. I am referring to those landlords who say, "My tenants have had an opportunity to vote for commonhold but did not take up that opportunity, so I need not bother about the law." Otherwise, we shall continue to see an abuse of service charges. I hope that, where the two thirds majority is not reached, there will be strict guidelines on service charges. People should have a right to oppose service charges, as my constituents have tried to do over the years, without success.

The issue of squatters may be out of the terms of the general debate, but it will be interesting to hear the Minister's views on it, because squatters have moved in to a block of flats in my constituency. Ministers may say that legislation on that already exists and that the agents or landlords should implement it. In the past two or three weeks, however, my consituents in that block of flats have been writing to me daily, asking me to get something done. The police say that they have enough to do, without worrying about squatters. Unfortunately, the legislation does not work quickly enough in support of decent, honourable people who have long lived in a block of flats and have a pride in it because it is their home. If a few properties fall empty for a period of time, it soon becomes known and the squatters move in. We need a means by which action can be taken quickly. Once squatters have been living in a property for a month or so, it becomes difficult to get rid of them.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Dulwich, who has done a great service to London constituents who have experienced the difficulties to which he referred. Whichever party wins the election, I hope that this will be a priority for the next Parliament because it is long overdue.

10.43 am

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) on raising this issue and compliment the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on what he has just said. From his experience of dealing with squatters, he will know that some of the attempts in the past 12 years or so to toughen the laws on squatting were vehemently opposed by hon. Members on the extreme left of the Labour party, under the guise of libertarianism. I exclude the hon. Gentleman, because he is a much more sensible person. He is the authentic voice of the Labour party. If such Labour Members controlled the Labour party, we might have some worries about winning the election, but we have no worries, because people like him are not in control.

May I place on record the absence of the co-called Liberal Democrats, who clearly have no interest in the problems of tenants of any kind? Yet when the election comes, they will be at the forefront, squeaking in their hypocritical terms about how they are the friends of tenants.

After being in the House for some 22 years, this is probably the last time that I shall address it. I have always

[Sir Geoffrey Finsberg]

been greatly interested in the problems of tenants, both private and public. When I came into the House in 1970, there was the scandal of Freshwaters—landlords who were destroying private tenants. They had taken over from highly reputable landlords, such as the London County Freehold and Leasehold Property Company and the Prudential, all of whom managed their properties in the interests not only of themselves but of their tenants, and there was immense satisfaction.

My own dear parents lived all their lives as tenants in Key Flats, and I lived most of my early life in those same conditions. So I know the problems, and I saw the change when the Key Flats were sold.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich and the hon. Member for Tooting spoke about service charges. On occasions, I have rebelled and my first rebellion was on the first Housing Finance Bill to go through the House. As a new Member, I moved a new clause dealing with service charges, but I did not know the rules of the game then and had not warned the Whips what I intended to do. I won and beat the Government on the issue. However, I did not know that the second vote to be taken was that the new clause stand part of the Bill and, by then, the Whips had organised matters and my new clause was not added to the Bill. When the Bill was dealt with in another place, however, my points were covered. So I soon learnt that it is better to have the Whips on one's side and to work with them, and I have tried to do that ever since.

I thought that we had covered service charges then. Later, when I had the good fortune to be a junior Minister in the Department of the Environment, I again thought that we had cleared up all the loopholes. I was assured by the draftsmen and lawyers in the Department that that was so and, with the help of my senior colleague, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), we went into the matter in great detail. I thought that we had managed to settle the issues of the inspection of service charge accounts and independent auditors—we had got rid of the phoney auditors put up by the landlords—and that we had provided that, where work was to be carried out, alternative and genuine estimates had to be submitted so that the tenants could challenge them if they were not satisfied. All those issues were to be challengeable in the county rather than the High Court so that expenses could be kept to a minimum.

I am disturbed to hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich and the hon. Member for Tooting that that system is not working. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will explain why it is not working. What can be done to ensure that Parliament's intention is carried out? If there are loopholes, will he take urgent steps to ensure that they are closed in the first housing Bill that comes before the House in the new Parliament?

The hon. Member for Tooting and my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) spoke about landlords' identities. Again, I thought that we had ensured in the last Housing Act, which my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning took through the House, that the names and addresses of landlords had to be disclosed. If that Act is not working, I am very disturbed. I hope that the Minister will be briefed by his officials on those points, because they are of immense importance. It is not a party issue but an issue affecting human life.

Such actions give landlords a bad name. The overwhelming majority of landlords do not deserve that bad name, as they are good. But they are tarred with the same brush as the irresponsible people who use so-called managing agents, who could not manage a fish and chip shop if everything was supplied free. The agents take large fees for doing poor work. I hope that the profession will tidy itself up. It involves only a minority, but we have all seen, over the years, newspaper headlines stating, "MP's fifth cousin up on driving charge". We never read, "Journalist's third cousin up on driving charge"—which is interesting. The irresponsible minority causes us all problems.

Having tried to do something for private tenants, when the opportunity arose, I tried to do the same for public tenants. I wanted to ensure that council tenants had the right to buy, and that the legislation covered various issues. My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich spoke of the delays in Southwark. We introduced amendments to the legislation so that, if there were delays, tenants could serve notice on the council, rent could be withheld and go towards the purchase cost. Such delay was covered in the legislation.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to note a new factor. Camden council has now decided that there should be a differential parking charge on mixed estates. Council tenants pay one parking charge and those who have bought their flats and who park on the same estate are asked to pay four and six times the weekly amount. I am told that nothing can be done until the law is changed. I hope that that can be done, as that system is grossly unfair.

There will always be gaps. My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich mentioned the problem of long leases coming to an end. Those long lease contracts were freely entered into many years ago—perhaps not even by the current residents, but by their predecessors. There are two sides to the question: the right of the freeholder who owns the property and who has sold on the lease for a fixed term at a ground rent, and the right of the person living there to some form of security. We must get the right balance.

One of the best ways of achieving the correct balance is to extend the lease. My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) has done much work in that sphere and he put forward various proposals in a debate about a year ago. The extension of the lease would give tenants the security that they understandably want. It would also cover the issue raised by the hon. Member for Tooting about whether people could afford to buy.

There used to be an option to remain in a block of flats. Those who chose that option remained as tenants of the new owner. That might not always have been satisfactory. We must see what can be done to ensure that the market value of the lease extension is fair to both sides. Perhaps that task should be given to what used to be the old rent assessment committees, which now have some new duties under the Housing Acts. Perhaps we should re-establish the old valuation courts that used to work with the benefit of the advice of the district valuer. We must have a system that is seen to be fair and workable, in the interests of both the freeholder and the tenant. It would be possible to achieve that, and I should certainly welcome an advance on that front.

We must also examine the option of compulsory sale. We must decide what percentage is adequate to demonstrate the desire of the majority to purchase. How does one decide what to do if there is a resident freeholder or commercial occupation? The statement that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State issued spoke of a 10 per cent. commercial occupation—that is one suggestion to consider. There is a problem with mixed occupation. If a council tenant of a garage lives over that garage, he has no right to purchase that property, which does not seem fair. We must consider how we could overcome that problem in future legislation. There must be fairness on both sides.

The issue of leases presents problems. When I had responsibility for the new towns, I was confronted with the problem of what length of lease one should give in the case of commercial properties. I had been brought up all my life to think of 99-year leases. Those no longer held good as if there were substantial redevelopments to take place, this would involve a time scale of about 60 years. We considered the issue and decided that 125 or 150 years would be about the right length for a lease. When considering the continuation of existing leases, we may decide that they should extend for longer periods than previously, but we must bear it in mind that all properties have a useful life and it is no good to the freeholder, leaseholder or tenant if the useful life expires and one cannot redevelop in a sensible way.

One of the simple theories in the world is that there are more tenants than landlords, so one must carefully consider the tenants' interests. Of course, that is right. A landlord is in business to provide an income for himself, which is quite understandable. A tenant is there because it is his home. We must find the correct balance. Over the past 30 years or so, the balance has swung somewhat unfairly against the tenant due to the activities of the bad landlords.

I do not believe that many people in the world would quarrel with the concept of private landlords if they conformed to previously accepted landlords' practice. Big companies such as the London County Freehold and Leasehold Property company had an unmatched reputation for looking after property and tenants.

People who are to become the new owners of blocks of flats—I leave aside houses, as they are a different issue —must realise that they will not necessarily have the time or ability to look after the immensely detailed business that will come their way. They may need to appoint managing agents to look after the property, but they will have to ensure that they pick the right ones. They must realise that major repairs will have to be done from time to time, which cost substantial amounts of money. They will have to listen to the advice given to them by their managing agents, which means that they will have to establish sinking funds that are well maintained and looked after in the interests of the tenants. They must realise that a cycle of preventive maintenance is by far the best way of proceeding. They cannot suddenly think that, as they have purchased the commonhold or freehold, they will not have to carry out any more repairs or have any more outgoings. If they understand that, a new Parliament will provide us with the opportunity to introduce legislation to allow private tenants to feel more comfortable and satisfied as they enter the last stage of this decade. I think that the whole House would welcome that. That is what I hope will happen.

I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich on giving the House the opportunity of debating this important issue.

10.59 am

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I congratulate the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) on introducing this subject. It is significant that the Government, who dithered on the issue for 13 years, have chosen their last few days to make a statement that seems to support the attitude of the hon. Member for Dulwich and of other hon. Members on both sides. It is also interesting that the warm noises emanating from the Department of the Environment have not yet been matched by any legislation. There is no draft Bill——

It being Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

National Lottery

11 am

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Baker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Government's plans, set out in a White Paper being published today, to introduce a national lottery for good causes.

As hon. Members will know, we have been considering for some time the merits of a national lottery. It raises a number of complex practical issues, but the potential benefits are substantial. In the past in our own country, a lottery funded the foundation of the British museum. More recently, in Canada a lottery also helped to fund the Olympic games. A lottery helped to fund the building of the Sydney opera house.

Many other countries have long been using the proceeds of national lotteries to fund a wide range of projects which improve the quality of life of their people. Every other country in western Europe has a national lottery. In the years ahead it will become increasingly difficult in practice to prevent their lottery tickets from being sold in this country. Without a national lottery of our own, other countries rather than our own will benefit.

In the light of all these considerations, and bearing in mind the opportunities it will give us to raise substantial sums for the public benefit, the Government have decided to introduce a national lottery to be promoted throughout the United Kingdom.

We propose that the national lottery proceeds should be used to support projects of lasting benefit to the nation. The good causes to be funded will be sports, arts, our heritage and charities. This means that sporting facilities could be further improved and new ones provided; a whole range of additional facilities for young people could be developed; our historic buildings, houses, museums, galleries and cathedrals could be restored and worthwhile new buildings constructed; art treasures could be purchased for our national collections; and a wide range of other charities could be supported.

A national lottery could be operating by 1994, but it will take some time to become fully established. Once fully developed, it could raise up to £1 billion a year for good causes. I must emphasise that this will be additional funding. The Government do not intend that the money provided from the lottery should substitute for existing expenditure programmes. Nor do we believe that lottery proceeds should go to the main areas of public expenditure, such as the national health service. These services are of fundamental importance to the community and must continue to be funded by the Exchequer in the normal way.

We have concluded that a single national lottery is the best way forward. This would allow major prizes to be offered and it would maximise the potential funds which could be raised for good causes, while minimising the risk of fraud or mismanagement.

The White Paper sets out the broad framework for the operation of the national lottery. There will be an independent national lottery board whose task will be to distribute the proceeds of the lottery. The day-to-day operation and management of the lottery will be undertaken by the private sector under contract and subject to strict regulation.

Today's White Paper sets out a number of practical issues, and on some of them we want to consult interested parties. We are aware of the concerns of the football pools companies and others. We intend to discuss their concerns with them, and to assess the possible effect of a national lottery on their activities. In the light of these discussions we shall consider whether there is a case for any changes in the controls under which they operate at present.

Charities will be among the beneficiaries of the lottery. But we still need to consider how best to protect their interests, both in the allocation of the proceeds and the effect on their income from existing small lotteries. We would welcome the views of all charitable organisations on both these points.

A national lottery will be a popular development of great significance. It provides a unique opportunity to improve in a lasting way the quality of our national life. I look forward to its early introduction.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): The Government make themselves ridiculous by announcing in the dying days of a Parliament a decision that they could have taken years ago, and it is particularly absurd of the Government to introduce a White Paper which they will have no opportunity of implementing.

Does the Home Secretary recall that as late as January the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department said—seven times, to be precise—that a decision on all these matters could not be taken without careful examination and consideration? He was especially precise about the need to examine the impact on the pools industry and, in his words,

> "to give those directly affected a chance to express their views before a decision is taken."

That promise has been broken. Since that speech, no consultation with the pools industry has taken place, yet the Home Secretary has made his statement today. That amounts to nothing more than the Government taking decisions first and fraudulently holding the consultations afterwards.

The way in which this statement has been hurriedly cobbled together is demonstrated by the bland announcement that it will raise £1 billion. How can the Home Secretary possibly know that when, according to the White Paper, he cannot even tell us the extent of the tax to be levied from each lottery ticket?

Does the Home Secretary understand that the Labour party, in a policy statement over a year ago, announced its intention of giving serious consideration to a lottery? That remains our position. We well understand the benefits that a national lottery might provide—to the arts, to sport, to our heritage and to charities. There are, however, substantial problems to be overcome before one can be introduced, and I know very well that in their present mood the Government are not prepared to examine any of them.

The Under-Secretary promised consultation on a number of vital issues, all of which have since been subject to arbitrary decisions taken, not in the national interest, but in the hope of gaining brief party-political publicity. I intend, therefore, to ask the Home Secretary a number of questions to which I have no real hope of getting answers. I do so simply to demonstrate the irresponsibility of his position. The difference is that we anticipate being in a position to implement a lottery; the right hon. Gentleman only considers the hope of cobbling together a few votes between now and 9 April.

Is the Home Secretary certain that the lottery tax he proposes will not result in some small but important charities receiving less from the lottery than they do from their own current schemes? Is he sure that some small charities which now exist on fund-raising schemes will not be driven out of business altogether? Since the leak to *The Times* which appeared this morning, small charities of every sort have been phoning Members of this House, saying that their existence has been threatened. What assurance can the Home Secretary give them that that is not true?

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, is the right hon. Gentleman sure that he can avoid the most serious consequences to the football pools, with enormously adverse effects on Treasury revenue, with enormously adverse effects on the essential income of football clubs, and above all with deep damage to Merseyside, an area already grievously affected by unemployment?

The next Labour Government will examine these and other essential questions with the seriousness that the subject deserves. Only when the difficulties are resolved will it be right for the lottery scheme to go ahead.

Mr. Baker: That was one of the right hon. Gentleman's more memorable performances. He is a sourpuss—there is no event that he attends on which he does not cast a blight. In this case, he is a party-pooper.

In the past 18 months, during which the right hon. Gentleman has been my shadow, he has come forward with no creative idea. He could have committed the Labour party to a national lottery had he wanted to, but he has remained silent. There has been an absence of decision and a daily struggle in the right hon. Gentleman's frame between sloth and indifference.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about charities. I refer him to paragraphs 33 to 37 of the White Paper in which we discuss the effect upon large and small charities. We specifically say:

> "The Government wants to consult widely with the major charitable interests and will pay careful attention to their views . . . The Government would welcome views on whether the monetary limits"

in the small lotteries on which some charities depend

> "should be increased and, if so, to what level."

We also mention the existing rules on small lotteries.

On the question of football pools, I refer the right hon. Gentleman to paragraphs 30 and 31. This morning my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State spoke to the Pools Promoters Association and to representatives of Vernons and Zetters, and I spoke to the managing director of Littlewoods. We explained to them what was in our mind, which they knew perfectly well. We say specifically in paragraphs 30 and 31 that we want to have meetings soon to consider their assessment of the effect of a national lottery upon their activities.

As the House knows, there are different views on the matter. The pools companies say that they would be seriously affected and quote examples from other countries. But in other countries with national lotteries the pools operation has not been affected. We want to make a proper assessment of that and want to discuss with the pools companies in the light of that consideration whether we should take steps to change the existing rules in relation to pools. The Government have no intention of forcing the pools companies out of business, and I do not think that that will happen. Pools can exist perfectly naturally and successfully alongside a national lottery.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members know that this is private Members' day and that time is precious. I will allow questions to continue until about 11.30, but I ask for questions about the national lottery and not on wider issues.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Would my right hon. Friend agree after a mere moment's reflection that the remarks of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) are reminiscent of a 50p piece—two-faced and seven-sided? Does he also agree——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Withdraw the phrase "two-faced", please. It is not appropriate.

Sir John Wheeler: I do so immediately, Mr. Speaker, but you will understand that as a numismatist I was factually correct. Of course I withdraw.

Does my right hon. Friend also agree that his proposal, which will be widely welcomed, will bring new money to charities because many British citizens are already spending their money on lottery tickets elsewhere in Europe?

Mr. Baker: That is correct. It will become progressively difficult in the years ahead to prevent the sale of lottery tickets between European countries. We are the only country in Europe without a national lottery and money spent in other countries does not benefit Britain. Therefore, our proposal seems doubly sensible.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Is it not perverse that this Government of all Governments should be involved in nationalising gambling? Has the right hon. Gentleman not considered that in many cases gambling is an addiction which leads to great hardship in families and that for the state to be involved in its deliberate promotion is a dubious role for a Home Secretary? Has he considered the damage that state lotteries have caused in other countries, such as the Republic of Ireland where the 16 major charities are petitioning the Government to end the national lottery?

What possible guarantee can the right hon. Gentleman give that the revenues, uncertain as they will inevitably be, from a lottery will not be used as an excuse by Government to stop money that would normally come from the Treasury to back the arts and other desirable heritage functions?

Mr. Baker: It seems that the Liberal party is hooked on yet another unpopular policy, because from what the hon. Gentleman says I understand that he opposes the proposal. The fact that it is a "national" lottery does not mean that it will be nationalised. It will be operated by a private contractor and the national lottery board will be at arm's distance from the Government.

I remind the hon. Gentleman of what is said about additionality in paragraph 41 of the White Paper:

> "Under standard conventions, the disbursements of a national lottery will be classified as public expenditure in the national accounts. The Government does not intend that the money provided from the lottery should substitute for that provided in other ways: the proceeds will not be brought within the planning total, and the Government will not make any case by case reduction in conventional expenditure programmes to take account of awards from the lottery proceeds."

Sir Richard Luce (Shoreham): I congratulate most warmly my right hon. Friend and the Government on their bold and imaginative decision. It is a great pity that the other parties have not given it their firm support. As a former Minister for the Arts, I believe that there is enormous potential for extra resources for the arts, sports and the environment and for other fields, thus improving the quality of life in the 1990s. Will my right hon. Friend continue to give every assurance that resources from the national lottery will not be seen as a substitute for public expenditure?

Mr. Baker: I thank my right hon. Friend for his warm welcome and pay tribute to the work that he carried out when he was responsible for our arts policy and for funding the arts. I know that he has supported for a long time our having a lottery, as does the present Minister for the Arts, who has given me great assistance in preparing the policy. I assure my right hon. Friend that resources from the lottery will not be a substitute. I remind the House of the substantial increase in arts spending under the Government—56 per cent. higher in real terms than it was in 1978-79. The arts budget this year is some £560 million.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Does the Home Secretary accept that the only wage packet for thousands of families in Merseyside comes from the member of the family who works in the pools? He proposes to introduce this measure without undertaking a single piece of work on the likely employment consequences. We accept that it is totally proper for the right hon. Gentleman to do as he wishes with his own money, but it is intolerable for him to gamble with the jobs of my constituents. Will he give a commitment that if he proceeds with the scheme the centre for the national lottery will be in Merseyside?

Mr. Baker: I respect the hon. Gentleman's views and I read his speech in the January debate on this subject. I also understand his concern about employment prospects. It is by no means certain that there will be such adverse effects upon the pools. We want to discuss that matter with the three pools companies, and especially in the hon. Gentleman's case with Littlewoods. It is quite possible that the pools companies, either individually or collectively, will make a bid to run the national lottery.

I note what the hon. Gentleman said about the site from which the lottery should operate. I cannot comment upon that now, but we shall be having constructive discussions with the pools companies because, obviously, we do not want to put them out of business. I do not think that a national lottery will put them out of business, but we must explore with them their concerns.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I thank my right hon. Friend for his enthusiastic and prompt response to the National Lottery Bill which I presented only six weeks ago. It shows that the Government are still full of dynamic action. His proposal will be immensely popular in the country because it will bring much pleasure and reward for thousands of people every week, many of whom will not be well off. It will bring an immense amount of help, which the taxpayer does not provide, to the arts, sport, heritage and charities.

My right hon. Friend's proposal is timely because when my Bill was presented Albania was the only other country in Europe without a national lottery and now it has one. If we did not have one, we would be alone. If a national lottery had not been introduced quickly, British money would quickly flow out of the country to foreign causes, even though there are many good causes in Britain that we have yet to satisfy.

Mr. Baker: I congratulate my hon. and learned Friend on being a pioneer in introducing his Bill in January, thus concentrating discussion on the matter. He brought the matter to a head in the House. There was considerable support for his Bill not only from the Government side, but from many Opposition Members. However, during the debate on my hon. and learned Friend's Bill, the Opposition spokesmen were rather lukewarm. The plain fact is that the Labour party would have made no decision on a national lottery. I doubt whether it will be mentioned in the Labour manifesto, although perhaps now it may be —it is a johnny-come-lately.

I agree with my hon. Friend that, if we do not do this, other lottery tickets will be sold here and it will be increasingly difficult to stop that, so this is a sensible move. The important point is that, in the words of Lord Rothschild in 1978, this is a harmless entertainment, a mild flutter, for many people, and our public life will benefit from it.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): In considering whether to publish the White Paper, did the Secretary of State have the opportunity to study the Coopers and Lybrand report on the impact of a national lottery? On the evidence collected in Belgium, Australia and the Republic of Ireland, it predicted that a lottery would kill off the pools industry within a matter of weeks.

Has the Home Secretary taken into account the fact that 4,600 jobs on Merseyside alone will be put at risk, and the predictions are that, even if the national lottery scheme were located there, it would provide only about 200 jobs? Has he taken into account the fact that places such as Merseyside cannot afford to gamble with the jobs that are at stake in these proposals? Will he take it from me that the hostility that he will arouse among the people of Merseyside with this proposal will have an impact not only on the progress of this scheme but on the Tory party in the forthcoming election?

Mr. Baker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not over-exaggerate any likely effect. The interesting thing about the Belgian experience, as set out in the letter, is that its pools were operating on the British fixtures list because there was not a long, strong tradition of clubs playing there. Therefore, there was not the same commitment to and interest in soccer in Belgium as there is in this country, where it is the national sport. In other countries where soccer is well established as a national sport, the football pools co-exist quite happily with the national lottery. These are matters which, with the pools operators, we shall be considering.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I congratulate my right hon. Friend and warmly welcome his announcement. It is very opportune because I believe, as a former Minister for Sport, that it may well enhance Manchester's chances of winning the Olympic bid, which will lead to the building of many excellent new sports facilities. Following what my right hon. Friend said about the flood of money to national lotteries in other countries, may I press him for a little more detail on the time scale of introducing a Bill and then bringing in a national lottery, because there is some urgency to stop the sale of other national lottery tickets here?

Mr. Baker: After the general election, when we return to office, we shall introduce a Bill to implement a national lottery and that will be put on the statute book as soon as possible. It will establish arrangements for a national lottery and a national lottery board and all the regulations needed. We estimate that it will probably require a year to 18 months to get established. The arrangements for selling lottery tickets through different outlets, which could include small shops, large shops, village post offices——

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Creating jobs.

Mr. Baker: Yes; there will be a great deal of job creation as a result of this activity, not least in the disposal of the proceeds. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) for the work that he did for sport when he was Minister for Sport. The lottery will allow many new sports facilities to be built across the whole range of sports, including new stadiums, tracks and clubs, quite apart from supporting major international events. It is an exciting prospect.

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), I am concerned about the way that this project has been introduced, and it will be clear to the public why it has been introduced today. Nevertheless, as a supporter of a national lottery for a long time, I welcome the decision. However, the Government will not implement their plans because the Conservative party will not be forming the Government after the general election. I know that the next Labour Government will look at this matter in great detail, immediately, with full consultation to ensure that the jobs of workers in the pools business are protected. I share the feeling that there has been some over-exaggeration of the threat to pools jobs that is posed by a lottery, but I hope that the Labour Government will look at this matter quickly and carefully to ensure that the national lottery will have the confidence of all the people.

Mr. Baker: I do not believe that what the hon. Lady says will happen, but, even if it did, I cannot imagine a Labour Administration giving a national lottery any priority. I congratulate the hon. Lady on her strong and consistent support for a national lottery. She has been outspoken about it; and I heard her speech on 17 January, in which she said that she does the football pools every week, and would continue to do so even if there were a national lottery. I think that that will be the reaction of many people. I hope that she is lucky on the pools this week.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on his statement. It is up to his usual standard in creative and imaginative thinking. Does he see the premium savings bonds disappearing? Secondly, will he ensure that shareholders' money will not be used for buying tickets? Thirdly, what about regional money? Will the money collected in one region be allowed to be used in another, or will it be spent only in that region? How will that be organised?

Mr. Baker: I thank my hon. Friend for his congratulatons—for such I took them to be. In paragraph 48, we say two things about regional money. First, we say:

> "Consideration might also be given to the possibility of participants recording their general preference for the use of the proceeds at the time they pay their stake."

They could nominate which charity or activity it went to. Secondly, we say:

> "Amongst the factors which the Board might want to take into account is whether proceeds raised in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland should be devoted to causes in those countries. The Government would welcome views on these, and any other ways, in which the distribution of lottery proceeds could be arranged."

That is a matter for consideration.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am attracted to a national lottery, not least because I recently won $12 in the Florida state lottery. There are those who say that the Government have been organising a national lottery with the economy over the past 13 years.

Will the Home Secretary say a little more about charities? He said that money from the national lottery would not go to the national health service to replace those moneys that come from the Exchequer, but a number of charities work within the NHS. Finally, what sort of prizes does the Secretary of State envisage being paid out?

Mr. Baker: As the hon. Gentleman is a lottery punter —I did not know that he engaged in the Florida state lottery—he knows how they work and he has been lucky enough to win something. The odds are quite strongly against winning. I would expect a large number of medical charities to be among the beneficiaries of a lottery, just as charities for disabled people, for education and for charitable projects that help health activities generally will be.

The prize will depend on the stake, which is envisaged to be 50p or £1. It is for the lottery contractors to determine that. The White Paper deals with whether there should be a maximum. We are disinclined to set a maximum, but that will be a matter for the lottery operators and contractors to decide. Lord Rothschild said in his report in 1978 that there should be a maximum prize of £500,000—in current day money £1·5 million. Only the other week the prize for the pools exceeded £2 million. It is for the lottery operator to decide how to distribute prizes and how much they should be.

Mr. Robert Boscawen (Somerton and Frome): This is the first Government to show real common sense on this issue in modern times, and I welcome this move by the Home Secretary. It could also have an enormously important social effect if my right hon. Friend would say that post offices, and particularly rural sub-post offices, will be able to handle the scheme. That would save many rural sub-post offices in our constituencies.

Mr. Baker: I thank my hon. Friend for his words of support. I think that, like many others, he feels that perhaps this could have been done very much earlier. The scheme will benefit many good causes and will improve the quality of our national life.

It would be for the lottery contractors to decide what outlets they would use. I should have thought that they would be very attracted to village post offices. They are important outlets in many village communities and people have easy access to them. I should have thought that they would be high on the contractor's list.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As several new points have been raised by hon. Members—I hope that that will continue—I shall allow questions to proceed for a further 10 minutes. At that stage we must return to the private Members' business.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the Home Secretary tell us whether this matter of principle, which it is, was included in the Conservative party's election manifesto at the last general election? Does he agree that some of his supporters might have reservations about the proposal on the ground that it gives a social imprimatur to gambling that it otherwise might not have? Apart from the charities which he has mentioned, will he tell us which good causes are either not being sustained by votes made by the House or which could easily be sustained from moneys voted by Parliament? Will not the members of the board be put in a position of considerable potential patronage? Does he think that appointed rather than elected persons of this sort, especially when there are other charities that perhaps will be affected, is compatible with representative democracy?

Mr. Baker: I am sure that the proposal will be clearly stated in our forthcoming manifesto. It is not our intention to promote gambling. A lottery is the softest form of gambling, the hardest being casino gambling. Lord Rothschild described a lottery as "harmless entertainment". I think that many people see it as that. They consider it to be just a flutter.

The hon. Gentleman referred to causes that are not supported. In all the areas that I have mentioned—sports, the arts and our heritage—I think that successive Governments have always wanted to spend more than that which is available. We have spent substantial amounts, and a lottery will provide an opportunity to spend more.

It is true that the members of the board will have a grave responsibility when it comes to allocating moneys. It is the sort of responsibility that has been borne by those who have to dispense money that is raised by various forms of television charitable raising of money, such as telethon, the BBC's "Children in Need" appeal and red-nose day. Those who decide which organisations shall be the beneficiaries take tremendously scrupulous care in so doing. Charities are examined and those involved like there to be a national spread. The board will have to conduct its affairs as scrupulously as that.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on having finally overcome the reluctance of the Treasury, which we know has for years been against a national lottery. When putting the scheme out to contract, would it be possible to include a condition that rural post offices, for example, must be included in the list of sales places? Will he comment on the fact that Liberal Members came into the Chamber to be killjoys in their response to his proposal but took no interest earlier in the debate on tenants?

Mr. Baker: I cannot comment on my hon. Friend's final point. However, it is on the record and will be used.

My hon. Friend's suggestion about post offices is one that we can consider. There are various matters that we will still wish to consider, including small shops as well as large retail outlets. I am glad that we have been able to win over all members of the Government in support of this measure.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Does the Home Secretary recognise that many people will see his announcement as one of the last sleazy acts of an exceptionally sleazy Government? What additional protection has he considered for charities such as the one with which I am proud to be associated, the National Children's Home, which refuse to accept anything from the proceeds of gambling? What defence has he for coming to the House, and using public money and parliamentary time, to announce something that was agreed by the Tory party only last night as part of its election spending and election commitments? What justification is there for doing that with the public purse?

Mr. Baker: The White Paper was not printed overnight; it was decided some time ago. The hon. Lady is being rather churlish. I suggest that she should have listened to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). As I understand it, he is half-heartedly in favour of a lottery, so the Labour party will be committed to one as well. If there is the chance of possibly quite large sums—up to £1 billion—being distributed when a lottery is fully established, a considerable extra amount of money can go to good causes.

The policy of charities depends on their trustees. If the trustees do not wish their charity to receive money from small lotteries, that is up to them. The hon. Lady will see in the paragraphs in the White Paper dealing with charities that we wish to examine with them necessary safeguards and protections. Charities will be among the beneficiaries of a national lottery.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): The gestation period for coming to this decision has been inordinately long. I recall that in my maiden speech, which I made about 18 years ago, I spoke about lotteries. I therefore greatly welcome my right hon. Friend's decision. How many people does he believe will be directly employed by a national lottery? Will he consider the Spanish example with a view to employing disabled people and disadvantaged people to run the whole show?

Mr. Baker: I could not make an estimate of the number of people who will be needed to run the lottery. There will, of course, be many thousands of agents across the country, and the disposal of the proceeds will be job-creative in many instances. Major capital projects will stem from the lottery and so it will have a positive effect. I congratulate my hon. Friend on his percipience. It has taken a long time to ripen.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is it not a fitting epitaph for the Government that after 13 years, having chucked 3 million people on the dole and having a public sector borrowing requirement of £30 billion, they come to the House—*[Interruption.]*—they live in a never-never fantasy land—to talk about running another gambling den? Will the Home Secretary consult the 50-odd Tory Members who are members of Lloyd's—*[Interruption.]*—on how best to run a lottery? They have got themselves into a right old mess. Will he get in touch with the Littlewoods organisation and all the other similar concerns that have given money to the Tory party over the years and tell them that as the Government are trampling on their territory they will send the money back?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friends have showed their contempt for the hon. Gentleman's usual display of spleen and venom. As I understand it, he is about to fight an election and there is a commitment, I believe, in the Labour party manifesto to introduce a national lottery. I trust that he will be able to support the Labour party.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement and his commitment to speak to the pools companies. Will he bear it in mind that most people, if they had to choose, would rather the proceeds of their flutter went to good causes than into the extremely deep pockets of the pools millionaires, where they have gone in the past? Will he confirm that, although there may be some genuine concerns about jobs in the pools companies, there are good prospects for jobs in the arts, in welfare, in sport and in the environment, directly or indirectly, from the lottery?

Mr. Baker: Estimates have been made. The interests that promote a national lottery have talked of very high figures in terms of job creation. I am sure that it will have that effect. I believe that as a result there will be much greater activity in the arts and in sport, including building projects, and across a range of charities, and in preserving our heritage. I hear what my hon. Friend says about the pools. As I have said, we shall discuss with the companies the arrangements that may be necessary.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I wish to speak up for urban post offices. Are they not just as important as rural post offices? I have had to fight to save five in my constituency.

Is my right hon. Friend aware that many churches, of all denominations, and other places of worship involving many faiths, organise raffles, lucky dips and the rest? So we already have the principle of a little flutter—perhaps concealed—by bodies that are committed to promoting morality of the most proper kind. There can be no moral objection to what my right hon. Friend is doing—just a warm welcome for it.

Mr. Baker: We all know that many church activities are supported by a mild flutter. Therefore, I hope that there will not be any great objection on those grounds. One of the beneficiaries should be the great clerical architectural heritage of our country. The cathedrals and the medieval churches will benefit.

If post offices are to be used—and the Post Office is a useful network for establishing contact with a large number of people—urban as well as rural post offices will be considered.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the greatest excitment in doing the football pools is checking the results over the weekend, and that that will continue? People in the United Kingdom are compassionate and they will still want to give to other charities in their own way, so those other charities would not be harmed.

Can my right hon. Friend explain why the Liberal Democrat spokesman, the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), introduced the gambling argument? I do not know what his experience is, but mine is that the first person to be asked to buy a raffle ticket in a constituency is either the mayor or the Member of Parliament. For many years I have given most generously to so many causes that it is unbelievable. Either the Liberal Democrat spokesman is a mean man or he has a short memory. I am sure that he has bought raffle tickets.

Mr. Baker: The Liberal Democrat spokesman must struggle with his conscience—*[Interruption.]* I do not know who would win. As my hon. Friend rightly said, all politicians will be buying raffle tickets this weekend and supporting, in one way or another, a mild form of gambling. I agree with my hon. Friend that there is a strong vein of compassion in our country. One of the endearing characteristics of the British nation is its willingness to give to charitable causes. The flows of money are very substantial, and I do not think that they will be choked by a national lottery.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): The right hon. Gentleman's statement will be viewed as utterly reckless and ill considered. It has been presented entirely for electoral purposes. That is shown by the Home Secretary's wild departure today from the Government's statement on this very subject on 17 January. The forthcoming election has caused that.

There have been no consultations with the pools companies. We spoke to them this morning and they are annoyed that the Government have reneged on the promises made by the Under-Secretary of State, who is in his place, on 17 January.

The nature of gambling in Britain is such that none of us here today even knows whether a national lottery is viable—*[Interruption.]* We do not know. For example, we do not know what form of regulation would be used vis a vis the pools. We do not know what the taxation will be. Will it be 37·5 per cent. as it is for the pools? It would be irresponsible of hon. Members on either side of the House to talk about £1 billion in prizes for good causes when none of us knows what the figure will be.

From his experience of other EC countries, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the probability of two long odds gambling regimes co-existing is very doubtful? There are serious risks. The Belgian experience, to which he referred, was that the pools were wiped out within three weeks. In Britain, that would mean the loss of one third of a billion pounds to the Exchequer. The Government are not bothered about that any more. They are spending money like water—borrowing, borrowing, borrowing.

There are 6,500 full-time jobs on Merseyside and 70,000 collectors' jobs that need to be considered. The right hon. Gentleman had little to say about that. We are also worried—and I cannot underline this enough—about the effect that the lottery could have on charities, especially small charities. It could undermine a great deal of good work in this country. The Labour party wants to ensure that the charities are properly protected.

Labour party policy is to review the fund-raising arrangements for sport, the arts, charities and other bodies, and we will do so when we form the Government in the next few weeks. As we said in September 1991, we shall sympathetically consider the question of a national lottery while ensuring that the football pools and charities are properly protected.

Mr. Baker: That is not much of a commitment. The hon. Gentleman will have happier appearances at the

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Dispatch Box than he has had in the past five minutes. The best advice to the Labour party is, "If you are in a hole, stop digging."

The Government have made a clear commitment to introducing a national lottery, and we shall do so. We will get on with it; we will not have reviews. We shall hold discussions immediately with the pools companies and charities to resolve any problems and difficulties. We are convinced that a national lottery will be of great benefit to the nation and to many good causes.

Royal Assent

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Bingo Act 1992.
Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act 1992.
Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992.
Further and Higher Education Act 1992.
Local Government Finance Act 1992.
Offshore Safety Act 1992.
Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act 1992.
Coal Industry Act 1992.
Licensing (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 1992.
Local Government Act 1992.
Aberdeen Harbour Order Confirmation Act 1992.

And to the following Measure, passed under the provisions of the Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act 1919:

Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 1992.

Commonhold and Leasehold Reform

Question again proposed.

Mr. George Howarth: Before the statement, I was saying that the Government have had 13 years to do something about leasehold reform, but they have shown a lamentable lack of inclination to do so—with the exception of the Lord Chancellor's consultative paper on commonhold.

Mr. Summerson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howarth: I have only just begun. I shall give way in a moment because I know that the hon. Gentleman has spoken in these debates previously. I want to get a little way into my argument before giving way.

I again congratulate the hon. Member for Dulwich on introducing the motion. He made a cogent and well-argued case for reform. However, if the past 13 years are anything to go by, the prospects of the Government doing anything if they are returned to power are pretty dismal. I do not want to go back over the whole of those 13 years, so I shall just itemise a few opportunities during the past two years that the Government have had to do something about the problem, but which they have failed to take.

The hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) has raised the matter frequently in the House. He is not in his place, although he was previously. He introduced the Leasehold Reform Bill on 3 April 1990. It is interesting that one of the sponsors of the Bill was the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), now the Minister for Housing and Planning—who has been somewhat reticent in following up the promise that he made at the time. There was another opportunity to make some sort of announcement on 8 March 1991, when a suitable motion was before the House. The Minister and I took part in that debate and the hon. Members for Kensington and for Dulwich also spoke. The opportunities have been there, but they have not been taken.

Mr. Summerson: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will give the Government credit for passing the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 and 1987.

Mr. Howarth: I do so, but I will mention later the inadequacies of that legislation.

A letter dated February 1992 from Joan South of the Leasehold Enfranchisement Association, which was widely circulated, states:

> "We have now received a positive commitment from the Labour party . . . a less than satisfactory one from the Liberal Democrats . . . but as yet have received nothing from the Government or the Conservative Party."

Earlier this week, perhaps because of fears in many Conservative-held marginal constituencies, particularly in London, the Department of the Environment issued a press release on which the Minister will no doubt comment in more detail. That suggests some panic in the Government. There are fears in a number of London constituencies about the inadequacy of the Government's past and proposed action.

When Labour comes to power in the next few weeks, it will put into effect a document, "Commonhold and other new rights for leaseholders" which I launched at Kensington town hall earlier this month in the company of that constituency's excellent Labour candidate, Ann Holmes. It suggests extending a new right to buy, including one relating to commonhold, along the lines previously considered for all leaseholders of houses. It deals also with lease expiry. A Labour Government will consider introducing and co-operating in the introduction of holding legislation.

Other key points in that document include the right for existing leaseholders to choose their managing agents, to help to ensure that agents are efficient and that reasonable service charges are levied. Existing leaseholders will be given the right to extend their leases and to have the freeholder's accounts examined by an auditor of the leaseholder's own choosing.

There will be a right to covenants that will clearly stipulate the freeholder's responsibility to repair and to improve the block. We shall also introduce the concept of an arbitration panel with the remit of settling disputes between leaseholder and freeholder over, for example, the price of a freehold or the level of service charges. We will also repeal the legislation that makes the original lessee liable for payment when the lease is sold on—an anomaly which exists in respect of commercial and residential leases.

The Government's proposals made even at this late hour are inadequate. I quote from a letter sent to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) earlier this week from Miss Jude Goffe of 68 Cloudesley road, north London. She makes the reasonable point that

> "The Leasehold Reform Act 1967 entitled the leaseholder to acquire freehold or to extend the lease by 50 years if certain conditions were met. These have been subsequently amended and the two most important are: 1. for leases issued pre-1 April 1990—the tenancy was at a "low" rent, i.e. at rent of less than two-thirds of the 1965 rateable value or the rateable value on the first day of the term, if later than March 1965. For leases post-April 1990—rents may not be more than £1,000 in central London or £250 elsewhere. 2. The rateable value on 23rd March 1965 was not more than £400 (increased in 1974 to £1,500) in London, and £200 (increased in 1974 to £750) elsewhere."

Miss Goffe makes the point that most houses in Islington and Hackney are excluded because of condition 1, whereas houses in Kensington, Mayfair, and Belgravia are mainly excluded because of condition 2—and that due to insufficient details in the Government's announcement,

> "we are not sure whether it is proposed to remove both conditions."

Miss Goffe adds:

> "We suspect that the Government is seeking to keep votes in key marginals, including Kensington. It would therefore not surprise us if only condition 2 were removed."

I understsand that that is precisely the Government's intention. That is all being done because in a few weeks' time, the country will go to the polls, and the Government are anxious to save the hides of a few Conservative Members in London constituencies.

The situation that I described does not exclusively affect London. In the previous debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) spoke at length about the problems of long leaseholders in the north-west of England. It exists also in south Wales, parts of Yorkshire, and the north of England.

My hon. Friend proposed a four-point plan. He suggested establishing the right to sell the ground lease to the owner-occupier; limiting by statute the level of on-costs in any transaction, because some organisations have been ripping off long leaseholders, who have been charged for all manner of items, including extensions, modifications and improvements; the removal from a

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given date of the imposition of retrospective permission; and, until the owner-occupier purchases, and for the benefit of those who do not choose—even at an affordable cost—to enfranchise, reasonable charges for current permissions to alter. I should be happy to incorporate those four provisions in legislation.

The Consumers Association also makes a number of important points. In a letter to me dated 4 March, it outlines five reservations that it has about the Government's proposals, and states:

> "enfranchisement and commonhold alone will not be sufficient to address the problems of the long leasehold system. They should be conjoined with a right to extend leases, available to all residents, and an overhaul of landlord and tenant law to improve the lot of those unable to convert to commonhold;
> too many leaseholders in 'mixed' blocks containing rented flats or commercial units will be excluded from the enfranchisement provisions, and too many 'resident landlords' in converted properties will be able to escape them;
> a statutory formula for valuation may be preferable to open market valuation: either way, the process must be clearly explained, and an inexpensive appeals procedure established;
> an early announcement is needed to persuade freeholders that they will not benefit from carrying out extensive works at the expense of flatowners in the run up to enfranchisement; a commonhold and enfranchisement commission should be set up to provide advice and informal resolution of disputes."

Broadly speaking, the association is proposing a similar strategy to that set out in the Labour party's policy document published earlier this month. We can happily go along with that approach, which I welcome.

In conclusion, I repeat an offer that I made earlier to the Under-Secretary. I said:

> "My offer is that, if the Government take up one, two, three or all of those demands, made in our policy statement . . . the Opposition will co-operate in every way to ensure that the legislation—which we hope will be proposed by the Government—gets on to the statute book. We would do nothing to detain or delay such legislation and would co-operate as fully as possible."—[*Official Report*, 8 March 1991; Vol. 187, c. 610.]

Even in the dying days of this Parliament if the Government, even over the weekend, come forward with some draft legislation, unlikely though it is, we would co-operate with them to get it on to the statute book.

The Government have dithered and delayed for 13 years. I have no confidence and I suspect that those affected have no confidence in this last-minute conversion. The Government's attitude has everything to do with the imminence of an election and nothing whatever to do with the fact that something needs to be done about this thorny problem. In the unlikely event of the Government holding their majority at the election, I suspect that nothing will be done thereafter. My pledge is that within the first year of a Labour Government we will introduce legislation to resolve these problems and the longstanding problem of leasehold reform, which this Government have evaded and avoided for the past 13 years.

12.1 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tim Yeo): As the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) is likely to remain in opposition for some time, I thank him for his offer to co-operate with the Government in getting legislation on to the statute book as quickly as possible. I look forward to taking up that offer later this year.

I declare an interest as the owner of a long leasehold flat in a rather well-managed block which, I am glad to say, as the Whip is present, is within the Division bell area. This has been an extremely high-quality debate. No speech exceeded in quality that of my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) when he opened the debate. I congratulate him on winning first place in the ballot, on choosing this particular topic so timeously and on the excellence of his speech.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) that the fact that no Liberal Democratic Member has been present at any stage in our proceedings is a sign of the low priority that that party attaches to this subject. I know that it is customary to congratulate hon. Members when they make their maiden speech. This morning my hon. Friend made what he mentioned could be his valedictory speech to the House. I should like to take the opportunity of saying what an excellent speech it was. I hope to be able to deal with some of the points that [illegible] raised.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), who asked for answers on a range of subjects when he spoke before the Home Secretary's statement, has not bothered to remain to hear the answers that I shall now try to give.

As the hon. Member for Knowsley, North said, it is just a year since we last debated this subject. A great deal has happened since then. The Government have made progress at a vigorous pace. Last July my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning announced the Government's firm intention to proceed with the introduction of commonhold as an entirely new scheme of freehold ownership and communal management of flats and other interdependent buildings. He made a further commitment of our intention to give long leaseholders of flats the right to enfranchise and collectively to purchase at market value the freehold interest of their block. The Department of the Environment then issued a leaflet and sought comments on those proposals.

Only this week my hon. Friend confirmed our commitments to the policy of enfranchisement. On Wednesday in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) he announced two important additional measures: the right to a lease extension and the extension of the right to enfranchise to householders who were previously excluded because of the high rateable value of their property.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Can my hon. Friend say whether this warmly welcomed announcement will extend to individuals in a block of former council tenants where others have not bought or where some have bought not at all? He will be aware of the various problems that that causes.

Mr. Yeo: Yes, I shall try to explain in more detail exactly to whom this will apply. The fact that the landlord is a local authority rather than a private landlord will not make any difference. There will still be a threshold in that two thirds of the properties in a block will have to qualify. In other words, they will have to be sold on long leases. That means that a number of flat dwellers who have exercised the right to buy will find at this stage that they are in too small a minority within their block to qualify. In smaller blocks it is perfectly possible that more than two thirds of the flats will have been sold under the right to buy, so will qualify.

Mr. Greenway: As my hon. Friend will know, this is extremely important to the people whom I have described. Can he give them some hope that the Government will consider the case of those who find themselves in a block where there are fewer than two thirds qualifying? They are almost always former council tenants. Can my hon. Friend give them some hope that they will be able to buy before too long?

Mr. Yeo: We shall have to consider that point in Committee when we reach that stage. The Government will continue to promote the right to buy. I hope, and I am sure that my hon. Friend hopes, that in blocks where a relatively small number of people have bought their leases the fact that this opportunity to enfranchise will exist when they get beyond the two thirds may attract more buyers. Therefore my hon. Friend's concerns will be met in that way.

Our proposed extension of the rights of leaseholders will go a long way towards resolving many of the bad management problems, about which many hon. Members on both sides are concerned. It has been apparent from the responses during consultation last year that there is still some confusion about the important differences between commonhold and leasehold enfranchisement. Indeed, that confusion has spilt over into this morning's debate, so I shall briefly clarify the Government's intentions.

Commonhold, as a new form of land tenure, is intended as a means of overcoming the present inadequacy of the law which does not provide for the satisfactory ownership of individual flats on a freehold basis. It is not intended to replace leasehold as a form of tenure, because in many instances, particularly in the commercial sector, leasehold works perfectly well. Commonhold will provide an alternative form of tenure.

There are some freehold flats in England and Wales, but the owners of those interests are in a far from satisfactory position. Their interest is generally not mortgageable, so is difficult to sell.

The commonhold Bill will introduce a new system of positive and restrictive land obligations which, in effect, will enable positive covenants to be enforced upon successors to a freehold title. Commonhold will also establish standardised arrangements and fair rules for the democratic management of individual flats and other relevant properties. All commonhold unit owners will automatically belong to a commonhold association which will have responsibility for the fabric of the building and its common parts. A commonhold unit owner will have the additional responsibilities and liabilities that freehold ownership brings, but he will also have a mortgageable asset instead of a diminishing leasehold. The Government do not feel that it would be right to enforce those additional liabilities of commonhold ownership on anyone who does not wish to take on such responsibilities. In answer, then, to a point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich, commonhold will not include any element of compulsion.

By contrast, our proposals on leasehold enfranchisement have an element of compulsion. The qualifying leaseholders of flats in wholly or mainly residential blocks will be given a right to purchase collectively the freehold of those blocks. That right forms a separate part in the package of measures that will be exerciseable by qualifying leaseholders, regardless of whether they subsequently wish to convert to commonhold.

We have placed in the Vote Office a leaflet that explains the proposals on the enfranchisement of leaseholds. It will go a long way towards answering the points raised by the hon. Member for Tooting, who I see is now back in his place. In outline, two thirds of the flats in the block concerned must be let on long leases—that is, leases originally granted for a term of more than 21 years. If two thirds of the flats are in that form, a further test is applied: two thirds of the people who have the long leasehold flats must vote in favour, if enfranchisement is to take place. There are a number of other more detailed conditions explained in the document, but I shall not weary the House with them now.

The process of leasehold enfranchisement will go a long way to ending management problems with freeholders, because enfranchisement transfers management to the people who own the flats.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): I must declare an interest as chairman of Haven Services Limited which manages more than 4,000 units of sheltered accommodation for the parent company Anglia Secure Homes and for many other outside developers. May I draw the Minister's attention to what I consider to be the most crucial element in what he has said so far. The only justification for leasehold enfranchisement is as a response to poor management by freeholders. Why does he believe that such a profoundly undemocratic and un-Conservative measure as the enforced sale of assets by an individual can be justified where there is no evidence of poor management? Does not he realise that there is justification for restricting the availability of leasehold enfranchisement only in those cases where there is proven poor management, perhaps by serving a notice on a recalcitrant landlord?

Mr. Yeo: It would be difficult to put into legislation a definition of what was or was not poor management. I have no doubt that the company of which my hon. Friend is chairman would never fall into the category of poor managers. That being the case, I strongly suspect that the leaseholders of properties that his company and other well-known companies own will not be in the forefront, demanding the purchase of the freehold. They will not be seeking to enfranchise because, as I am about to explain, the process of enfranchisement carries a considerable cost. It is not a free option, so I believe that landlords with well-managed properties have nothing to fear from the principle of compulsion. Indeed, negotiations may take place between landlords and leaseholders about lease extensions and other matters, which will largely satisfy the concerns of leaseholders in well-managed properties.

The other advantage of enfranchisement is that it eliminates the problem of an unsaleable asset in the form of a lease which is too short to be mortgageable, as has been said. We are also concerned about the freeholder. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) intervened, and my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate made the same point. There is no question of expropriating the freeholder's asset. The price that the leaseholder must pay

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to enfranchise must be a fair market value. We do not intend that through this legislation leaseholders should be able to acquire assets at a discount.

The valuation process will be complex. The price must include not only the open market value for the freehold but a share of the marriage value. The marriage value is a concept familiar to those in the property world. It represents the latent value released by the merger of two or more interests in land or property. The combination of those interests may be worth more if it is in the same ownership than the sum of the individual values in separate ownerships. Our aim in acquiring the marriage value to be shared is to be fair to the leaseholder and the freeholder. The document in the Vote Office explains that the freeholder will always receive at least half of the total marriage values of the individual flats.

Where there are disputes over facts, they will be referred to the county court. Where there are disputes over valuation, they will be referred to the local leasehold valuation tribunals.

Mr. Cox: I take the Minister's point that it is a complex issue, but, as I and other hon. Members have said, one of the on-going criticisms is the condition in which properties are left. Can the Minister say that the condition of a property will also be included in the market value that the owner is seeking to obtain?

Mr. Yeo: Inevitably, the condition and the location of a property will be reflected in the valuation.

I said that qualifying leaseholders in wholly or mainly residential blocks could enfranchise. Although we wish to spread the benefits of enfranchisement as widely as we can, our proposals will not apply to properties of which more than 10 per cent. of the internal floor area is used or intended for use for non-residential purposes.

We have no evidence of widespread demand in the property market for leaseholders of commercial units to have the same rights as people living in flats to purchase the freehold. I believe that the introduction of such a right for commercial leaseholders to enfranchise could undermine the effective working of the property market and would threaten the position of investors and developers. The 10 per cent. threshold has been chosen carefully in the light of consultation, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate said, it is a difficult balance to strike and there will no doubt be further debate about that in due course.

Relatively few leaseholders of flats will be excluded by that provision. We have also tried to minimise the other exclusions so that leaseholders such as local authorities and other public sector landlords will also qualify, as will leaseholders of housing association properties and of sheltered housing properties.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: Will my hon. Friend at least examine the point that I made about a council property that is at least partly commercial—for example, a garage with residential accommodation upstairs? Can his Department's long-standing objection in that respect be overcome?

Mr. Yeo: I shall certainly look into that.

The effect of the proposals would be that if enough qualifying tenants in any of the categories that I mentioned are willing to enfranchise, the opportunity to do so will be widespread.

Where four or fewer flats in a property have been converted from a house and where the landlord occupies one of those flats as his sole or main residence, that block will also be excluded. However, for the people who are excluded the next proposal is important, because it will extend leases on an individual basis. We have amended our original proposals to include this right because of our concern about how unenfranchisable leases might be treated in the property market following the opportunity to enfranchise being granted to many other leaseholders. The right to extend individual leases will ensure that leaseholders exclude from the other provisions can retain a saleable and mortgageable asset, an issue which will be of great interest to many of my hon. Friends' constituents.

I stress that the right to lease extension will be confined to leaseholders excluded from the right to enfranchise in the categories that I have already mentioned. An extended lease will be granted for the unexpired portion of an existing lease, plus an additional 90 years at a peppercorn rent for the entire period. The price will be the market price of a new lease, including the income value to the landlord of the existing lease and the price that could reasonably be expected to be paid for granting a 90-year extension at a peppercorn rent. That price will also include a share of any marriage value lost to the landlord by granting a new lease. The process of settling the price will be the same as that for a lease enfranchisement.

The issue of lease extension is much more complicated for flats than for houses. Our minds are not absolutely closed on every detail. We are still consulting on that aspect of our proposals and we are looking for comments before the end of May.

I mentioned briefly our proposals to amend the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. Most long leaseholders of houses have had the right under that Act to enfranchise, subject to their properties falling within certain rateable value limits. Those limits left many high-value houses—mostly in central London—excluded by the rateable value limits. My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North has made us aware of the problem that that restriction poses for his constituents. We now recognise that introducing the right for leaseholders of flats to enfranchise without any rateable value limits would create anomalies for high value houses. Therefore, we have made it clear that not only do we have no fundamental objection to removing the rateable value limits but that we now intend to do so.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene. I should be glad if he would comment on two issues.

First, will he assume that the provisions that he has just announced and which will be included in the forthcoming Bill will apply to the long leaseholders of the Crown Estate, as the Crown Estate Act 1961 would usually exempt the estate from the consequences of this legislation? Secondly, can he confirm that there will not be any evasion of our intentions by those who claim charitable status, except as set out in the Leasehold Reform Act 1967?

Mr. Yeo: In the past, the Crown Estate has undertaken to abide by the consequences of legislation and we will have discussions with the aim of achieving that again in this case. In the second case, charitable housing trusts will not be able to claim any exclusion from the legislation except when, for the purpose of fulfilling their charitable objectives, they have sold property at a discount to its market value to the long leaseholder. In other respects, they will be treated the same as everyone else.

The existence of the right to enfranchise will be a powerful spur to all landlords to maintain higher standards of management, but it will not eliminate disputes altogether. Leaseholders in blocks where the freeholder is responsible for management will still need to be protected, both against unscrupulous landlords and, sometimes, other tenants.

I regret to say that the problems of bad management are not confined to the private sector. The incompetence or worse extends all too frequently to local authority landlords which is recognised by Conservative Members even if it is often vehemently denied by Opposition Members.

Mr. Benyon: Before my hon. Friend leaves the 1967 Act, I must point out that it is apparent from the note in the Vote Office that those who enfranchise themselves under the extension to the 1967 Act in highly priced properties, mainly in central London, will not get the marriage value or a proportion of the marriage value. If it is equitable for the leaseholders of flats to get that, why is it not equitable for those in such properties?

Mr. Yeo: What is proposed for those properties is consistent with the case of the properties that qualified under the 1967 Act. As my hon. Friend has drawn attention to the point, I undertake to consider it. We have said in the document in the Vote Office that the process of calculating the price is almost identical to the market valuation principle proposed for flats. To the extent that it is different, I will consider my hon. Friend's concerns and reflect on them. My hon. Friend may not be in the House by the time that the legislation goes through. I am sure that he will be here in spirit and I have no doubt that we shall be able to communicate with him as he is a substantial landlord in Hackney. I am sure that the Hackney constituencies will soon become Conservative.

I regret that it is not surprising that Opposition Members are so reticent about the disgraceful behaviour of many local authority landlords, because such landlords are almost invariably Labour-controlled authorities. The principle that landlords can appoint managing agents cannot be easily overturned. I notice that that proposal is included in the Opposition's policyy statement. We have considered carefully whether tenants should be given the right to choose the managing agent or to remove a managing agent chosen by the landlord. To give such a right would create more problems than it would solve. It would present severe practical difficulties if the tenants wanted to take action against the landlord because of poor management. As the landlord is ultimately responsible for the management of the block, he must have the final choice of managing agent.

The Landlord and Tenant Acts already provide for tenants' agents to be consulted over the appointment of managing agents and about their duties. Leaseholders also have the right to be consulted about major works. They have the right to information about service charges, including a summary of the costs and they have the opportunity to inspect supporting documents if unreasonable service charge demands are made.

In answer to the concern expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate, I point out that the legislation provides a broadly adequate set of safeguards. Difficulty has arisen because of the reluctance, which may be understandable, of some tenants to enforce the legislation. The House should deliver a clear message to people that there is a framework that can be used to pursue bad landlords who are inflicting the consequences of poor management on their tenants. As Members of Parliament, we should advise and encourage people to go down the legislative route. Only if we find that the legislation proves to be ineffective when it has been tested in court would it be necessary to consider further change. I understand the caution that many tenants would feel about going to the courts and I especially understand the caution that tenants of local authorities may feel because of the danger of harassment.

I condemn the practice of many local authorities, especially in London, of making exorbitant demands for contributions from leaseholders who have exercised the right to buy to the cost of works in the blocks in which they live.

Mr. Summerson: Hear, hear.

Mr. Yeo: I am glad to hear my hon. Friend being so vocal on the matter. In Waltham Forest and in Southwark, there is still great Labour party hostility to home ownership. That is never far from the surface anywhere in the Labour party. That hostility was reflected in Labour's opposition to the right-to-buy legislation when it was introduced. That hostility is reflected in Labour's opposition to rents-to-mortgages, the most valuable extension of right to buy. Even when the right to buy has been established as a statutory right, local authorities such as Lambeth and Hackney continue to obstruct, both by incompetence and by dogma, the process of tenants trying to exercise their right to buy.

Under prodding from my Department and following legislation, Lambeth's previously lamentable performance has improved slightly. The mantle of being the worst performing London borough in terms of processing right to buy applications has now passed to Hackney.

Sir John Wheeler: Before my hon. Friend concludes his excellent speech, will he deal with this point? He may have been as astounded as I and my hon. Friends were to hear the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) talk about the Government "dithering" over the proposals. Will he confirm that this Government set up the Nugee committee of inquiry in 1984 which led to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987? It greatly extended the accountablity of freeholders and managing agents to renting and leaseholding residents.

Will my hon. Friend dwell on another point? Although the Opposition have said that they support the forthcoming legislation, they have proposed in their policy documents the introduction of two taxes that would make the acquisition of freeholds and commonhold an irrelevance. They propose an inheritance tax and the reintroduction of a capital transfer tax.

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend makes two important points. No Government have done more than we have, through a series of measures throughout the 1980s—we will follow that in the 1990s—designed to bring sense and balance in the relationship between landlords and tenants. In the unlikely and tragic event of the Labour party coming to power this year, there is no doubt that few leaseholders would have the resources or inclination to try to exercise the rights that we propose because they would have been taxed out of existence. The danger of the Labour party coming to power is that most householders, through a combination of higher income tax, higher national insurance contributions and, above all, higher community charges, because Labour is committed to abolishing community charge capping, would be struggling to remain where they are now. They will not be able to lay out money to acquire the freehold of their properties.

The Opposition's total silence about the way in which their Labour party allies in the local authorities are denying tenants their statutory rights is revealing. We have listened in vain this morning, as always, for any whisper of condemnation of those disgraceful practices. It is not only that such authorities deny tenants their statutory rights. They waste resources by leaving properties empty and by failing to collect the rents due to them. To know what a Labour Government would be like in practice, one has only to look at the record of the London Labour-controlled authorities.

Let me conclude with a word about service charges.

Mr. George Howarth: The Minister has treated us to a long litany of abuse. As he has widened the debate to housing concerns in general, would he care to spend a few minutes defending the Government's record on homelessness?

Mr. Yeo: I am glad to be able to tell the hon. Gentleman that I am looking forward to the publication of the next set of homelessness statistics next week, and they will demonstrate the success of our policies.

Let me deal specifically with the point about service charges. We know of contributions requested from leaseholders of £20,000 towards work on flats whose total market value is little more than that. We have heard of demands for advance payments of up to £40,000—even where there is no evidence that the council plans to carry out any work in the near future. At the moment, I am taking up a case with Southwark—brought to my attention through the good offices of my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich—involving a tenant who has been billed every quarter for a contribution of £100 a month towards repairs that the council shows no sign of being ready to undertake. That sum is additional to the charges for day-to-day services and maintenance costs. If that is not an abuse of landlords' power, I do not know what is. It is certainly not acceptable to us. Again, I listen in vain for any condemnation of that practice by the Labour party.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Yeo: No, I must make progress. I am sorry, but I have given way many times.

Tenants are being discouraged from exercising the right to buy because of their fears of excessive charges—fears that are being whipped up by councils providing unjustifiably high pre-sale estimates. They are being warned of—one might almost say that they are being threatened with—liability for repair bills higher than the value of the flats themselves.

On the issue of timing, my hon. Friends will know that I cannot make commitments about what legislation will be included in the first Session of the new Parliament. I can confirm, however, that leasehold enfranchisement and the introduction of commonhold will be a top priority. We have done the work, we have completed the consultation. The Government are committed to the policy.

The Opposition have tried to claim that they would attach a high priority to such a policy—but they have so many priorities. By the time they have introduced legislation to cripple employers and destroy jobs through the introduction of a minimum wage, and to legalise flying pickets, by the time they have renationalised the water industry, abolished fund-holding general practices and scrapped the council tax, I do not know how much parliamentary time will be left in the first five years, let alone the first year.

At least the Opposition list their priorities on housing: there are 16 priorities listed in their policy document on housing, and I should like to draw my hon. Friend's attention to one of them. Labour would lift restrictions on direct labour organisations. Of course, the Opposition must pay their dues to their masters in the public sector trade unions, but to call the promotion of direct labour organisations a priority is surely unnecessary even by Labour party standards. Let us recognise it for what it is—not a priority but a threat to the pockets of charge payers in London Labour-controlled local authority areas who have benefited so much from compulsory competitive tendering. It is a threat, too, to the tenants, whose repairs are unlikely to be more speedily or effectively undertaken if the direct labour organisation monopoly is restored as the Labour party wishes. The priority for Labour to help its union friends ranks at least equally with the introduction of leasehold enfranchisement. The message is clear: those who want legislation on the statute book quickly need a re-elected Conservative Government. That is what they will get later this year, and I commend the policy to the House.

12.31 pm

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): I had not intended to speak in the debate but as it has been rather one-sided I have decided that I would like to intervene. I must declare my interest as the owner of leasehold property.

No one objects at all to commonhold as an additional form of housing tenure—although the claims made for it are grossly exaggerated, and the sort of instances described by the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) show the difficulties that will arise. Commonhold sounds lovely but in practice it will mean a lot of extra money for the lawyers.

It is not that aspect with which I have difficulty, however. What sticks in the gullet is the compulsory overthrow of agreements freely entered into and their extension—quite apart from commonhold—to the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. The changes will affect the whole concept of the private rented market. As my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norrish) implied in his intervention, that effect could have been avoided, by allowing the right of enfranchisement on change of ownership or where a landlord does not conform to a proper code of practice.

Such legislation would remove long leasehold from housing tenure. Nobody would ever again grant a long lease. The opponents of the existing system say, "So what. This is a bad system and we have heard much of its defects today. We have heard a lot about the bad apples in the barrel." But there are grave disadvantages in losing the leasehold system, particularly in areas of high-priced property. Leasehold has always been the halfway house between direct rental and owner occupation. Without it there will remain only two forms of private housing tenure —direct rental on my one hand and owner occupation on the other. I beg my hon. Friends to understand that, as a result of the change, both will become more expensive.

One of the saddest aspects of the current housing scene is the relatively small size of the private rented sector. Compared with our industrial competitors overseas, we are a long way behind, which militates against the mobility of labour. There are several reasons for that—principally, the low return that a landlord receives on rented property largely caused by the tax advantages available to owner occupiers. It is also a direct result of the political uncertainty that has surrounded rented property for so many years. As a result of the compulsion element of the proposed change whereby a Conservative Government proposes that these contracts should be overthrown, landlords will wonder how they can ensure that the same will not happen to ordinary rented properties and will decide to get out now while the going is good. That will be their overriding reaction.

Some of my hon. Friends may say that the number of private rentals is now rising, and I have the figures from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. But that is because of the depressed state of the housing market. As soon as that changes, as it rapidly will, people will leave the private rented sector in droves.

May I raise the issue of compensation, not as a private plea but because it is important for landlords' general conception of renting in the future. I was glad that my hon. Friend the Minister replied to me as he did about the extension to the 1967 Act. But even what is proposed for flats—the market price plus at least half the market value —will give enormous immediate tax-free capital gains to the leaseholder at the expense of the freeholder. There is no way to avoid that. If no change is made to the proposal for extending the 1967 Act, the windfall gain involved will be enormous and will involve hundreds of thousands of pounds per property. That is marvellous for the Government because they do not have to pay a penny, and it will no doubt have a considerable effect on how people vote. But it does make one curious about why all those impoverished people in Eaton square should have that windfall.

Excluding the 1967 Act itself, we must go back to the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII to find an equivalent transfer of property from one section of the population to another.

Sir John Wheeler: I am tempted to intervene in my hon. Friend's speech to say that he may have proved the case for change if he is looking back that far in history.

Mr. Benyon: Henry VIII transferred arbitrarily a large amount of property in this country. My hon. Friend may say that that was beneficial. I am not arguing that point, but it is a curious measure for the Conservative party to aspire to. When the appearance of central London changes out of all recognition, as it will, and when the price of property and rents escalate, we shall know who to blame.

12.38 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) on his good fortune in winning the ballot and choosing such an interesting motion for debate.

Commercial leasehold has not yet been dealt with in the debate. In a good letting market, a landlord has all the advantages. People fall over themselves to take property at a time of buoyant economy and many people want to run their own businesses from those properties. That means that landlords can include all sorts of conditions in leases, sometimes quite onerous ones that deal with the maintenance of the building and state that there must be rent reviews at regular intervals—indeed, upward-only rent reviews at regular intervals. The landlord is doubly advantaged by privity of contract—a double whammy.

We should ask what privity of contract is——

Sir John Wheeler: Define it.

Mr. Summerson: My hon. Friend asks me to define it, and I am just about to make a gallant effort to do so. In broad and general terms, at the start of a lease there is privity of contract between the lessee and the freeholder. Well on into the lease, where the lease may have been assigned several times, there is privity of estate between the freeholder and whoever holds the lease at the time. In addition, there is privity of contract between the freeholder and the original lessee, who may have assigned the lease and disappeared off into the distance.

If the lease was originally for a term of 25 years, has run for 15 to 20 years, has been assigned several times, and the holder of the lease is unable to pay the rent or comply with the conditions of the lease, the landlord can go back to the original tenant. As there is privity of contract between the two, the landlord can demand of the original tenant that he pays the rent. It could be that, with upward-only rent reviews, the rent will be much higher than it was when the lease was first granted.

I have some examples of what can happen in those circumstances, and shall quote from a publication, "Drapers Record—the Fashion Business". It states:

> "Some retailers are facing bills of up to £50,000 for rent arrears run up by tenants to whom the lease has been sold on. By law, previous holders of the lease can be forced to pay the arrears, if the current holder defaults on payment.
>
> Retailers say that they face bankruptcy because they cannot pay the bills.
>
> One fashion retailer in the Midlands, who said he did not wish to be named, said he had just received a demand for £50,000 on a property which he and his wife had left 11 years ago. 'It is causing a lot of hardship but it is the law, and the freeholder is entirely within his rights to do this.'
>
> The retailer is now worried that the landlord will continue to force him to pay the rent until the lease is up in another nine years or until another tenant is found. He added: 'We will have to go bankrupt—there is no way that we can be liable for that sort of figure.'"

That is what happens with privity of contract.

A report was published by the Law Commission in November 1988, following publication of a consultation paper in 1986. A press notice on the report states:

> "Once a tenant no longer owns property, he should not pay for it. The Law Commission, in a report published today, recommends that the responsibilities of both landlords and tenants under a lease should normally end as soon as they

[Mr. Summerson]

> dispose of the property. At present, the general rule is that anyone who signs a lease remains liable to comply with the obligations until the end of the lease period, even though he may long since have parted with all interest in the property.
>
> The rule applies equally to landlords and to tenants, of all types of property—residential, commercial, agricultural. But tenants feel the main impact because leases impose more obligations on them. Difficulties arise particularly when the original tenant transfers the lease, the new tenant defaults on the rent, and the original tenant has to foot the bill . . . The Law Commission found widespread ignorance of the present rule."

We cannot be surprised that there is widespread ignorance of privity of contract.

The press notice continues:

> "The first that many people heard of it was when they received a claim.
>
> Although it is now possible to make a contract to vary the position, the Commission reports that 'landlords are often in a dominant position in this market, which either makes it impractical for tenants to negotiate on equal terms or even deters them from trying'.
>
> The Law Commission recommends that liability should normally cease when an owner parts with property let on a lease, but there would be exceptions. The scheme works differently for tenants and for landlords:
>
> Tenants would automatically be released, unless the landlord's consent to a transfer was needed and he could show that it was reasonable that they should quarantee their immediate successor's liability.
>
> Landlords would have a chance to seek a release, but the tenant would have the opportunity to insist on their remaining responsible if it was reasonable that they should be."

The matter was raised more recently by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), who tabled a question answered on 3 March by the Attorney-General, who said:

> "In 1988 the Law Commission published its report, 'Landlord and Tenant Law: Privity of Contract and Estate', Law Com. No. 174. It recommended that all the obligations created by leases should bind the parties who for the time being are interested in the land and that those parties should cease to have any liability when they part with those interests, except in cases in which it is objectively reasonable that their liability contiue. It is envisaged that in many cases a landlord consenting to an assignment by a tenant of his interest will be able to impose a condition that the tenant guarantees the performance of the lease covenants by his successor, but only until any subsequent assignment. The Lord Chancellor is actively considering the report's recommendations and hopes to be able to make an announcement about them in the near future."—[*Official Report*, 3 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 99.]

That is good news, especially since, as we hope, the Lord Chancellor has been actively considering the report's recommendations since 1988, so he will doubtless be full of ideas.

It surely cannot be right that a landlord can bankrupt someone for someone else's debt.

Turning to residential matters, I declare an interest as the owner of some freehold property in south-west London. My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich is quite right about the difficulties facing leaseholders. He spoke of rapacious freeholders and declining leases, and no doubt there are problems; but certain difficulties also face freeholders. They will have responsibilities imposed on them for any lease. Usually, those responsibilities will include managing, insuring and maintaining a building. Freeholders, too, can run into difficulties. What if, for instance, a couple of lessees in the block do not feel like contributing to the cost of maintenance? Property maintenance is expensive and sometimes people do not feel like paying up. That puts freeholders in a quandary; they are bound by the terms of the lease and by statute to maintain a property. What, therefore, should they do when lessees say that they will not pay? They may decide that if they do not go ahead they will be breaking the law, so they go ahead and try to recover the money later. If a great deal of work has to be done to the block in question, the freeholder may find himself having to pay out large sums of money which the lessees have refused to pay.

House owners have a choice when it comes to maintenance. If the roof starts to leak and someone is feeling a bit hard up, he can decide to buy a bucket to catch the drips and leave the roof until next year. A block of flats is different, however, because the interests of everyone in it have to be considered and the freeholder may have to carry out the work. I question whether these difficulties will be solved by what we have been discussing today.

Will commonhold solve all these problems? Certainly, it will have certain different effects on blocks of flats. It will mean that other commonholders will be able to put pressure on those who do not feel inclined to pay their bills. On the other hand, some people say, "We want to live in peace with our neighbours and do not feel like knocking on the door of the recalcitrant lessee. If he will not pay up that will make things difficult for everyone else."

However, there are rapacious freeholders, people who do not do their job properly. Some of them terrorise leaseholders, and I use those words in a considered way. My constituency has a large block of flats called Fernhill court and there are many problems there. The first problem is in finding out who the landlords are. I think that the Freshwater group is involved, but the trouble is that it has created a number of intermediate forms of tenure. There are freeholders, head leaseholders, under-leaseholders and sub-under-leaseholders. As a result, responsibility for carrying out the terms and conditions of the leases has become thoroughly obscured.

Whoever the freeholders or leaseholders are in that case, they are certainly good at sending out service charge bills to the lessees, and those bills arrive without reference to any law. They consist of a bald statement to the effect that the person owes £500 in service charge. However, they are certainly bad at maintaining the property. They say, "We refuse to maintain the property until you, the lessees, pay our service charges." That is what I mean by rapacious freeholders. It is unfortunate that such things happen, because they tend to give the whole leasehold system a bad name.

Fernhill court also has the problem of short leases which are down to about 30 years, and many elderly people in the blocks are worried about that. Some of them are worried that they may outlive their leases and others are worried that if they want to move they cannot. How can anyone sell a 30-year lease in a block of flats, particularly where those who are supposed to be maintaining the fabric of the property are not doing their duty and are sending out exorbitant and, I am sure, illegal service charge demands?

We must be careful not to throw out the baby with the bath water, because there are many well-managed estates. Estates in London, and especially in central London such as the Grosvenor estate, Belgravia and Mayfair, tend to be well looked after and well maintained. If an estate wishes to sell properties on fairly short leases it should have the right to do so. Many foreigners who come to this country for two or three years would like a home of their own and are perfectly willing to pay a premium for a 25 or 30-year lease in a part of London such as Mayfair or Belgravia. They do not wish to buy a 99-year lease, because the difference in the amount that they would have to pay for a 35-year lease and a 99-year lease is considerable. They know that at the end of the time they can sell the lease and return to America or wherever.

We should consider a simpler solution to the problem, which is that ordinary flats should be sold on leases of, say, 999 years. Those who erect blocks of flats or convert a house into flats sell them on 99 or 125-year leases and then scarper because they are not interested in the freehold. If the leases were for 999 years the freehold could be vested in the leaseholders.

I spoke about elderly people with short leases. Is it possible to put in place some sort of system whereby elderly people who have lived in their flats for a long time but are unable to sell them because of a short lease could sell them on notional 99-year leases? That proportion of the price received that can be attributable to their flats could be passed over to them and the rest passed over to the freeholder, or something like that.

I was rather cross when the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) read out a quote from the Consumers Association because I was going to do that myself. However, although he was good at reading out its reservations, he did not quote one part of the letter, which says:

> "In brief, we broadly welcome the developments to date."

I have received a paper, called "A Programme for a New Parliament", from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, of which I have the honour to be a fellow. It asks for a better deal for leaseholders and tenants and says:

> "Many people in rented and leasehold accommodation have to endure low standards of management and maintenance. The government has tried to help some tenants through its Tenant's Charter. But many tenants and leaseholders in both the public and private sectors still receive a poor service from landlords. Organising even essential repairs can be a major problem.
>
> There is cross-party support for the introduction of a system of commonhold under which leaseholders would be given the right to buy their freehold. Management of the common parts of blocks of flats would then become the responsibility of a commonhold association comprising of all the flat owners. What more can be done?
>
> A statutory code of practice should be prepared for all who manage residential property—whether rented or leasehold, public or private sector. It would lay down a set of minimum standards which all managers would have to meet. The RICS is currently preparing just such a code in close liaison with the Department of the Environment.
>
> A commonhold form of tenure may suit the needs of some people. But introducing it poses many problems. It should only be available with the agreement of both the leaseholders and the freeholder. The needs of many leaseholders may well be better served by giving them a statutory right to extend their leases, a right already enjoyed by commercial leaseholders. This would overcome the difficulty that leaseholders can experience in selling flats with short leases."

Those who have been listening to my speech will doubtless be able to point out a number of contradictions in what I have been saying. That just goes to show how difficult and complicated a subject this is. We have to be terribly careful about what we are proposing and doing. Dispossessing good landlords and freeholders of their properties is something which no Conservative Government should undertake lightly.

I emphasise what has already been said by my hon. Friend the Minister about the treatment by the London borough of Waltham Forest of leaseholders who have exercised their right to buy their flats from the council. Waltham Forest council has behaved in the most disgraceful way towards those leaseholders. It has sent out demands for sinking funds—demands that lead to sinking hearts in my constituency. These demands are often undetailed and have figures written in at the bottom in hand. This is a London borough behaving like this.

Some of the service charges are for exorbitant amounts. People get demands for £2,000 on account. As a result, the London borough of Waltham Forest leaseholders' association has been set up. That just goes to show the demand that there is for a voice for these people who feel themselves so pressurised by the council. There are now more than 2,000 members of the association, which has sent delegations to see me and my hon. Friend the Minister. They are looking to us for help. I am grateful for the assistance that he has already given and I look forward to the further assistance that he will doubless give in the future.

12.59 pm

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): First, I make my declaration of interest in leaseholds as chairman of Haven Services Ltd. Secondly, I apologise to the House for being absent during the first part of the Minister's speech. I was carrying the Home Secretary's bag from his office to the House before he delivered his most welcome statement on the national lottery.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) on his good fortune in the ballot and on what I am assured was a most lucid survey of the problems of leaseholders in Britain. I wish to enter one or two notes of caution along the lines of those of my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon), whose contributions to our debates will be sorely missed by those of us who know him to be one of the most honourable of all right hon. and hon. Members. He has a most distinguished record of contributions to many debates over many years.

The Government are proposing and extremely un-Conservative act. As my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes said, they are proposing to dissieze on a scale which has not been contemplated since—I am sure that the historical researches of my hon. Friend are complete—the dissolution of the monasteries.

We are talking about the right to enfranchise and purchase long leases and the recent announcement of the right to extend leases by providing an extension to the balance of the existing lease plus 90 years. We are establishing a new right to householders who were previously excluded from the terms of leasehold reform legislation to buy their properties, whether or not the landlord likes it, and there is now the new right of commonhold.

My hon. Friend the Minister was right to suggest that there is often confusion over the differences between leasehold enfranchisement and the principle of commonhold. I have no great difficulty with the concept of commonhold, because my hon. Friend made it clear that compulsion was to be absent in deciding when and where commonhold might be appropriate. I believe that he is right. There might be merit—not exclusively but on many occasions—in having a form of ownership of units of occupation within one larger unit or building, which is

[Mr. Steve Norris]

essentially what we are talking about, of the sort that commonhold seems to represent. I hope that in the next Parliament my hon. Friend, if he has not then moved on to be the Minister of State or the Secretary of State of another Department, will be able to advance that concept. I am sure that it would be generally approved.

With leasehold enfranchisement, we are surely in extremely dangerous territory. We are saying that we, the Conservative party, should require an individual to sell an asset—not that he wants to or has any intention of doing so, and not that he has been anything but the most prudent, decent, honourable and conscientious landlord —merely because the tenant of the property that the landlord owns has decided that he or she would like to make a windfall gain.

Sir John Wheeler: Surely my hon. Friend recognises that Parliament decided upon that principle in 1967. The decision has been made. We are proposing to extend the principle to a few remaining houses, chiefly in central London. Surely he recognises also the impossibility of enfranchising the £1 million flat in Westminster under commonhold but leaving the £1 million house next door to it still subject to the leasehold regime.

Mr. Norris: First, I am surprised that my hon. Friend should regard the occupants and tenants of a £1 million flat as being deserving of our attention as persons in dire need. Secondly, I say that two wrongs certainly do not make a right. The fact that the House, before I became a Member of it, introduced—in my view, unwisely—the concept of forcing people to sell assets that they had no intention of selling does not mean that we should compound the felony by extending the principle still further.

I do not doubt the good intentions of my hon. Friends, but there are at least three significant disadvantages in following their preferred route. The suggestion to extend leases sounds perfectly reasonable, but the idea is that someone who has only the tail end of a lease, which is not easy to sell, should be able to buy the balance plus 90 years. As my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) knows, if such a property were a commercial property, under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 the owner would have the right not to extend the lease if he intended to use the property himself or to redevelop it. There is no suggestion that that facility will be available under the proposed legislation.

Let us suppose that I have a block of flats. When the leases on that block come to an end, I want to redevelop it—but I cannot do so because I am now told that I must allow the tenants to buy the remainder of their leases and extend them for another 90 years. It does not matter whether I am compensated for that; no amount of compensation imaginable would be adequate to compensate me for the development loss that I would suffer. However, that is what the motion envisages—unless my hon. Friend the Minister wishes to intervene and say that that is not the case. As he appears to be reasonably comfortable where he is sitting, I can only assume that it is the case. It is nonsense. It is a disgrace that a Conservative Government should even think of doing such a thing.

Let us consider the difficult business of the person who owns the tail end of a lease. There are not many of us who, when contemplating purchasing property, have not thought about the seductive appeal of getting much more premises for our money, provided that we are prepared to accept a shorter lease. It is a well-known choice, which is available to us all. We can have freehold or we can have a 20 or 30-year lease—but on a much grander property—for the same price.

If someone is prepared to buy a 30-year lease, he knows what he is buying. He knows that the value of the lease will diminish and that, at the end of the 30 years, he will not have an asset. That is why he can purchase the occupancy of those premises, with a much shorter lease, for such a small price.

Even if the person concerned was elderly—and we are all sympathetic to the plight of the elderly—and might have occupied a leasehold property for a great many years, it would be a clear breach of natural justice if we were to say that that person had the right to take from the landlord a further extension of the lease plus the balance of the lease simply because that person's circumstances appeared to require our sympathy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) is a good friend of mine. He is a distinguished member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. However, he is wrong to assume that our sympathy for a person who happens to have the tail end of the lease means that we should force landlords to sell for no other reason than that.

My greatest concern is our motivation behind the wish to change the nature of tenure of property. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes that the concept of the lease, short and long, is valuable in the way in which we make property available to people. From freehold to weekly lettings, there is a whole variety of tenures. That is good for the market and we should encourage it. It is clear that the real concern behind the wish to give tenants more power relates to bad landlords. I shall not enter into the argument about whether some Labour local authorities are worse landlords than the worst private landlords.

If one drew up a scale of awfulness, at the very bottom one would find the odd Rachman-like landlord who was cynically ripping off people in an intolerable and unjustifiable way. Above him there would be a whole raft of Labour authorities, which are often just as bad and in some cases even worse. The only justification for their actions is pure political spite. They are prepared to use the poor people whom they claim to represent as political pawns, and outrageously scare and intimidate them to make a cheap political point.

Before my hon. Friend the Minister embarks on the course that he described, I ask him to consider that the majority of landlords are decent and reasonable people. Some of us are very proud of the standards that we observe in managing property. Over the many years that I have been involved in Haven Services, I cannot recall one substantial complaint being received about the way in which we manage the hundreds of blocks that contain more than 4,000 properties.

We should be addressing instead the right that should be given to tenants when the landlord clearly does not meet his obligations. I refer to a failure to repair, or an endeavour to exact unreasonable charges. My hon. Friend the Minister says that that might be difficult to achieve, yet he proposes to take us down a complex, undemocratic, and un-Conservative path to compulsory enfranchisement and commonhold, as if that were a better alternative.

It would not be difficult, building on the Government's excellent work in improving the rights of tenants of blocks of flats that are run by management companies, to provide for a system whereby tenants could, on a number of different grounds, serve a notice on the landlord; and if he failed to respond adequately after a set period, tenants would be entitled to acquire from the landlord the freehold of the property on a basis to be agreed.

In such circumstances, there would not be much argument for giving the landlord a particularly generous deal, and perhaps that is as it should be. I envisage a situation in which the total cost of the landlord's outstanding liability to repair would be deducted from any value attaching to the freehold, so that the landlord received nothing more than the net difference. If that amounted to nothing, there would be every justification for the tenants to say, "We shall take the freehold from the landlord. He does not deserve to own it. He fell down on his obligations"—which could be expressed in a statutory form—"and did not respond to our notice."

I want to place on record, in the marvellously neutral territory of a debate on a private Member's motion, a sentiment that I might have more difficulty expressing in the course of a Government debate, such as a Second Reading introduced by my hon. Friend the Minister. A great deal of uncertain territory remains to be explored. There are profound anti-Conservative, anti-libertarian, and undemocratic issues at stake. I counsel my hon. Friend the Minister and the Government to consider carefully the alternatives that are available in improving the lot of tenants before embarking on the course that my hon. Friend the Minister described.

1.13 pm

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I propose to be brief, because I know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) is waiting to introduce an important debate, to which we shall listen with great interest.

My hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) will not be surprised if I say that I cannot agree with anything that he said. It echoed from the 16th century. That thought was put into my mind by my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon).

The plain truth about leasehold property is that the public no longer have any confidence in it. They have been demanding change. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and his marvellous officials will be only too well aware of the quantity of correspondence that I have sent him over the years from the public in the city of Westminster.

I do not find any person—no judge, no distinguished Queen's counsel, no lawyer, no property magnate, no capitalist, no candlestick maker—standing up to defend leaseholds as they are. All the demand is in the opposite direction.

Mr. Norris: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir John Wheeler: No, let me get on. People are saying that the concept is out of date and that they want the right to enfranchise in their higher rateable value properties as Parliament set out in the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 when it debated and agreed to the principle of this change in the law. At long last, justice is coming to that important, but relatively small group of people in the city of Westminster and elsewhere in the centre of London.

I was astounded to hear the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth), who I know has had to leave the Chamber for a moment, say that the Government have "dithered" over the introduction of the commonhold and leasehold reform Bill. Nothing could be further from the truth. In the 13 years that the Conservatives have had the privilege of being the Government of the United Kingdom, we have been at the forefront of reform and change. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary said in response to my intervention, the establishment of the Nugee committee of inquiry in 1984 led the way to a thorough and detailed investigation of the many problems faced by renting tenants and leaseholders in blocks of flats. It resulted in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 which gave the right of first refusal when a freeholder was proposing to dispose of his interest in a block of flats. It greatly extended the ability of leaseholders and others to hold to account managing agents and property owners.

Then came the Lord Chancellor's paper on the concept of commonhold. As my hon. Friend knows, this is an immensely complicated subject. It was right that the Government should consult widely to obtain all views possible. I am glad that I have been able to contribute to this debate, albeit modestly, on behalf of my constituents so that we prepare legislation for introduction into the House in a few weeks' time that will stand the test of time.

I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning announced on Wednesday the intention to introduce that legislation. I was glad that he could confirm that the Crown Estate would also apply the provisions of the proposed legislation as if it applied to the estate, because the Crown Estate is generally exempt under the Crown Estate Act 1961. I was glad, too, that he could confirm that the principle of charitable property would be as defined in the Leasehold Reform Act 1967.

Some say that this may damage the maintenance and quality of some of the great historic estates in central London. Of course, that is absolute nonsense. These days, historic buildings are protected by a great deal of legislation, and by planning controls when planning consents are required. However, the case for change is overwhelming, not least in the many blocks of flats in central London and elsewhere which are owned by, for example, the Harounis. Any hon. Member who has such properties in his constituency knows the sheer misery that they cause. The properties are not maintained or cared for but every penny is extracted from the wretched leaseholders and renting tenants. It is right that something is at last being done, and I pay a warm tribute to the city of Westminster and the councillors for the way that they seek to enforce the law with regard to such properties.

I also conclude my brief speech with the warmest thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden). He is surely a great champion of the rights of leaseholders and renting tenants in his constituency, and he has also done the House and other hon. Members a great service by making it possible for us to hold this debate. I look forward to the introduction of the commonhold and leasehold reform Bill in the next Parliament. I am glad that the legislation is ready to roll the moment the general election is over.

1.20 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Like other hon. Members, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) on introducing this important debate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) said, some people have bought their leases from the council. A large number of those people —a number growing by the day—have inherited a worrying situation as a result. Such people and those described by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) are getting together because they have many problems in common.

I associate myself with what my hon. Friends the Members for Westminster, North and for Dulwich said—I am sorry that I missed so much of what the latter said—but especially with what my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow said. He put his finger on the problem facing many of my constituents. I do not need to repeat what my hon. Friends have said, but I wish to make two points which are of great concern to my constituents.

First, I refer to the disappointment of many people who have bought their flat in a block in which there is no prospect of two thirds of the people wishing to become enfranchised. Can the Government show real imagination and find a way in which individual leaseholders can yet be enfranchised? We have always said that where there is a will, there is a way. There must be a way, difficult as it may be. I ask the Minister to recognise the disappointment and, possibly, resentment felt by people who cannot have the same entitlements and rights as others in similar but slightly different positions.

Secondly, service charges, especially to council tenants, are a matter of the utmost concern. So often tenants do not know what they are paying for. When they ask, they are sent a list of what has been done with the money that they have paid, but they are often highly dissatisfied. For example, they are told that the cleaning of common staircases and the mowing of lawns is included, but men tell me that their stairs are never cleaned except by their wives and women say that the lawns are never mown except by their husbands. That, rightly, causes great dissatisfaction.

Another problem with service charges is the iniquity of the difference between charges imposed on people in almost identical properties. People cannot understand why, as their properties are almost identical in layout and value to others, they have to pay different service charges. Should not there be some way in which people could be charged more evenly and more fairly?

Repairs are an issue of great disappointment and dissatisfaction for many people. If they live in a block of flats and the council requires, for example, the replacement of all the windows in the block, they ask to be allowed to get the work done themselves. It may be said that one flat could not be allowed to have different windows because it would spoil the appearance of the block. I have met many constituents who say that they could find a little builder down the road who would use materials almost identical to those used by the men employed by the council and who would do the work at less than one quarter of the cost. Why cannot my constituents do that?

We need to consider people who have bought their flat and who are approaching old age and, sometimes, penury. Some are required by councils to have work done which, in the opinion of many, is not required. The cost may run into thousands of pounds and those people may be in debt for the rest of their lives. That severe problem should be addressed.

I make my comments against a background of knowing that everyone in the categories that I have described is grateful for having been given the right to buy by this Conservative Government. I well remember how, in the 1979-80 Session, the House sat until 15 August to get the right to buy on to the statute book against the bitterest, most wicked and meanest opposition imaginable from the Labour party. Labour has no honest interest in the tenants' right to buy. Let no one say that it has. That is proved by the way in which Labour behaved then and by the way in which it continues to behave when it controls councils. There are many examples, including Ealing between 1986 and 1990. Every possible impediment was put in the way of people who wanted to buy. The evidence for that is in the figures, because the figures for the Labour period of control are very different from the figures for the Conservative periods of control before and afterwards. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

1.27 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): Hon. Members have referred to bad landlords, and the whole issue turns on that. Only this week, I have found bad landlords in my constituency. One has been referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) this morning. Some 400 flats are owned by that firm in my constituency.

The proposed legislation must answer three points. First, is it adequate to protect weak and defenceless tenants when they fall under exploitive landlords? The legislation must be adequate if it is to have my support. Secondly, have all landlords paid their taxes? Have there been checks, especially on the service charges? Thirdly, does the law need to be strengthened so that there is an obligation to provide local accounts of service charges and expenditure, and to maintain proper building insurance? Landlords could not then avoid their responsibilities with impunity.

I am anxious that those three points should be met because many tenants suffer tremendously at present. Good landlords exist; bad landlords must be dealt with. My support for the proposed legislation is conditional upon answers being given to my questions for the sake of my constituents.

1.29 pm

Mr. Gerald Bowden: We have had an interesting debate on an important subject, during which many good new ideas have emerged. Anyone who has been listening to the debate or who reads *Hansard* will immediately realise that almost all the discussion has been on the Conservative Benches. The Liberal Democrats have not deigned to turn up to show an interest or to give the matter some thought. With the notable exception of the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), who raised an important constituency matter related to squatters with which we can all sympathise, we have had no Labour Back-Bench speeches, and the Front-Bench spokesman merely said, "We would do something similar if we had the chance." It is Conservative Members who have instigated the discussion and made the debate.

There are differences of view on this important subject and we have been able to expose them to scrutiny and debate. It has been a notable occasion in that we have had the benefit of a speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) who may have been making his last speech as a Member of the House. His first speech in the House, to which he drew attention, was on a similar subject. It is evident that his interest, concern and commitment are in no way diminished and his constituents must feel proud to have been represented by him over the years and glad that he has taken such an interest in their concerns.

We have also heard my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon). I am sure that, although they may not agree with the detail of his argument, hon. Members will recognise his great understanding, experience and expertise in the field and the contribution that he has made to the honourable profession of being a good landlord who takes care of his tenants' interests. It will be a great loss to the House that he will not be here to contribute to other debates on these matters in future. We shall bear in mind the thoughts with which he has left us.

My hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes raised the serious question—which might be taken into account by Opposition Members if they would care to listen or attend—of how far it is within Conservative principles compulsorily to acquire an existing interest. My hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) drew attention to precisely the same point. It is a matter for debate but the principle has been established—not only in legislation to allow compulsory purchase for the general good and planning purposes, but in the leasehold enfranchisement Act, the Leasehold Reform Act 1967.

We had notable contributions from my hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson), for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) and for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson)——

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Wembley.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: Brent, North.

Mr. Bowden: Brent, North—of which we understand Wembley to be a part. My hon. Friends have all drawn attention not only to the broad principle but to the particular application that we need to consider in relation to the provisions. Our debate today leaves us in no doubt that there is a crying need for landlord and tenant law to be reformed. The question is whether we should simply tinker with and adjust the existing arrangements or whether what is needed is a major overhaul. From time to time it is necessary—as in 1925—to take a serious look at the law of property. I believe that such a time has arrived once more. Leasehold enfranchisement, the extension of leases and commonhold, provide us with that opportunity. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House calls for the early introduction of commonhold as a means of effecting necessary reforms in leasehold and freehold tenure.

Education

1.33 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): I beg to move,

That this House warmly welcomes Government educational policies to bring back standards of learning in the three Rs in the infant school by an emphasis on phonics in reading, on number and tables in arithmetic and on writing in English, by subject teaching and learning by heart in the junior school and by a variety of secondary school provision providing for the varied interests, aptitudes and ability of pupils, by tests at the ages of seven, 11 and 14 to guarantee to parents that all schools are fulfilling their purposes, by the retention of 'A' level examinations before transfer to university and professional education at 18 while provision is made at the same age for craft and technological examinations which will lead to craft and technical qualifications and by the provision of maximum parental choice of school based on full public information on all schools, including their external examination results; and believes that such policies will ensure maximum advantage to the pupils, the parents and the whole country.

I came to the House this morning in my capacity as a humble—or not so humble—school master, although I intervened in the previous debate because the suffering that was being inflicted on my constituents had been drawn to my attention this week.

According to my definition, quality of education involves taking all pupils—irrespective of their ability—as far as they can go within the context of finite economic resources. It also means the preservation of high culture. Every society should preserve its high culture in literature, music, poetry and religion if it is to claim to be a civilised society.

Educational quality is always improving or declining at any point. I can look back on almost three generations of school masters, from the age of going to school, being a school master and being a head master. Until the 1960s Britain had a system that worked as well as anywhere in the world. In infant schools, children were taught the three Rs and the habits of disciplined learning. That is what infant schools are for. In junior schools between the ages of seven and 11, children were taught a set of subjects—arithmetic, writing, reading, geography, history, literature, science, nature study and religious education. They also learnt by heart. At that age, children enjoy learning by heart, with poetry and Bible readings that they can carry with them for the rest of their lives. In secondary schools, the 11-plus system divided some 20 per cent. of pupils to grammar academic schools, some 5 per cent. to the long-lamented technical schools and some 75 per cent. to secondary modern schools. The system worked.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West) *indicated dissent*——

Sir Rhodes Boyson: The hon. Lady, who lives in another world, may not know that, but we know that it worked. At that time, the standards of education of children aged 14 were equal to any in the world, before the Labour party damaged it by putting its paws all over the system.

The destruction came in the 1960s. The first changes were made in the primary schools. Children cannot discover learning for themselves. If they could, we could do without schools and let children loose, as Dewey and Rousseau said. It would be anarchy. The idea that children could discover things for themselves degraded teachers and that is when the status of teachers started to fall. That system, imported from America, did untold harm in

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schools. I have never yet met a pupil who could write one of Milton's sonnets during the morning break, learn French subjectives at lunch time and write a Shakespearean play in the evening, without being taught any of those subjects along the way. If such a pupil exists, I shall go on a world tour with him or her. We could pay off the national debt from the money earned through people coming to this country to see such a person.

Mixed ability teaching then came to primary schools and secondary schools. It was the most ineffective method of teaching. Pupils of extremely different abilities being taught together meant that half of them did not know what was going on. In a lesson of 30 minutes, it could mean teaching each child for one minute, which was like going back to hand loom weaving compared to a factory system. We should put together children with the same interests and abilities, and then learning can roar ahead. In an average class of 30 children aged 10, one may have a mental age of five while another has a mental age of 15. To think that those children can be taught together is wrong. Bertrand Russell, who I do not think was ever a member of the Conservative party—he never advocated Conservative policies—once said that to educate bright and dull children together was the height of cruelty, and so it is. The bright become arrogant because they think that they can achieve everything and the dull, whatever they try to do, cannot catch up. It is not a moral issue but the fact that the good Lord made us all different. Just as we differ in the speed at which we can run and the amount that we eat, so we differ in intellectual ability. I do not believe that there is just one type of brain—a class 1 brain that is given to everybody.

The Labour party then introduced its disastrous comprehensive policy. It is always looking for policies and has no initiatives of its own. It killed grammar schools, which were the ladders of opportunity for working-class children, and intends to kill them off further if it comes to power again. It killed the 450 technical schools, which probably did even more damage and broke technical teaching in this country. The Labour party also destroyed secondary modern schools, which were developing extended courses. I was then the head of a secondary modern school and, before that, taught in one.

As a result, the standard of mathematics of a Japanese child of 14 became two years ahead of the standard of the average child in this country. In Germany and France, children are one and a half years ahead of us in mathematics, a subject in which comparisons can be made. We are the only country of the 10 industrial countries in which the standard of mathematics was lower in 1981 than it was in 1964.

In addition, the Labour party disenfranchised working class children. The proportion of working-class children going to university between 1961-63 was 25 per cent.—by 1980, that figure had dropped to 19·4 per cent.

There is no such thing as a comprehensive school; there are comprehensive schools that are different in each region. Middle class districts have grammar schools with CSE streams, downtown areas have secondary modern schools, in which few pupils are studying to go into higher education. That is no slur on the staff working there, but reflects on the system that does not work.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: No, I shall not give way as I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) has some excellent things to say, which could change the educational system of this country.

The ones who suffered most from the change were not the most able, but the average plus, and the technically innovative children. The destruction of the technical school was probably more damaging than the destruction of the grammar school. For a long time, the Conservative party tried to retrieve standards. We came into power and questioned our position, and where we were going.

I pay tribute to the present Ministers, particularly the Secretary of State, at the Department of Education and Science, who are at last taking hold of the subject by the neck and achieving reasonable standards. Undoubtedly, in five years' time, even the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong)—I am glad that she is wearing red, as she is the only remnant of the Labour party present—will be saying what I am saying today. It is simply that it takes the Labour party a long time to catch up with us. We must be charitable to the Labour party, as we are in our schools.

What must we do? The Labour party and other Opposition parties—were any of their Members present today—would say that we need more money and smaller classes. Japanese classes have 50 per cent. more pupils than ours, as do Israeli classes. I would willingly exchange the system that we have had during the past 30 years for either of those. It is not a question of the size of class or the amount of money, but the calibre of teacher, the correct curriculum, gathering together the right groups of children and having a belief in what one is doing.

We should return to teaching phonics in infant schools. We can also use other methods, but we must teach tables and writing. In junior schools we must encourage learning by heart, including poetry. We need a rich variety of secondary schools, to relate to aptitude, ability and interest. I very much approve of city technology colleges, grant-maintained schools and the assisted places scheme—all of which have been introduced by the Government during the past 12 years. Recently, these policies have been more speedily introduced.

We need a much greater variety of secondary schools. Germany and Russia have three types of secondary schools. In Russia, or what was Russia, one third of pupils receive technical education. Russia has boarding schools for languages, mathematics and physics. If the economic system in Russia ever takes off, woe betide us unless we increase our educational standards in this country, as we are now trying to do. Children in Russian schools can study 1,100 crafts, from laundry work to watch repairing. One third of pupils in Sweden attend technical schools and they have a choice of 250 crafts. I have seen the education systems in Sweden, Japan and parts of Russia. In Japan, one third of students can train for technical work, business work, fisheries, commerce. Only here, according to the benighted, non-thinking Labour party, has everyone to go to the same school.

Socialist, mixed economy and capitalist societies all enjoy some form of separate educational institutions. The Labour party alone remains the one-eyed man who believes that he will be king because he cannot see anyone else passing by—I thought that was rather good. I want classical schools, mathematics schools, science schools, sports schools, trade schools and commercial schools. We are a city people; 85 per cent. of us live in towns or cities comprising 100,000 or more people. We should all enjoy a variety of provision, assuming that all schools provide the basic curriculum, as do city technology colleges. Beyond that, much more can then be done—two hours a day on a specialised subject, for instance. Pupils could operate selection as well as external selection policies.

I agree with the seven-plus tests, the 11-plus tests and the 14-plus tests; they may be a little too complicated, but the Government are slimming them down. I agree with retaining A-levels. The Labour party would destroy them on the basis of, "If anything works, pull it down."

I have always supported education vouchers, although I doubt whether they will be included in our manifesto or brought in by the next Government. George Bernard Shaw said that he could suggest improvements when he got to heaven. We could all suggest so much more.

I am worried about the lack of right of parents to decide how much sex education their children should receive, especially in an AIDS age. Despite any worries, however, the differences between Labour party policy and Conservative party policy are vast and they subsume my other anxieties. If the Labour party wins the next election, it will destroy CTCs and grant-maintained schools and it will try to destroy the assisted places scheme. It will destroy the A-level system, which helps to maintain reasonable university entrance standards. I hope that my constituents and those in all other constituencies will vote against the Labour party on the ground of education policy alone.

At the risk of repeating myself—I rarely do so, because I find it rather boring—I reiterate that the present team of education Ministers has done a first-class job. Those Ministers need the support of everyone, if only for what they have done with examinations, tests and the diversification of secondary education. Let the country support the Conservatives on education alone, if not on all our other policies. We cannot afford to allow the Labour party to take power. We have started to build up education standards in this country; it would be a terrible tragedy if the Labour party came in and destroyed them.

1.47 pm

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I am delighted to have the opportunity once again to follow my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson). Following him is the story of my life; I followed him as the Minister for schools, a post that I held from 1983 to 1988. I and the present team of Ministers can point to bricks that we have put in the wall that we are building to strengthen and support the country's education system.

The motion touches on a number of aspects which time will prevent me from referring to, but I must point out that the quality of education in this country has improved and it will improve further as long as our education philosophy is underpinned by variety and choice. As my right hon. Friend said, Conservative and Labour Members are a million miles apart on this issue. In 13 years of Conservative Government, many new education policies mentioned by my right hon. Friend have been introduced. We have brought about local management of schools, grant-maintained status, open enrolment and the national curriculum, and there have been many other changes.

When I was in the Department of Education and Science I abolished the Inner London education authority. Many Opposition Members argued against its passing, but they do not do that now. In a speech at that time, I said that the ILEA had a policy on anti-racist sport and that it would not be long before it had a policy on anti-racist mathematics. Within two days of that speech, ILEA introduced such a policy.

I should like to deal with the quality of education in my constituency which is most fortunate in being a part of the 5 per cent. of the country which retains a selective system of education. We have grammar schools and successful single-sex and mixed high schools. We have a successful 13 to 18-year-old comprehensive school in Longfield and a city technology college, a concept which I introduced at the Department of Education and Science some years ago.

We speak about bringing on our young people according to their abilities and about trying to find their talents. The people of Dartford have an education service which is among the best in the United Kingdom's local authority structure, as it was, and within the grant-maintained structure as it is. It is amazing that in such debates Opposition Members, many of whom gained an enormous educational experience from attending grammar schools, choose to support a policy which would destroy them. Fourteen members of the shadow Cabinet, including the Leader of the Opposition, went to grammar schools, thereby benefiting from a system of education which they have denied and would like further to deny to my constituents.

The Labour party's greatest worry is that its empire is breaking up, and they have lost political control of our schools. In the context of education in Kent, we had a visit a few days ago from the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). Unfortunately, he was not able to make a speech in Dartford as planned. I had hoped that he would speak to the people of Dartford about his plans to pass a death sentence upon our district grammar and high schools, our comprehensive school in its present form, and our city technology college.

I should like Labour to make plain the implications of its policy for the future of Dartford schools. Our well-supported and popular range of schools in Dartford have no future under Labour. All our schools would be turned into comprehensives and there would be an end to parental preference in north-west Kent—a principle which I have fought for years to sustain and retain. Labour is pledged to destroy our schools by law. It will compel the closure of grammar schools. Labour will not say, "Would you mind or can we talk about the matter?" It will be as before. If Labour has its way it will pass legislation to close the grammar schools and will confine all pupils to simple neighbourhood comprehensives, a gamble on success or failure depending on where pupils live and on what housing their parents can afford. Labour will trap people on housing estates, as it has in the past, and there will be no ladder of opportunity to allow young people from difficult backgrounds to make a real contribution to the future of our country.

Of course, Labour will say that the Conservative party has closed grammar schools. That is true, but it occurred because of the infection of socialism many years ago. During the five years in which I was a Minister with responsibility for schools, only 20 grammar schools were closed, and they were not closed because of doctrinaire, dogmatic policies. On the contrary, I fought hard to keep

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them open, philosophically, but with falling rolls and reorganisation it was necessary occasionally to amalgamate, to change the status and to close some grammar schools. One such grammar school in the west riding of Yorkshire took 65 per cent. of its pupils from across the ability range. But that school was no longer a grammar school and therefore had to close.

The debate is focusing on the deep divide, and we have had that from none other than the hon. Member for Blackburn. At the end of last year I tried to get the hon. Gentleman to put down in writing what he would do to my grammar schools in Kent. Finally, after three letters from me, he said:

> "I am astonished that you should have any doubts about the wisdom of ending selection at 11".

I am surprised that he thinks that I have doubts because I do not. He continued:

> "We shall end selection at 11 across the country, and we shall legislate to do so . . . Good grammar and other schools in your constituency will under our plans have an assured future as even better comprehensives."

I have to tell the Labour party that that is the best thing that the hon. Gentleman could have said. It came out clearly and the people of Dartford wanted to hear that Labour party position defined. They know, because I have told them so on many occasions, that our grammar schools will close under Labour or the Liberal Democrats. The hon. Member for Blackburn has spelt it out in a way that even the deaf could hear.

On 26 February last, among reports in the national papers, the *Daily Mail* had the headline:

> "Labour pledges to abolish last of the grammar schools".

There we are. It is clear. There is no question of trying to hide the facts or to fudge as the Labour party does on so many other issues, pretending to be something that it is not. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) can mutter and chunter to her heart's content. It is indisputable that the Labour party will close grammar schools——

Ms. Hilary Armstrong *indicated assent*——

Mr. Dunn: The House notes that the hon. Lady agrees with me. She is the only person on the Labour Benches who can talk and think at the same time. Once the Labour party realises that, in all the many constituencies which still have them, the philosophy of closing grammar schools and bringing everything down to the lowest common denominator will be electorally unpopular, there will be a change or a fudge.

I shall conclude by quoting the words of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). I have nothing in common with him, but I respect his honesty and integrity. On 30 September last in *The Independent*, he said:

> "If we've changed our mind to win, we could change our mind when we've won. What's wrong with that?"

That will be the caveat that all of us who are concerned about education standards will put to the people over the next few weeks. Undoubtedly, people will back our view that parental preference is the key and that the variety and range of schools that we have in Dartford should be extended across the country. I support the motion.

1.57 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I was interested to read the motion. I hope that hon. Members will read and reflect on Monday's debate about the sittings of the House and the report of the Select Committee from which the debate arose. I am rarely here on Friday because it is the only day that I can spend with my constituents and in my constituency office. I can be here this afternoon only because I have broken constituency commitments. I have a very able person to deputise for me, and my father is this afternoon presenting, on my behalf, prizes to 17-year-olds in Consett who have recently achieved qualifications from the YTS scheme.

We need to look at how we organise business in the House. Private Members' business is important, but because it happens on a Friday, many hon. Members who are not from London constituencies are excluded from debates on it. Today, almost every hon. Member who has spoken has represented a constituency in London or the south-east. The way that we conduct business limits the ability to participate of hon. Members whose constituencies are a long way from here. That is one of the reasons why I was pleased to be a member of a Select Committee which recommended alternative ways to organise the business of the House.

We are here to debate quality in education, and it is clear from the debate that there are real differences about what we mean by quality and how we achieve it. I believe that the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) is genuinely concerned about quality in education, but on reading his motion I groaned. I thought, "This is taking us forward into the past." I wish that I could believe in the romantic vision of a past education service that worked. I come from another country; I come from the north of England.

Mr. Dunn: So do I and my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North.

Ms. Armstrong: Both the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) and the right hon. Member for Brent, North may come from the north, but it is obvious that they have not been living and working there for some time.

As I have said, I come from the north. I know of many people whose talent has been unrecognised; it has been untapped. Their abilities were wasted because they were pushed into secondary modern schools. I am amazed when Conservative Members talk about choice in terms of a selective system. Nobody has choice in such a system except those who run schools. Parents and pupils have no choice.

When my father was chairman of the education committee in Sunderland I remember only too well the many parents who would tell him, "My child has failed the 11-plus and yet I know that he is capable of pursuing academic interests." That assertion was true. When I began my secondary education in a grammar school I learnt that the school believed that only the top two streams were worth bothering about. Those in the bottom two streams, even though they had passed the 11-plus, were seen as being not quite up to the cream in the other two streams. When the school went comprehensive at the end of my fourth year—my father was still the chairman of the education committee, and this was one of my early political lessons—my English teacher went on over and over again about what my family was doing; that strong memory lives with me. That teacher personalised the issue. He went on about plenty of crops, as he put it, joining the cream, and claimed that the entire system would be corrupted. What a view. What a way to regard those who would be citizens and decision-makers in the town—I am pleased to say that it is now a city—and in the country generally.

Against that background I am enormously disappointed by the speeches of the right hon. Member for Brent, North and the hon. Member for Dartford. I know that many of the 75 to 80 per cent. who were excluded from grammar schools had talent and have talent. They failed the 11-plus but they had enormous talent, which was then wasted.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North did not pass the 11-plus and nor did I.

Ms. Armstrong: Many of those who failed the 11-plus had talent which was wasted.

Before I came to the House I worked at a polytechnic and was involved in a mature students' course. All the people taken by the polytechnic had failed the 11-plus and had left school at 15 or 16. Their experience was that they had failed in their education career. We were finding ways in which they could return to education as mature students. The average age of the students on the course that I taught was 34. The work that we did on access before students could apply to take up the course and when they first came on it was mainly directed to giving them confidence in their abilities. What a waste of talent. Britain has wasted the talents of so many people who had an enormous contribution to make but who believed, because they went through a system that told them that they had failed, that they were failures.

We are now in a very different period.

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Armstrong: No, because I am anxious to get on and I do not want to be distracted. It is important to deal with the claims about the selective system.

When the Secretary of State gives evidence to the Select Committee, he says that the Government bear no responsibility for what happens in schools—yet at the same time they impose almost weekly changes, thought up on the hoof, with each change contradicting a previous change. All the changes have undermined the confidence of teachers in their ability, to the extent that Her Majesty's chief inspector said in his report last year that the manner in which the national curriculum was being centrally imposed risked the deskilling of teachers. What a state to be in.

The Government are concerned not to listen and not to consult. They say, "We know better than everybody else." They impose weekly changes on schools such that that chief inspector said that they run the risk of deskilling our teaching force. The way in which the Government have introduced change has caused incalculable damage.

Much of what is claimed in the motion has been challenged in recent reports. I was interested to hear the comments about phonics. Have hon. Members read the recent report on reading by the National Foundation for Educational Research? It says that the overwhelming majority of all methods include phonics.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: That is right.

Ms. Armstrong: Absolutely. I have not known a school which, during recent years, has not dealt with phonics in some form—even those schools that are using real books. As the NFER says, they represent only 2 per cent. of actual practice.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Tim Eggar): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Armstrong: No, the Minister will have his opportunity in a moment.

What is now being called the WAR report also says that there has been a great deal of rhetoric on teaching methods that is not borne out by the practice in the classroom. It is our responsibility to encourage teachers to identify good practice, to help them to do so, and then to build on that. Much of the Government's rhetoric has undermined rather than reinforced the confidence of teachers.

The motion fails to recognise the changing demands on people, whether academics or skilled workers. No one can enter the work force without having confidence in both their educational and technical abilities. Unless we recognise that as a nation, we cannot tackle the challenges of the future. All those wishing to contribute to our society need to have a grasp of both knowledge and skill. We cannot train technical workers unless they have confidence in their ability to have a basic educational grounding, to learn and to change. We cannot train academics unless they have a knowledge and understanding of some technical skills.

For a short period last year, I had a student who had been to a top public school and who has a first from an Oxford college. When he came to work here last year, I discovered that he had never before laid hands on a computer, and was illiterate in the skills that I needed him have. We do not allow anyone into the Library, and the only way that one can access its information is through the POLIS database. That young man's education had not fitted him for the work of being a good researcher, which is what he wants to be, in modern society. His education was too narrow.

Those of us who are concerned about this country's future needs and its education system—bar the Government—argue that the three A-level model is too narrow. I discussed that aspect with students at Durham, which is supposed to be one of the better universities—although I sometimes wonder, in the sense that it, too, has a narrow intake. Those students were keen to defend the three A-level model, saying, "I could never do modern languages." It sent a shiver down my spine to hear top intellectuals among the next generation say that they are incapable of learning a foreign language. What does that say about their capabilities after leaving sixth form and their confidence in their ability to learn?

If we continue to follow that route and fail to give even the brightest among our 18-year-olds confidence in their own abilities, what does that say about the future of which they will be a part? The Government offer only experimentation, which has changed and shifted, and has largely been unsuccessful. They offer only double standards—which, together with experimentation, are characteristic of the Government's education policy. They have so little faith in the changes that they have wrought on the maintained sector that only one Cabinet Minister is prepared to risk educating his children in it.

[Ms. Armstrong]

The greatest example of the Government's lack of commitment to standards and quality is to be found in the lunacy surrounding the Education (Schools) Bill, which introduced the concept that a privatised inspectorate could somehow lever up standards. What an insult.

I am delighted that their lordships rejected that proposal and, as the Minister in another place said, tore out the heart of that Bill. We know, however, that a deal has been done, yet even last night the Department was not prepared to concede that. Will the Minister confirm whether the Government will try to reinstate their inspectorate provisions next week? Has a deal been done whereby the Bill will be guaranteed a Third Reading provided that the Government do not try to reverse their lordships' decision?

If the situation is as I understand it, will the Government commit the money that local authorities will need to continue meeting their responsibilities as currently identified in the Bill? Does the Secretary of State intend to keep the local inspectorate privatised? Again, that would go against the spirit of the amendments that have been agreed.

If the Government are interested in raising the standards and quality of education, they will recognise that every single school must have its standards raised. We must have a means of measuring the progress that children make, whichever school they attend. We heard the real answer from the right hon. Member for Brent, North when he said that the quality of schools depended on the sums spent.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I did not say that.

Ms. Armstrong: The right hon. Gentleman said that he wanted standards raised in schools, but——

Sir Rhodes Boyson: No. Standards depend on the quality of teachers. They have nothing to do with money.

Ms. Armstrong: I am responding too much to sedentary interventions and I apologise for that.

The Government have said that they can afford to educate only a few well. I reject that, and the Labour party rejects that. We are committed to ensuring that all children, wherever they live and whatever school they attend, get the very best attention. Our education standards commission will lay down national guidelines and national standards. Local authorities and schools will work towards them to ensure that they deliver for every child and every family the highest quality of education, wherever they live and whichever school they attend.

2.16 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): It is significant that there are no Members present from the two socialist parties, the Labour and Liberal Democratic parties, to listen to the splendid speeches by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) and my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn). Unlike them, I have not been a Minister, but I passed my 11-plus and went to an excellent grammar school. I was in the second year sixth when it went comprehensive and 18 teachers left. If success is gauged against salary, those who went to the technical and secondary modern part of the school received an excellent education as they are all earning more money than I am now.

My hon. Friend the Minister visited Basildon last week and saw at first hand the splendid standards of education that we have. Of my five children, the two oldest attend school. One attends the St. Anne line school and the other the infants school. They receive a splendid state education in Basildon. My hon. Friend the Minister will also be pleased to know that thanks to the intervention yesterday of three Conservative county councillors, Councillor Brin Jones, Councillor David Walsh and Councillor Iris Pummell, we saved Fryerns secondary school in Basildon.

Examination results in all Basildon secondary schools continue to show improvements. Increasing numbers of students are moving on to higher education this year. All schools have successfully taken on the national curriculum. The Nicholas school, in particular, received one of the nationally prestigious, schools curriculum award for involving the community in the curriculum to the highest standard.

My infant and junior schools are all doing splendidly. I regularly visit all our education establishments in Basildon. I thank and congratulate our excellent ministerial team on helping the children in my constituency to enjoy ever-higher standards of education.

2.18 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Tim Eggar): I am delighted to respond to the debate and to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) on his motion. The whole House recognises his lifelong commitment to improving the quality of education and has noted with dismay the present situation at the school in which he was once a distinguished head master. As he said, the recent HMI report on Highbury Grove school is a shocking indictment of what can happen to a school when it is not properly and adequately led and when it does not retain the traditional values that must be associated with successful schools.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) talked of the variety of schools in his constituency. There is indeed a unique amount of choice available to his constituents and I know that they value that. I hope that in time other hon. Members may have the same degree of choice available for children in their constituencies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) reminded us that only a few days ago I had the chance to meet the headmaster and staff of Fryerns school. I also met a number of pupils who had come in especially to show what they were capable of doing. I am delighted to hear that the school has been saved. I was very impressed, especially by the commitment of the staff who were taking a training day to consider ways of improving the school's image, of attracting more pupils and of ways of using the school's considerable assets to even better effect. I am sure that now that the difficulty is behind it, the school will go from strength to strength.

It was interesting that we heard nothing about the early years from the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) who claims to be the shadow Minister with responsibility for that issue. I think that she is embarrassed by the press release that she issued yesterday and probably believed that it was better not to mention it.

It contains a most extraordinary announcement about the proliferation of bureaucracy and planning. It tells us that under a Labour Government—if we were ever unfortunate enough to have one—all child-minding will come under the control of the Department of Education and Science. Presumably, if one wanted to drop one's child round at granny's for a few hours while one did the shopping, one would have to ring the Minister for the early years to find out whether granny is registered with the Department. However, it would not stop there.

The Minister for the early years would not have the answer because she would have to consult the Minister for women who would co-ordinate the Minister for the early years. The Minister for women would then have to double check with the Minister for children. Having been double checked, the Minister for the early years would then presumably go back to the new special unit within the Department which would ensure that everything was properly co-ordinated. It would then, presumably, say whether granny was capable of looking after the child, but, before final decision was made granny would be referred to Labour's new quality commission which would investigate granny's skills as well as investigating the skills of the Ministers for the the early years, for children and for women.

I recommend the document to my hon. Friends because it gives an image——

Ms. Armstrong *rose*——

Mr. Eggar: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Lady. The document gives an image of life under a Labour Government. It would be a marvellous world if one were a woman and wanted to be the Minister for the early years, for women or for children, but we should not get very far in terms of better child care.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford) *rose*——

Mr. Eggar: I apologise to my hon. Friend for not giving way, but I must deal with several issues.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North stressed the importance of raising standards still further, of getting back to basics, of concentrating on improving the standards of literacy and numeracy and the understanding of science. I know that he recognises the considerable importance of the national curriculum in improving standards still further.

Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) does not recognise the importance of the national curriculum. In 1987, the hon. Gentleman said that the national curriculum would lead to

> "a monopoly in thought, in ideas, in education".

The hon. Gentleman has learnt something and he has moved on. In December 1991, on "Frost on Sunday" he said:

> "We'd keep the national curriculum . . . the idea of a national curriculum is, in principle, a good one."

The hon. Gentleman's idea of a national curriculum is not ours. It is not the idea that is shared by parents and supported by teachers. Let us see what the Socialist Educational Association believes that the national curriculum should consist of. I quote from its January 1992 document entitled "The New National Curriculum: a socialist view". It said:

> "Every institution—including the school—is part of [the] struggle. Disadvantaged students are entitled to expect this to show both in the curriculum itself and in the ways it is implemented."

In other words, the Labour party sees the national curriculum as nothing more than a method of social engineering—and an especially nasty method at that.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North talked about the importance of improving primary education. I know that he recognises the importance of the recent report on primary education by the three wise men. The report will be widely read and widely discussed in primary schools. It highlights the importance of ensuring that there are phonics in the teaching of reading. It mentions the importance of subject teaching, especially for older primary children. It will be an important report, especially when it is put together with Professor Alexander's examination of what was going on in socialist Leeds. The report recognises that there must be a change in primary schools. That change will be widely recognised and supported by primary teachers.

My hon. Friends have made it clear how important it is to have testing in our schools. That view has been consistently opposed by Opposition Members. The hon. Member for Blackburn said in December 1987 that testing is a system which

> "sets child against child, which tells them only how to compete against their peers and which labels them as successes or failures at age 11, 14, 16 or seven."—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1987; Vol. 123, c. 788-89.]

The hon. Member for Blackburn has recognised that his view is not shared by parents so he has moved on. As recently as 21 October—this is a remarkable statement from the shadow spokesman who has been here for so long —he said:

> "Labour has not made final decisions on how testing would operate under a Labour Government."

Labour simply cannot make up its mind about whether it is in favour of testing.

The hon. Member for Durham, North-West made a series of extraordinary assertions about the Education (Schools) Bill. The amendments that their lordships accepted the other day were not only a change from the Government's point of view, but the complete abandonment of all the Opposition's arguments in Committee. The amendments completely contradicted and torpedoed the policy document "Raising the Standard" which had taken a quite different approach. The hon. Lady may well be worried about issues such as the role of the local education authorities. She has realised that the amendments are wholly contrary to her party's policy.

Ms. Armstrong: What are the Government going to do?

Mr. Eggar: I will tell the hon. Lady. Their lordships preferred the selection of inspectors to be made by Her Majesty's chief inspector. That centralises the system and we should have preferred the matter to have rested with governors. However, the amendments can be managed and we are tabling consequential amendments to give practical form to the effect of their lordships' main amendment. That decision is quite consistent with the aims of the parents charter, and our new inspection system bears no resemblance to the monopoly inspection of schools by local authority inspectors that has been urged on us by the Labour party.

We are determined, through the Education (Schools) Bill to get on to the statute book legislation that will give parents information about the strengths and weaknesses of all our schools, which will publish performance tables of a kind that we have never seen before. We are determined that there should be regular and transparent inspection of

[Mr. Eggar]

all schools because we want to open up the education system to public accountability in a way which we believe is bound to raise standards and extend the influence of parents. I am delighted to have had the chance to debate this important——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Bills

HEALTH BENEFITS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Second Reading what day?

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): With the permission of the Member concerned, Friday next.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 March.

BLASPHEMY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

SHOPS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 March.

CIVIL RIGHTS (DISABLED PERSONS) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [31 January].

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate to be resumed what day?

Mr. Ray Powell: On behalf of the Member concerned, Friday next.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 13 March.

COLD WEATHER CREDITS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Ray Powell: On behalf of the Member concerned, Friday next.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 March.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Ray Powell: On behalf of the Member concerned, Friday next.

Second reading deferred till Friday 13 March.

TIMESHARE CONTRACTS (TIME FOR RECONSIDERATION) (SCOTLAND) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day.

Mr. Ray Powell: On behalf of the Member concerned, Friday next.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 March.

HOUSING (FITNESS STANDARD) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 March.

ANIMAL EXPERIMENTATION (COSMETICS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Ray Powell: On behalf of the Member concerned, Friday next.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 March.

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE (SUPPLY OF MEDICAL EQUIPMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Ray Powell: On behalf of the Member concerned, Friday next.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 March.

SEA FISHERIES (WILDLIFE CONSERVATION) BILL

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered; read the Third time, and passed.

YOUNG PERSONS' RIGHTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): With the permission of the Member concerned, Friday next.

Second reading deferred till Friday 13 March.

HARE COURSING BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 March.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN RETIREMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Ray Powell: With the permission of the Member concerned, Friday next.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 March.

FIREARMS (AMENDMENT) (No. 2) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

NEWSPRINT RECYCLING BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): With the permission of the Member concerned, Friday next.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 March.

SEXUAL OFFENCES (AMENDMENT) BILL

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered; read the Third time, and passed.

ACCESS TO NEIGHBOURING LAND BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time; considered in Committee; reported without amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind the House that Mr. Speaker has deprecated the considering of Bills without adequate prior notice.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I detected a note of incredulity in your voice and saw the incredulity on the faces of some hon. Members. It would have been useful if, when the Bill was briefly in Committee, I could have caught your eye to ask its sponsor to explain, in a few sentences, what he wanted the Bill to achieve. Instead, the Bill was rushed through in a matter of seconds. As you correctly said, Mr. Speaker on more than one occasion has said that that should not happen.

Mr. John Ward (Poole): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I help by saying that the Bill has been fully considered in the other place and has all-party support? It is a simple Bill to allow somebody whose house is in danger of falling down to repair it, even if neighbours object, although he or she would first have to get the courts' approval.

Bill read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

HYDATIDOSIS CONTROL BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Friday next.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 March.

EDUCATION (SCHOOL PREMISES) BILL

Order for consideration, as amended (in the Standing Committee), read.

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Friday 13 March.

POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Friday next.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 March.

COMMUNITY CARE (RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION) BILL [*Lords*]

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House—*[Mr. Lord.]*

Committee on Friday 13 March.

OFFSHORE SAFETY (PROTECTION AGAINST VICTIMISATION) BILL [*Lords*]

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House—*[Mr. Nellist.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind the House again that Mr. Speaker deprecates the taking of remaining stages of Bills without adequate prior notice.

Considered in Committee; reported, without amendment; read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Monday 9th March, Mr. Speaker shall put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion relating to the First Report from the Accommodation and Works Committee not later than one and a half hours after their commencement; and those proceedings may be entered upon or continued after the expiry of the time for opposed business—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Monday 9th March, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Newton relating to Pensions may be proceeded with, though opposed, until half-past Eleven o'clock or the end of a period of one and a half hours after the first of them has been entered upon, whichever is the later, at which time Mr. Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of them—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Construction Industry

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

2.39 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I wish that I could bring one or two Bills before the House and see them passed in the few minutes it took us to deal with a worthy measure, which has some bearing on the remarks that I wish to make today. The Offshore Safety (Protection Against Victimisation) Bill is designed to limit the amount of victimisation that takes place against safety representatives and workers on offshore oil rigs. There is a need for a similar measure to protect workers on building sites and in the construction industry generally.

At Christmas, the acting head of the Health and Safety Executive for the west midlands stated in a press release dated 11 December:

> "Many industrial and construction accidents are being caused by workplace conditions which would have been unacceptable half a century ago".

In the press release, the region's industrialists were challenged to put more effort into managing safety. Last year, in my district of the west midlands, there were 12 fatalities—double the number of the previous 12 months.

Bev McCordall, acting HSE chief, said:

> "Inspectors are still investigating accidents in factories and on building sites which they would not have tolerated in the 1930s let alone today when safety awareness should be much more advanced".

As I recall, the last time that the House debated the issue of health and safety on construction sites was almost three years ago in April 1989—little has changed since then. The construction industry still has the highest reported fatal and major injury rates of any of the main sectors of employment. The fatal injury rate is five times that of the average rate in manufacturing industry as a whole, and 10 times that of the service sector.

Today, in one of the last Back-Bench debates of this Parliament—if we assume that the Government intend to call a general election next week—I wish to ensure that health and safety in the building industry becomes an election issue. I want candidates up and down the country to be asked what they would bring before the House in the form of legislation. I shall answer my question at the end of my speech. We want measures to stop the carnage of death and disfigurement on Britain's building sites.

There are about 1·5 million workers in the industry, and during the past 10 years, 1,500 have been killed in accidents. Some 40,000 have died of bronchitis, cancer and other diseases. The number of reportable injuries lasting for more than three days runs into hundreds of thousands. Those are chilling figures in an industry which, perhaps above most, puts profit before public safety.

I do not wish to make a personal accusation against the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, but, as action could be taken to prevent such carnage, the absence of such action must lead anyone to conclude that the Government's attitude towards death and injury in the building industry is largely one of indifference. They have cut the number of inspectors and weakened many of the powers, legal and otherwise, that could have been used.

In addition, during the past couple of years, the problem has been compounded by the recession. A couple of years ago, the Building Employers Confederation calculated that since July 1989, 165,000 jobs in the industry had been lost. In 1990 alone, 4,700 construction firms went bankrupt. There has been a 2 per cent. fall in the overall injury rate due to that. In the past couple of years the recession has turned into the deepest and longest lasting slump for 50 years. Building workers have complained —both to me personally and, more generally, through their organisations, union magazines, health and advice centres and other such organisations—of the pressures now put on workers in the industry to cut corners, finish a job within budget and bring in contracts early, often because of the severe penalty clauses written into them.

Unacceptable and unnecessary risks are being taken in the building industry. Largely, the fault lies with the management. That is not only my view; the then director of the Health and Safety Executive, after analysing 739 deaths between 1981 and 1985, said in June 1988 that management action could have saved seven out of 10 fatalities in that period. So the carnage is preventable in nearly three quarters of all cases of fatality.

The Health and Safety Commission's annual report for 1990-91 listed horrific statistics. On average, a worker is killed in the building industry every three days. On an average day, 59 building workers are reported as injured. The labour force survey, which many regard as offering a more accurate picture of the real number of injuries—not just those reported—suggests that that is only half the actual number. On average, a member of the public is killed by construction activities every month. Search our thesaurus as we may, we can find no other words to bring to bear on this than scandal, horror and carnage.

In the five years to 1990-91, 742 people were killed, 496 of whom were legal building employees and 183—a number that had sharply risen—were self-employed or subbies, who are experiencing more and more problems. Sixty-three were members of the public.

For someone who has worked in the building industry for 20 years, there is a one in 600 risk of dying as a result of an accident at work and a one in two risk of suffering a reportable injury. In other words, for every reported fatal injury, there are 30 major injuries in the industry, many of them potentially fatal.

Half of all injuries to workers in the building industry are caused by falls from a height, as are two fifths of reported major injuries. To anticipate what the Minister may say, I must point out that head injuries have significantly decreased since the regulations were changed in April 1990—a 25 per cent. fall.

What I have not included in this snowstorm of statistics are the figures for those who have died from cancer of the lung or of the stomach, from respiratory diseases and from diseases of the circulatory system—all diseases which kill a far higher percentage of building workers than members of the general public because of the dust, fumes, gases and toxic chemicals with which they are forced to work.

Then there are the biological and physical hazards to contend with: noise, heat, vibration, compressed air and inflammable materials. If those materials do not alone account for the horrific death rates, the stresses of site work, low pay, long hours, poor food and other factors exacerbate the problem. If Ministers think that I am exaggerating, I took that last point from a signed editorial in the September 1990 edition of the *British Medical Journal*. Many medical practitioners agree with it.

Tragedies in my area are reported in the pages of the local papers. A week before Christmas, my local paper, the *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, reported a father of four killed when a scaffolding tower on which he was working toppled over and hurled him to the ground. In the same period, Philip Rodgers, aged 29, was killed when the moving arm of a hoist smashed against the rear of the vehicle in which he was operating. In June of last year there was a double tragedy when the husband and brother of a Warwickshire mother of three, Jane Cole, were both killed on building sites—both had worked for the same company. One of the workers was crushed to death by a 4-tonne crane; the second was pinned under a dumper truck.

Because of the make-up of the workers in this industry, a lot of Irish workers are killed. Rather than take up the whole of this debate cataloguing each case, I hope to give the Minister at the end of it, if he can wait for a few seconds, some cuttings from the *Irish Post* which list 10 or 12 horrific cases of death and serious injury. In the metropolitan areas and especially in London, in the docklands and elsewhere, there was a frenetic building boom, part of the Government's general phoney boom built on cheap credit in the mid and late 1980s. As that building boom went ahead, so did the carnage on the building sites.

Campaigns have been mounted to try to change matters. Unions such as the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians and my own union, Manufacturing Science Finance, have tried to organise workers in an attempt to limit death and disfigurement. Campaigns such as those mounted by HAZARDS and the HASAC centres in Birmingham and the Construction Safety Campaign and others have suggested what they see as necessary measures.

In the final third of my speech I shall propose some measures that should be enshrined in legislation. In the dying days of this Parliament we cannot perhaps achieve what was achieved earlier today when a Bill went through in 20 seconds. A priority in the next Parliament should be legislation to reduce the horrific death rate. As I have said before in the House, disasters such as Piper Alpha, King's Cross or Zeebrugge and other dreadful national disasters in which there is a huge loss of life and horrific injuries scar families for life even though they are tragedies of a moment. Hon. Members express regret, and acres of newsprint analyse the causes and suggest how such terrible national disasters can be avoided in future.

Every year in the building industry the same number of deaths and horrific injuries takes place as in any one of those disasters. But they are diffused, not concentrated in a single event, and spread across the country and over a year. Therefore, they do not attract the same media attention as one horrific national tragedy. The Offshore Safety Bill will ensure that by 1994 the Health and Safety Executive will have one offshore safety inspector for every 170 workers on the rigs in the North sea. I welcome that. It is a major step for the protection of workers. If we applied the same ratio to the construction industry, which is more dangerous than the offshore oil industry, there would be not 100 site and safety inspectors, as there are at the moment, but 5,880.

Much attention was paid in the House over the past year to offshore safety following the Cullen report. If workers, and particularly union-organised workers in the construction industry, were able to write and present to the House a report of the depth and scope of the Cullen report, perhaps the House would agree to fund the Health and Safety Executive to enable it to raise the number of

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inspectors to a far more realistic level. Will it take a Piper Alpha disaster onshore before there are debates, reports and Bills on this matter?

I intend to be in the next Parliament to ensure that legislation is passed. I hope to be able to persuade a Labour Government in that Parliament to pass such legislation, and I hope to be at the parliamentary Labour party meetings to persuade Labour to do that. If that is not possible, I shall present amendments, private Member's Bills or whatever is necessary from the Back Benches.

My final suggestions come from several people who write and campaign on the subject, people such as David Bergman and solicitors such as Louise Christian. Contributions have also been made by UCATT and my own union, MSF, papers such as the *Irish Post*, centres such as HASAC and HAZARDS and the Construction Safety Campaign. I do not claim that any of those people or organisations necessarily agree with all my ideas, but they all agree with many of them.

The first proposal that the House should consider is that after the death of a worker on a building site, senior company officers should face criminal police investigation. Only if the Crown prosecution service and the police conclude that there is not enough evidence to bring in a charge of manslaughter should the Health and Safety Executive be brought in to prosecute the firm for breaches of health and safety legislation.

We all agree that if anybody is killed or seriously injured on a road by drunken driver, that driver should face a term of imprisonment. I believe that individual directors and managers, as well as companies, should face the prosecution that can lead to terms of imprisonment. If a few employers had been put behind bars for some of those 1,500 deaths in the past 10 years, perhaps managements would view safety in the industry from a different perspective. For that reason, all cases taking place after death and serious injury should be heard in the Crown court. It is ludicrous that magistrates courts should consider these cases.

I know that the Minister will say that, last summer—I think in June—the level of fines was raised from the £2,000 maximum to a £20,000 maximum. However, I am not aware that that has seeped its way through the legal system. The vast majority of fines never even reached the £2,000 level. I remember analysing the average in the mid-1980s and it came out to a fine of about £361 on a firm or employer after a fatality or major injury. When one thinks that that was the average fine for fare-dodging on London Transport, one realises how little it really was. Even if that average climbed to £500 or £600, it would still be only at the same level as that for not paying television licences, and would, therefore, be wholly inadequate.

We need changes in the health and safety law, in coroners' practices and in inquest law so that death by negligence can be brought into play. Bereaved families should have access to all the notes of evidence before the inquest and legal aid should be available for representation at inquests. All these procedures and the others that I would detail if I had time are for after the injury or death by accident.

I began by saying that 70 per cent. of accidents are not, as one Minister said to me in the House three years ago, avoidable, but are preventable by management action. Those two words are different. Why, then does the industry drive workers forward in such a way that these accidents happen and the carnage continues? It is because of the profit motive, which looms even larger in this industry than in industry in general, but it is also because of the weakness of workers' legal rights and organisational strength. Therefore, the other legislative change that needs to be brought about urgently is one that will give workers the legal right to stop an unsafe job without facing the fear of victimisation and blacklisting. If we had had more time, I could have given the House the details of two cases in the past fortnight in London where workers have been sacked after mentioning unsafe work practices to their employers.

The construction industry is not only the most unsafe industry in the country but a prime case for public ownership and accountability. Public ownership of the industry is something that I stood on, along with all other Labour candidates, in the 1983 general election, although it is no longer Labour party policy. The industry should be controlled, and the laws that govern it should be written far more by the workers who have to work within it. Perhaps if that happened the carnage could stop.

In the next four or five weeks, every election candidate should answer the question, "What would you do to stop the horrific death and injury toll in the industry?" The next Government, which I hope will be a Labour Government, should make it a priority in their early months to introduce proposals such as those that I have outlined to lower the accident rate and make the industry a safe one to work in.

2.58 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Eric Forth): I congratulate the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) on initiating the debate. I pay tribute to him for the work that he has done so consistently during his period in the House and for his commitment to the cause of health and safety generally, especially in the construction industry. He should be congratulated and thanked by the many people in the industry for his persistent pursuit of such an important issue.

I join the hon. Gentleman—there is no difference between us—in expressing concern about the numbers of fatalities and injuries that take place in such an important industry. That is common ground in the United Kingdom and throughout Europe. However, these matters must be put in context, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not misunderstand me when I do so. He has used emotive words such as "carnage" and "scandal"—he is entitled to use them—but there are international comparisons to be drawn. The United Kingdom industry has a fatal injury rate of under 10 per 100,000 employees. The rate in what was West Germany is broadly the same. The rates in France, Spain and Italy are about two to three times higher. I say that to illustrate that the industry is a notoriously difficult one in whichever country it is operating. None of the countries that is comparable to the United Kingdom—even those in the European Community—has yet found a satisfactory answer to the difficulties that are experienced in the industry.

Figures similar to those that I have quoted apply to serious injury rates. The recent Health and Safety Commission mapping project, which I have quoted from, shows that our serious injury rates, on the best comparable basis that can be achieved, are significantly lower than those in France, especially, and in Spain. These camparisons show that the solution to what is accepted is a serious problem is a difficult one, and so far an elusive one.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the number of inspectors available. He referred to a cut in the number of inspectors that the Health and Safety Executive has for the construction industry. He is not correct. In the 1970s, 86 inspectors were employed by the executive for the construction industry; There are now more than 100. On the basis of historical comparison, the number of inspectors has increased.

I concede immediately that the number of inspectors that is appropriate for the construction industry constitutes an important debate. As time is short, I do not want to be diverted into making comparisons between the offshore oil industry, the subject of Lord Cullen's greatly respected report, and the construction industry on shore. There are many crucial differences. Suffice it to say that to suggest that there should be 5,000 or more inspectors is to be unrealistic to say the least. To go from about 100 now to 5,000 is not, I think a practical proposition. There may well be scope for more inspectors—I think that many would concede that, and the matter is even now being considered by the executive—but we must be practical.

Perhaps I might be allowed to make a tiny party-political point. The hon. Gentleman made one or two slight ones. I am not aware that the Labour party has made a commitment to increase the resources that are made available to the Health and Safety Executive that would allow the measures that the hon. Gentleman wants to be implemented.

There is a problem here. The Government have honoured the Health and Safety Commission's requests for funds over the past few years, and the commission includes representatives of trade unions as well as of employers and others. Therefore, there has been an element of cross-party agreement on this difficult subject for some time. I hope that it will continue, even allowing for this debate.

The hon. Gentleman made some play—I understand why—of what should happen when there is a fatality on a construction site. He suggested that there should be immediate police investigations, and he made comparisons with cases of drunk drivers. I think that there is a real difficulty. In a drunk-driving case, there is relative ease in establishing liability. It will involve someone who after drinking has driven a car and been involved in an accident, as a result of which someone, tragically, has died. That example is not comparable since establishing liability or responsibility on a construction site may be extremely difficult. The hon. Gentleman's knowledge of construction sites is at least as good as mine—it is almost certainly better—and so I put the difficulty to him.

If there is a fatality on a construction site, it can be extremely difficult to establish whether it was the fault of the employee or operator or of the contractor, his immediate foreman or manager, the directors of the company or the company as a whole. The fault could lie with a combination of those persons. To assume that establishing liability or responsibility is as easy as the hon. Gentleman suggested is not, I think, fair or correct.

Two or three weeks ago I spent a day with an inspector on construction sites in London. That was my most recent visit to the sites. I asked the inspector about these matters and he told me that he would be reluctant to be a party to attempts to mount prosecutions of the sort that have been requested by the hon. Gentleman. He told me that he had been engaged in such work for many years and that he felt that it would be extremely difficult to take such a course.

I do not want to rule out the possibility of prosecutions of the sort suggested by the hon. Gentleman. The HSE is committed to mounting prosecutions whenever it thinks it prudent and correct to do so. However, to leave the suggestion in the debate and the impression in the House that that is a relatively easy matter would do the subject less than justice.

Mr. Nellist: I said that it is the HSE's own assessment that 90 per cent. of fatalities in the construction industry are preventable and that 70 per cent. could be prevented by management action. If the laws were in place to allow prosecutions to be tested in the courts, I cannot believe that some employers would not go to prison. I am not suggesting that every case can be proved in a matter of minutes or hours, but some employers should serve prison sentences because of their inaction. I want the law to be changed.

Mr. Forth: That is a reasonable point. There is a framework directive, which will be progressed later this year, that moves in that direction. There is another directive, which is progressing on a European level—the hon. Gentleman must accept that many laws are now being taken forward on a European Community basis—that attempts to ensure that management exercises its responsibilities more.

We must distinguish between the practical measures that can be taken in relation to the responsibility of management and individuals on the work site, and the question whether an increased number of prosecutions would have the desirable effect that many assume it would. I do not deny that a prosecution should be mounted where someone can be indicted and where even a prison sentence might be appropriate.

We have increased the penalties available to the courts. The Offshore Safety Act—it was given Royal Assent today—provides for further increases in penalties. The facility already exists for magistrates courts to refer such matters to Crown courts for unlimited fines and imprisonment, if they believe that to be appropriate.

One of the frustrations that all Members of Parliament share—and I suspect that it unites the hon. Gentleman and me—is that this House makes penalties available to the judiciary, but the judiciary—for reasons often best known only to itself—does not take advantage of those penalties. Indeed, the average penalty is about £700 or £800, even though a penalty of £2,000 is available. The judiciary does not use the low maxima currently available; we can only hope that it will think again about using the much higher maxima available under the new Act.

It is an important subject that concerns everyone involved with health and safety, whether in the executive, the Commission, the bodies mentioned by the hon. Gentleman or the Government. The need to move forward is urgent, but it must be done carefully and systematically. These are complex matters and the European dimension must be considered.

There are arguments about resources and about the numbers of inspectors. There is rightly a debate about the level of appropriate penalties. However, in the end the main responsibility lies, on a day-to-day basis, with those

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responsible for managing the sites, both at foreman and manager level, and with the employees themselves. The fact that most of them are now wearing protective headgear is a major step forward.

Those are undramatic but important ways in which the level of safety will be improved and which will meet the hon. Gentleman's objectives. I thank him for bringing this matter before the House today. I hope that I have answered some of his points. As always, if any are outstanding I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 9 March 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Roads, Wiltshire

1. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his current estimate of capital expenditure on roads in Wiltshire in the next three years.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Christopher Chope): Capital expenditure on trunk road schemes in Wiltshire in the next three years will be approximately £50 million.

Mr. Coombs: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that most helpful and encouraging answer. Can he do anything to speed up the rate at which the link between the M4 at Swindon and the M5 at Gloucester is increased to dual carriageway status throughout its length? Will my hon. Friend also consider the roads to the south of Swindon through Marlborough and Devizes to Salisbury? If he saw those for himself, I am sure that he would agree that they are of low quality, given the volume of traffic using them every day.

Mr. Chope: The roads to the south of Swindon are the responsibility of the local authority—Wiltshire county council. The roads between Swindon and Gloucester, however, are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

I am pleased to say that work on the Latton bypass is due to start next year, at a cost of about £17 million, and there are five other schemes on that road, at a total cost of £100 million. My hon. Friend's constituents will recognise that it is vital for the future prosperity of Swindon that those schemes be implemented as quickly as possible. They would be delayed, if not cancelled, were the Labour party to take control.

A13

2. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to accelerate the proposed work on the A13 between the M25 and outer London.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. and learned Friend has today announced his intention that a major advanced works contract on the A13 Wennington to Mar Dyke scheme should be started in the coming financial year, subject to satisfactory completion of remaining procedures.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Will he take my word for it that my constituents are horrified by Labour party proposals to review the trunk road programme? That would be devastating to my part of the country——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady should put a question to the Minister.

Mrs. Gorman: Does my hon. Friend agree that in the meantime we could so something to improve the A13, because it carries major freight from Ford at Dagenham, from Tilbury docks and from Shell Haven, all of which involve developing industries in my part of the country?

Mr. Chope: I agree that the A13 is of fundamental importance for the prosperity of my hon. Friend's constituents and of many others in the east Thames corridor. Apart from the Wennington to Mar Dyke scheme, I am pleased to say that about £455 million worth of improvements—dualling, flyovers and junction improvements—are planned for that section of the A13.

Mr. Wolfson: On major road improvements on trunk roads and motorways, what progress is my hon. Friend making in achieving lower noise levels through better surfacing? What consideration is being given to noise barriers of various kinds?

Mr. Chope: There are a number of experiments at the moment to improve the noise environment on our motorways and they include the most modern technology for noise barriers. We also have studies under way to determine whether it is possible to use a porous asphalt surface on some roads, as that would reduce noise for people living near those roads. We certainly take into account the effects on local residents of noise from roads and we are doing our best to minimise them.

Road Casualties

3. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what asssessment he has made of the contribution the road-building programme can make to reducing road casualties.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): It is currently estimated that, for every £100 million invested in trunk road improvements, about 100 road deaths and 4,500 casualties are saved over a 30-year period. The House will be pleased to know that in 1991 there appear to have been lower fatalities on our roads than in any year since the 1940s, despite a ninefold increase in the amount of traffic.

Mr. Stevens: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply which shows that the programme for road improvements not only increases traffic flows and reduces congestion but makes a direct and positive contribution to the reduction of road casualties. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend will know that in areas such as mine, which has the A5 running through it, the improvements have been greatly appreciated. My Conservative county council strongly supports the Government target of reducing accidents by one third by the year 2000. Has my right hon. and learned Friend any thoughts on the implications of delaying or abandoning the substantial road programme that he has proposed, such as is advocated by the Opposition?

Mr. Rifkind: That would indeed have a serious effect. For example, this morning we announced the spending of £760 million on road improvement projects in the forthcoming financial year. That is likely to save 700 lives and more than 30,000 casualties over the next 30 years. It is important for the Opposition to bear it in mind that their opposition to the roads programme is a recipe not only for increased congestion but for increased fatalities and casualties on our roads.

Mr. Fearn: About 12 months ago, I asked the Secretary of State a question about the safety of the lighting on the M6. It appears that the lighting has not been improved and that there are black holes all the way along the M6. Two particular spots with many accidents have been highlighted lately. Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman any proposal to improve the lighting on the M6 where black holes exist?

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have major proposals to widen the M6 and obviously the lighting on part of that road will be improved when the proposals are implemented. We give serious consideration to safety recommendations and, where lighting would make an important contribution to reducing casualties, it is an important factor.

Mr. Adley: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the Winchester bypass is one of the most dangerous pieces of road in the country? The latest figures show that the death and serious injury rate on that road is five times the national motorway average. There is widespread support for completing that road at the earliest opportunity. The proposition that it passes through one of the most beautiful parts of England is total nonsense, because it passes through what is virtually surburban Southampton. Opposition comes mainly from a handful of self-interested people and some foreign thugs. Will my right hon. and learned Friend do everything that he can to complete that road as soon as possible?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the serious congestion in the Winchester area. We attach importance to environmental considerations and the House will be aware that there have already been, I think, four public inquiries into the project over 20 years. It is crucial to make progress in completing the Winchester bypass as soon as possible. We are taking account of environmental considerations. There are substantial environmental benefits to be had from the proposed project because of the ability to reunite St. Catherine's hill with the town of Winchester. At the moment the two areas are divorced by a road that will revert to green fields when the project is complete.

Mr. Prescott: The Secretary of State's new £750 million road electoral bribe is something old, something borrowed and something blue. The programme contains a promise to improve the M25 between junctions 15 and 16. However, Tory party central office says that the M25 will be widened to four lanes at a cost of £4 billion. Who are we to believe—the Secretary of State for Transport or Tory party central office in a different statement which was issued this afternoon?

Mr. Rifkind: I am glad to see that the hon. Gentleman is holding a copy of our document headed "Labour's Threat to Road Projects". I trust that he will not only read it but absorb its implications. If he does, he will recognise the serious warning by the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors that if a Labour Government imposed a freeze on the roads programme, up to 20,000 jobs could be lost in the construction industry. I trust that he will take account of the road safety dangers that are inherent in his policy. Finally, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will remind his colleagues in the shadow Cabinet, including the shadow Chancellor, that they should not advocate major road projects in their constituencies at the same time as the Labour party seeks to impede progress elsewhere in the country.

Channel Tunnel

4. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss improving the rail links between the channel tunnel and north-west England.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): British Rail plans to run channel tunnel freight services from terminals at Trafford Park, Manchester and Seaforth, Merseyside. British Rail has ordered channel tunnel day-and-night trains which will run on the west coast main line.

Mr. Evans: Is the Minsiter aware that most people in north-west England, including the Railway Industry Association, believe that it is economic madness to open the channel tunnel without first providing a proper linkage between the north-west and the channel tunnel? What response does the Minister have to the association's recent criticism that neither the Government nor British Rail has a strategy against which manufacturing industry can plan its future?

Mr. Freeman: As regards long-term plans by British Rail for expanding services and re-equipping certain lines, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that Sir Bob Reid, the chairman, published a document in the middle of last year which looked forward 10 years to railway investment. That level of investment, currently running at £1 billion a year, will be sustained by the Government over the public expenditure planning period which runs for the next three years and, I am quite confident, will run over the next 10 years.

Mr. Mans: Is my hon. Friend aware that people up in the north-west welcome the prospect of the channel tunnel being opened? Will he ensure that sufficient facilities are made available north of Manchester and Liverpool to allow people and freight to be carried on the trains? Does he agree that it ill behoves the Labour party to comment on that because Labour was against the channel tunnel at its inception?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Freight services will run through the channel tunnel from its opening. The locomotives and wagons are ordered. As for passenger services, the new Waterloo terminal is substantially complete. It will be open by summer next year. Passengers on trains running from the north-west into Euston will be able to cross London and catch a train at Waterloo and, in addition, some of the trains will run directly to Waterloo.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does the Minister support British Rail's policy of siting freight depots only where it can find developers to put money into facilities around the depot? Does he think that that is the way that one should plan the freight movement from the north-west through the channel tunnel?

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Lady is misinformed. Of the nine terminals that will be opened by the summer of next year, the majority are already owned by British Rail and will be developed for channel tunnel freight services. Some of them will be developed further with the use of private sector capital—particularly Port Wakefield if, as a result of the public inquiry to be held this month, a decision to go ahead is given. The majority of the terminals are British Rail terminals.

Mr. Butler: Given that 46 per cent. of British Rail's freight business originates in the north-west, is not it strange that British Rail has not talked to the majority of its users already about times and tariffs for the channel tunnel?

Mr. Freeman: I am certain that British Rail will shortly publish its scheduled freight services from the nine terminals. It has already published a preliminary timetable and, as I understand it, preliminary tariffs. My hon. Friend will know that the Government have proposed a major new initiative in rail freight by encouraging the private sector to run additional services on British Rail track.

Mr. Prescott: Will the Minister confirm that the Government were heavily involved in negotiations with British Rail to produce the passengers charter, which was condemned universally last week? During the negotiations, was the Minister a party to setting the target of acceptability for the west coast main line at 90 per cent? He will know that only 85 per cent. has been achieved and that the 15 per cent. shortfall is due to track failure and old rolling stock. Would it be better to confirm the order for the west coast main line instead of negotiating a bonus for the chairman that is worth £53,000?

Mr. Freeman: I would advise the hon. Gentleman not to believe what he reads in the newspapers about the bonus for British Rail's chairman. There is no truth in those articles.

British Rail has not yet put an investment proposition to the Department for the west coast main line. It will be for expenditure in the mid-1990s. It is an extremely important investment project.

The passengers charter has been warmly welcomed by many of my Back-Bench colleagues—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—many of whom are sitting behind me. The Government had the initiative to work with British Rail to introduce it. The hon. Gentleman has no proposals whatsoever.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: During the discussions that will range from the channel tunnel to the north-west of England, will my hon. Friend remember that he will have to cross north-west Kent? Will he take note of the campaign to sink the link, as the channel tunnel rail link passes Gravesend and Northfleet? We do not see why we should pay the environmental price for manifest improvements for the people of north-west England.

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend refers to the proposals for a new high-speed rail link from Folkestone to King's Cross. I can give him the assurance that both he and the local authority in his constituency will have ample opportunity to express their views on how best to design the line to reduce the environmental impact.

Buses

5. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the regulations covering safety and roadworthiness of buses.

Mr. Freeman: Regulations covering the safety and roadworthiness of buses are kept under continuous review. However, buses are the safest form of road transport in this country and the Government strongly support the growth of bus services, especially in urban areas.

Dr. Howells: Is the Minister aware that in my constituency people refer to buses these days, following deregulation, as bananas because they tend to arrive in bunches? *[Laughter.]* One Conservative Member has a sense of humour. Is the Minister further aware that there has been an enormous erosion of confidence in the reliability and roadworthiness of buses since deregulation, especially in south Wales during a period in which monopolies have been created as stronger firms capture weaker ones and cowboy fleets undercut the operations of firms that are much more conscientious and safety conscious?

Mr. Freeman: The bunching of buses occurs largely because of congestion in urban areas. The hon. Gentleman will know that we have recently announced a £10 million programme to provide grants to local authorities to enable them to give priority to buses through the construction of bus lanes and by giving priority to buses at traffic lights. That initiative has been widely welcomed.

There is no statistical evidence to support the contention that deregulation has led to a decline in the quality and roadworthiness of buses. Passenger casualty rates have fallen by 30 per cent. in the past five years. There has been a fall in the proportion of buses that have been taken off the roads because of serious defects found during the vehicle inspectorate's examination.

Mr. Evennett: Will my hon. Friend confirm that safety regulations for buses remain the same whether the services are deregulated or regulated? Will he confirm also that the regulations are entirely independent of the industry?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He has reminded me of what I should have said in my supplementary answer to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). My hon. Friend is absolutely right; there is no difference in the standards applied to the initial test or spot checks on the roadside, whether the buses are in a regulated or deregulated environment.

Ms. Ruddock: Is the Minister aware that one third of the country's bus fleet is now more than 12 years old, which is double the proportion before deregulation? Does he realise that, given the present replacement rate, the average bus will be on the road for 30 years? Surely that can only mean the collapse of the bus industry, less safe services and less access for people with disabilities. Why does not the hon. Gentleman admit that bus deregulation has been a disaster? Why does not he direct more of his roads bribes money towards the provision of better buses?

Mr. Freeman: As it so happens, on Thursday I had the opportunity to visit Derby, together with the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), whose constituency is there. I met the management of Trent Buses, which operates in a very competitive, deregulated environment, and I am glad to say that its investment programme over the past five years has been impressive.

M25 Traffic Flow

6. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the proposed improvements to traffic flows on the M25 in Surrey will take account of environmental considerations.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): All motorway and major trunk road schemes are subject to rigorous environmental assessment.

Mr. Taylor: Although I accept the necessity to improve traffic flows and safety on the M25, may I ask my hon. Friend to take into account environmental considerations such as the need to keep noise down to a minimum? In particular, will he ensure that any widening is within the existing boundaries of the M25 and that the lighting, which is there to help motorists, does not infringe on the villages and the countryside of Surrey?

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand my hon. Friend's concern. The M25 is being lit in an attempt to reduce the number of accidents, to enhance driver comfort and to increase the security of motorists whose vehicles have broken down. I assure my hon. Friend that lighting schemes will be designed to minimise visual intrusion into neighbouring property. Much use will be made of the full-cut-off lanterns, which reduce the minimum spill of light outside the highway boundaries. I confirm that it is not our intention to widen the M25 outside its present curtilage.

Motorway Service Areas

8. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what response he has received from organisations concerned with the countryside about his ideas for extra motorway service areas.

Mr. McLoughlin: We issued a consultation document on the provision of motorway services on 10 February. Copies were sent to a number of organisations with countryside interests. The Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland has responded. It was concerned that proposed new arrangements should not lead to undue development in sensitive areas and it favoured a degree of continuing Government control over minimum standards at motorway service areas.

Mr. Bottomley: Will my hon. Friend confirm that there is still time for various groups, whether environmental or road safety, to respond to the Government's proposals? Does he understand that planning permission was initially gained, with difficulty, for the building of motorways through areas of outstanding natural beauty and great environmental sensitivity, so many people would not be keen to see developers spending hundreds of thousands —if not millions—of pounds fighting in a long succession of inquiries so that they can build not just motorway service areas—possibly excluding the disabled and lorries —but hotels and other facilities that would never have received permission when the original planning consent was granted?

Mr. McLoughlin: I confirm that there is still time for organisations to respond to our proposals and we expect more representations during the consultation period. My hon. Friend raised matters that we will want to consider carefully. However, most people would welcome a greater availability of motorway service stations. A number of people have expressed their concern that there are almost 200 miles of motorway without one. The proposals in the consultation document will go a long way towards improving the facilities and the standards that drivers expect from motorway service areas.

Ms. Walley: When the Minister consults the countryside organisations about motorway service stations, will he also discuss the wider environmental implications of the Government's transport policy? Has he seen the report published today by the Council for the Protection of Rural England? If, over the next decade, there is to be a 50 per cent. rise in traffic demand, is not it about time that his Department stopped being a Department only for roads and instead sought to introduce a proper, integrated transport system that takes real account of environmental considerations?

Mr. McLoughlin: Well, there we have it. That sums up the Labour party's attitude, which is against a roads policy. The Opposition should go to a number of towns where bypasses have been built, which have been warmly welcomed. I assure my hon. Friends that we will continue to provide those bypasses where schemes are put forward. They are environmentally friendly and they lead to less congestion. That helps the environment; it does not damage it.

Mr. Ashby: Will my hon. Friend take into account motorway service areas of the kind found in France— which do not have restaurants, hotels or facilities of that kind, but offer lavatories, running water and parking places, so that the motorist can stretch his legs and rest before continuing his journey? Such stopping places are cheap and good, and we need them in this country.

Mr. McLoughlin: I hope that the consultation document will prompt a number of proposals of the kind that my hon. Friend makes, and we will certainly consider them.

Second Severn Crossing

9. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will visit the site of the second Severn crossing at Caldicot, Gwent.

Mr. Chope: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Hughes: If the Secretary of State were to visit Caldicot, the people there would quickly remind him that Wales is in a state of deep repression—I mean, depression. They see no sense in imposing tolls on the existing bridge of £2·80 for a motor car, £5·60 for a minibus, and £8·40 for a lorry. Have not the Government given the French-backed consortium a licence to print money?

Mr. Chope: I am disappointed at the hon. Gentleman's negative attitude to a £300 million-plus investment in a second crossing of the Severn, which will improve enormously communications for the people of Wales. There is considerable confusion among Labour Members over whether their party supports continued tolling. We heard only last week from Labour's deputy leader that his party would abandon tolling in Scotland. If that policy were applied throughout Britain, as was also said by the right hon. Gentleman, it would cost £1·2 billion—an additional cost to the taxpayer which could only mean less investment in roads. The Opposition's policy is confused —and I do not agree that the people of Wales are repressed.

Mr. Anderson: Is it not clear that the substantial staged increases in respect of the existing bridge are being imposed simply to provide money for the second, privatised bridge? Did the Welsh Office, because of the enormous blows to the location policy in Wales, bother to make representations against them?

Mr. Chope: The Government are united in their commitment to improving road communications in Wales. Labour was the first party to introduce the idea of a Severn crossing—and of a tolled crossing, at that. Labour does not have a clear policy on whether it believes in a second and tolled crossing, or wants just one very congested bridge—which would be very bad news for Wales.

A12 Chelmsford Bypass

10. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work to commence on upgrading the A12 Chelmsford bypass from a two-lane to a three-lane road.

Mr. Chope: Consultants are working on possible route options, and we plan to publish them in the summer of next year.

Mr. Burns: Is my hon. Friend aware that prior to the opening of the A12 Chelmsford bypass in 1986, the Army and Navy roundabout in Chelmsford was the most heavily congested traffic blackspot in the country? After that bypass opened, congestion was greatly reduced—but it is beginning to increase again because of the greater use of the A12 as a route into the hinterland of East Anglia, to the ports of Ipswich, Harwich and Felixstowe. Will my hon. Friend bear it in mind that the sooner a third lane is constructed to alleviate Chelmsford traffic, the happier will be my constituents?

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend gives a timely reminder of the benefits of investment in our roads infrastructure. I am grateful for his congratulations to the Government on the completion of the Chelmsford bypass. We are committed to improving it further as a result of increased traffic, which is largely a consequence of the success of the east coast ports.

Sir Robert McCrindle: As this might be my last opportunity to draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister to the topic of the proposed M12 between Chelmsford and the M25, I seek his assurance that when he receives alternative proposals for that motorway's line of route, he will take into account that such a motorway may not be required. That is the overwhelming response that I have received, and I suspect that the same is true of my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns). Rather than presume that a motorway is required, will my hon. Friend the Minister acknowledge that there is at least one other option—to leave things as they are?

Mr. Chope: Certainly the Government will take into account all the views expressed during the consultation period.

My hon. Friend's successor will have a hard act to follow: the diligence and commitment that my hon. Friend has given to his constituents have been exemplary.

Roads, West Midlands

11. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the programme of road building in the west midlands.

Mr. Rifkind: We are pressing ahead with the Birmingham northern relief road and western orbital route. The A5-A49 Telford-Shrewsbury improvements and two other bypasses are opening this year, and we are also supporting a £446 million local roads programme.

Mr. King: My right hon. and learned Friend will understand that the west midlands conurbation, lying as it does in a landlocked area, is responsible for the bulk of the country's manufacturing industry, and that it depends on adequate and improving road conditions. Does he accept that there is widespread support from industry and the community generally for the Government's roads programme? Without it, the whole area would be economically strangulated; but that is not the view of the Opposition, whose transport spokesman—the organ grinder—has now left the Chamber, but who would condemn every aspect of our road building programme.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the vital contribution that our roads programme will make to the west midlands economy, and to contrast that with the appalling implications of Labour's proposals. I note that, in addition to the party's moratorium on the roads programme, the shadow Secretary of State for Transport has imposed a moratorium on his own presence in the Chamber.

Mr. Snape: This electioneering is an expensive business, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Secretary of State tell the House what proportion of his Department's projected minimum increase of 80 per cent. in road traffic will be absorbed by this latest pre-election bribe? Will he also tell us why he has refused to adopt the alternative package approach, involving a mixture of public transport and road schemes, that has been advocated by local authorities in the west midlands? Finally, does the Secretary of State accept that, no matter how much money he tries to throw around now, he will not save his hon. Friends' necks?

Mr. Rifkind: We are delighted to hear from the shadow to the shadow Secretary of State. He must appreciate that we do have a mixed public-transport and roads programme. In the autumn statement, we announced major increases in rail expenditure in particular. Labour's proposed attempt to finance improvements in our rail expenditure, at the expense of our roads programme, would result in massive unemployment in the construction industry, along with an increase in the number of casualties on our roads. It would also bring deep depression to many members of communities who are looking forward to the bypasses that the present Government have promised. That promise would not be implemented if the Opposition ever came to power.

Motorway Repairs

12. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about the speed with which motorway repairs are undertaken.

Mr. Chope: The most recent representation has concerned the removal of the Ingst bridge on the M4.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. Friend believe that the public are satisfied that motorway repairs are being undertaken in the shortest possible time? There has been some improvement in recent years, but are not further measures needed to speed up the process?

Mr. Chope: It is because of the concern expressed by my hon. Friend and others that the Government are committed to a further increase in the use of the "lane rental" method of procurement of motorway repairs. I am pleased to be able to tell my hon. Friend that, in a recent study on maintenance techniques across the world, the World bank has confirmed that the United Kingdom carries out such work faster than any other country.

Mr. Haynes: I shall wait to see what happens about the speed of motorway repairs. While the Secretary of State is looking at that, however, will he also take a look at the idiots who race through these roadworks? They have flipping telephones as well. It is time that the Secretary of State did something about that.

Mr. Chope: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not speed through road works, and I hope that he will set a good example, which others will follow.

Fenchurch Street Line

13. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received on the Fenchurch Street line.

Mr. Freeman: I have received a number of representations recently about the Fenchurch Street line. The Government appreciate that that line does not provide the quality of service which passengers can reasonably expect. British Rail will, however, shortly be letting a contract to renew the signalling at a total cost of £50 million. That should help to improve services.

Mr. Amess: Will my hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to Mr. Martyn Rands, chairman of Basildon commuters' club—and to his hard-working committee—who met my hon. Friend this morning and presented him with a petition, signed by 5,000 people in my constituency, complaining about the disgraceful service that they receive on the Fenchurch Street line? Will my hon. Friend agree to tell the chairman of British Rail that he must do everything that he possibly can to improve the standard of service on that line for my constituents before 1995?

Mr. Freeman: I certainly shall, and I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for his assiduous representations on behalf of his constituents. Largely because of his representations, it was a pleasure to announce the resignalling of that line recently.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Ministerial Visit

31. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next expects to pay an official visit to Lancashire.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Chris Patten): I have no plans to visit Lancashire in the near future.

Mr. Skinner: I have no doubt that during the general election campaign the chairman of the Tory party will be spreading himself about a little bit, even though he has a tiny majority in Bath. Is he aware that I shall be following him in Lancashire? I shall be telling the Lancashire electors about the fact that the Tory party is financing its election campaign with money from Hong Kong, with £2 million from a Greek fascist and £440,000 from Asil Nadir—money which he stole from his company—and will the chairman of the Tory party——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should bear the sub judice rule in mind. Some of those cases are before the courts at the moment.

Mr. Skinner: That money has not been declared in the company accounts of Polly Peck. Will the chairman of the Tory party send that money back to its rightful owners, bearing in mind the fact that the Labour party has agreed to send back Maxwell's money, if it is found to have had any connection with the Mirror group pension fund? That decision was passed unanimously and if it is good enough for us it should be good enough for the Tories.

Mr. Patten: I do not think that the Labour party could possibly repay the debt that it owes to the late Captain Maxwell. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and I manage to spend a little time in Lancashire together, and that he will come to Bath. He will find that in both Bath and Lancashire the electorate has as little faith in Labour's policies as he has.

Mr. Rowe: Can my right hon. Friend spare a moment from Lancashire to come to Maidstone, where he will be able to share our pleasure——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about Lancashire.

Mr. Rowe: My right hon. Friend will be aware, when he next visits Lancashire, that the news that the Liberal council has had to give up office in Maidstone has travelled the length and breadth of the land——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a bit wide of the subject.

32. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to visit the Duchy.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have no plans to visit the Duchy in the near future, nor Maidstone, nor Basildon.

Mr. Enright: Would the Chancellor reconsider that decision because, when he next goes to the Duchy of Lancaster he may go to confession and admit to the untruths that are being told by his party in party-political broadcasts? He could admit that the 7 million days that allegedly were lost in one year under a Labour Government were lost under this Government, in less than three days because of unemployment. As a penance, will he restore the £500,000 that he stole from the shareholders of Polly Peck——

Mr. Speaker: Order. [SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: "On a point of order, Mr. Speaker."] Leave it to me, please. This case is sub judice. Will the hon. Gentleman please not use the word "stolen"?

Mr. Enright: That his party has taken from Polly Peck shareholders——

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman should bear in mind the sub judice rule.

Mr. Enright: If there is a court case, I shall refrain from commenting further, but would the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster urge the Tory party to refrain from wallowing in sleaze, which he calls scholarly?

Mr. Patten: One realises from studying the affairs surrounding the Maxwell Group that the Opposition know everything that there is to know about sleaze. The confessional is a matter of secrecy, but what is not secret is that, when they were really working at it, the previous Labour Government ensured that far more than 7 million days a year were lost through strikes.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

National Audit Office (Public Relations)

41. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission how much the National Audit Office spends on public relations, publicity and parliamentary relations.

Sir Peter Hordern (Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission): The National Audit Office handles its own public relations, publicity and parliamentary relations work and one member of staff acts as press officer. Advance copies of reports are provided to the press and other interested parties at a cost of about £6,000 a year. In addition, the office produces an annual report at a cost of about £8,000 and periodic booklets on its work.

Mr. Bottomley: Will my hon. Friend pass to the National Audit Office the thanks of Parliament for its series of reports and ask whether it would be possible for us to have them at a time when Parliament is likely to be sitting rather than at one minute to midnight for the benefit of the press? That would be regarded by the House as a sensible courtesy.

Sir Peter Hordern: The National Audit Office normally lays reports before the House five to seven days before publication. Once a report has been laid and a copy placed in the Library, it is available for any Member of Parliament to read. The Votes and Proceedings record daily items laid before the House. I understand, however, from the Comptroller and Auditor General that he would be happy to let any Member have an advance copy of a report if the Member indicates his interest. A list giving likely publications by the Comptroller and Auditor General in the coming months will now be made available in the Library.

Mr. Tim Smith: Does my hon. Friend think that the excellent work of the NAO is sufficiently well understood and appreciated by hon. Members? If not, as some changes will be made to its membership after the election, will he consider writing to all Members explaining how the system works—what the Public Accounts Commission, the Public Accounts Committee and the NAO do?

Sir Peter Hordern: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that suggestion. I should certainly like to consider it. It is a great pity that hon. Members do not take more notice of the admirable reports that are made by the Comptroller and Auditor General, which are followed up so well by the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is not it true that some documents that the Public Accounts Committee receives are not published, such as the memorandum that the National Audit Office drew up for me on the accountability of United Nations agencies? Is not it possible to put many of those documents in the public domain and publish them as Public Accounts Committee documents? Will the hon. Gentleman have a word with the Chairman and members of the Public Accounts Committee about that?

Sir Peter Hordern: I should certainly like to consider that suggestion. Perhaps I could write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is a Bill to extend the powers of the National Audit Office to consider the Opposition's policies? Will he consider the staffing levels needed to cost the billions of pounds of wholly uncosted pledges made by the Opposition day after day, week after week? Would not that be an enormous and unfair burden on the NAO?

Sir Peter Hordern: I think that it would place great strain not only on the Comptroller and Auditor General and his staff but on the budget of the Public Accounts Commission itself if it had to authorise such expenditure.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Ministerial Visit

33. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any plans to visit the Duchy in the near future; and if he will make a statement.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Chris Patten): I refer to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) some moments ago.

Mr. Dunn: Does the Chancellor of the Duchy realise that a visit to Lancashire—to the Duchy—in the near future——

Mr. Corbyn: He does not even know where it is.

Mr. Dunn: I was born there. Would not such a visit provide a glorious opportunity to point out that the assisted places scheme—among other major educational advances—would be abolished under a Labour Government, thereby denying many bright children in the Duchy the opportunity of a first-rate education?

Mr. Patten: I share a birthplace with my hon. Friend, and I also share his concern about the future of the assisted places scheme. There are 295 schools in England benefiting from the scheme, and eight are in Lancashire. It is astonishing that the Labour party keep putting it on record that it is prepared to defend independent schools but refuses to allow poorer families to send their children to them. That is astonishing humbug.

Dr. Cunningham: Will the Chancellor of the Duchy reconsider his decision and pay a visit to the north-west, especially so that he can meet the 800 people a week who have lost their job since this time last year as a result of the Government's policies? When he is there, will he explain to the people of the north-west why he has changed his mind about borrowing? Does he recall saying in his Disraeli lecture to a Conservative audience that high levels of borrowing were nothing more than deferred taxation? Why has he changed his mind?

Mr. Patten: In the less demotic phases of my career I have given a number of lectures, most of them described as the Disraeli lectures, some as the Macmillan lecture and some even as the Macleod lecture. As for the borrowing lecture and the lecture on job creation, I have been able to state on a number of occasions when I have been a little more demotic that all independent forecast suggest that under a Labour Government—heaven forbid—borrowing and unemployment would be higher.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committee Reports

42. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council how many reports have been produced by House of Commons Select Committees during the current Session; and if he will make a statement.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): In Session 1991-92, to 5 March, Select Committees published 54 reports and nine special reports.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend say how often these reports are considered on the Floor of the House? When he does, he will accept that it is not often enough. Will he take particular note of the excellent report on reading by the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts which established that reading standards have certainly not fallen and that teachers of reading should be congratulated on the excellent job that they do? If that report were debated, it would surely spread confidence in the teaching of reading which would benefit everyone, including hon. Members.

Mr. McGregor: The reports are debated in the House and we follow the practice of the Select Committee on Procedure which recommended three days for such reports. When I was Secretary of State for Education and Science I recall being concerned about the implications of some methods of teaching reading if they are followed too acutely—in other words, without a balance of reading methods. I know that that caused some concern, but, broadly speaking, my hon. Friend is right to say that standards in our schools are very good.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Lord President explain the priorities that he adopts in providing time for debating the reports? He provided time rapidly for the Select Committee on Sittings of the House which concerned curtailing hon. Members' hours. Yet for more than three months he has had in his hands the report by the Select Committee on Members' Interests which recommends changes in the registration of commercial lobbying interests. Is not that because many Tory Members are up to their necks in money received for commercial lobbying of one sort or another? The right hon. Gentleman did not provide time for such a debate because he did not want to embarrass the Tory party so close to a general election.

Mr. MacGregor: That is absolute nonsense. It had nothing to do with that. Hon. Members of all parties who have interests have them declared in the register, as the hon. Gentleman knows. The reason why we have not been able to debate the report is that we have had a great deal of other business to do. We have made extremely good progress with the most important business—Government legislation. However, I thought it right to debate the report of the Select Committee chaired by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) because many hon. Members of all parties, which was not the case with the other Select Committee report, asked me to find an early opportunity to enable the House to give its initial response to that splendid and important report.

Palace of Westminster (Security)

43. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what new arrangements he proposes to improve security in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. MacGregor: It has been the long-standing practice of Leaders of the House not to comment on matters of security within the Palace of Westminster. I can, however, reassure the hon. Gentleman that we regularly keep security matters under review and take all necessary further steps in the light of such reviews.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Lord President urge the security services to concentrate their search for the alleged theft of information from hon. Members on the organisations that regularly spy on hon. Members, including the organisation that last week published a ludicrous volume full of slanders and innuendos about hon. Members? Will the right hon. Gentleman stop the self-defeating, ludicrous, sleazy, muck-raking by the Conservative party's thought police?

Mr. MacGregor: If the hon. Gentleman is referring to the document that was recently published by Conservative Central Office——

Mr. Flynn: This one.

Mr. MacGregor: "Who's Left?". There is no need to have any security inquiry into that document because it uses published, freely available sources. There is no sleaze. It is a document about the Labour party's policy attitudes and it rightly points out that more than half of Labour Members have either recently belonged to or still belong to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It is an important contribution to discussion and to policy attitudes on important matters.

Mr. Dykes: As the Lord President has successfully demolished the Opposition's spurious arguments, will he get back to real questions of security and take time to pay tribute to all who look after security in the Palace of Westminster? It is a nightmarish and difficult job for them all and sometimes we sound a little bit too critical.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I am happy to pay tribute to the security services. They do a good job in the House, under the Serjeant at Arms. It is not an easy task and it depends, for example, on thefts being reported. It does not help when distorted and misleading accusations, often with no foundation, are made by one or two hon. Members.

Question Time

44. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he has any further plans to propose changes to the order and method of Question Time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I have no plans to do so in the current Parliament.

Mr. Skinner: May I make a suggestion to the Leader of the House?

Mr. Speaker: It should be a question.

Mr. Skinner: It is a question. Do not panic. Is the Lord President aware that the Prime Minister has not been doing very cleverly lately in Question Time? He had to apologise about that young girl Carly because he got it all wrong. Then he got the public sector borrowing requirement wrong. Will the right hon. Gentleman take on board the idea of giving the Prime Minister a mentor who could sit by his side for these last two days to help him out? Perhaps he might use the ex-Prime Minister to give him a chuck on. May I make the further suggestion that when it is all over on 9 April we get the right hon. Gentleman a new job—a walk-on part in a re-run of "Crossroads" or as a substitute for Ken Barlow.

Mr. MacGregor: I sometimes think that the hon. Gentleman is so busy thinking up his contorted questions that he does not observe what is going on in the House at other times. If he had been observing, he would have noticed that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been scoring heavily at Prime Minister's Question Time—winning hands down. Whenever the election comes, the hon. Gentleman will find that the electorate has also noticed that.

Sir John Stokes: Is my right hon. Friend aware that very few people in the country will share any of the views of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)? Question Time is unique to this Parliament. It is very much admired by foreign parliaments and enables the Prime Minister and others to answer questions in front of us all. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has done extremely well and will continue to do so for many years to come.

Mr. MacGregor: As always, my hon. Friend talks great sense, and I agree with everything that he has said.

Mr. Winnick: May we have a change in our procedure for questioning the Leader of the House who last week announced the business for the following week even though he apparently knows that the election is to be called for 9 April and that the business will therefore be changed? Why should the Leader of the House be in a position to give the wrong information to the House, given that he will almost certainly be making another business statement this week? As Leader of the House, does not he have a responsibility to the whole House?

Mr. MacGregor: My business statement every week is based on the position as I see it at the time and we have organised matters at the time. There are occasions—there have been occasions in this Parliament—when I have to make a supplementary business statement. I always make the statement at the time—as I did last Thursday—based on the information available to me and on the right process for the House for the following week.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that many of us would like to ask how it is possible to contemplate spending an extra £38 billion without increasing taxes, increasing unemployment and increasing prices? Will he therefore amend Question Time to allow us to ask questions of the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend makes a point which my right hon. and hon. Friends and I will be making on many occasions in the weeks ahead. The reason why the Opposition do not like Question Time and try to drown my right hon. Friend out is that they know that we are right in everything that we say and that the country will not support them on their policies.

Mr. Rees: If the election were not to be held until May or June, would an announcement be made next time we have business questions?

Mr. MacGregor: Business questions are always about the business for the next week.

Trust Ports

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the progress that has been made on the privatisation of the trust ports since the Ports Act 1991 received Royal Assent in July of last year. The main objective of the Government in promoting the legislation was to enable the major trust ports to bring themselves into the private sector.

On 28 January I announced that I had given my consent to the sale of the Tees and Hartlepool port authority's undertaking to Teesside Holdings Ltd and that sale has been completed. The Forth ports authority intends to seek the privatisation of its undertaking on 12 March by floating it on the stock exchange. The boards of the Clyde port authority and of the Medway ports authority have now put to me their recommendations concerning the sales of their ports; the board of the Port of London authority has put to me its recommendation concerning the sale of the port of Tilbury.

Different objectives were agreed for the sales of the three ports, but in all three cases they included encouraging the disposal to managers and employees of the whole or a substantial part of the equity share capital; seeking the best open market price subject to the other objectives; and continuing the port operations of the undertakings.

I am satisfied that, in all three cases, the boards conducted the sales in a fair and proper manner. In particular, I am satisfied that each of them carefully assessed the bids for their ports against the agreed objectives of sale.

The Clyde port authority board concluded that the bid made by Clydeport Holdings Ltd, a management and employee buy-out team, satisfied most appropriately and fully the objectives of sale. It was also the largest bid in monetary terms. Under the terms of the bid at least 60 per cent. of the equity share capital of the company will be held by managers and employees. The Clyde port authority board has accordingly recommended to me that its successor company should be sold to Clydeport Holdings Ltd.

The Medway ports authority received only one final bid for its undertaking. This was from Medports Mebo Ltd, also a management and employee buy-out team. The board considered that the bid fully met the agreed objectives of sale. Under the terms of the bid, 51 per cent. of the equity share capital will be held by managers and employees of the company and an employee share ownership trust. The Medway ports authority board has recommended that its successor company should be sold to Medports Mebo Ltd.

The Port of London authority board concluded that the bid by International Transport Ltd, also a management and employee buy-out team, best met the agreed objectives. It was also the largest bid in monetary terms. Up to 50·1 per cent. of the equity share capital and 7·5 per cent. of preference capital will be available to managers and employees of the company. The board of the Port of London authority has recommended that the port of Tilbury should be sold to International Transport Ltd.

I have considered carefully the recommendations of the three port authority boards. I am satisfied that in all three cases the recommended bids meet the agreed objectives of sale. I have noted the provisions made in each case for managers and employees of the company to hold a substantial part of the equity share capital of the companies. I also consider the bids to be satisfactory in monetary terms.

I am therefore writing to the chairman of each of the three port authority boards giving my consent to the sale of their ports to the three bidders whom they have recommended, subject to the completion of satisfactory contracts of sale. I am delighted that today's announcement means that three more major British ports are now moving into the private sector and that a fourth intends to do so shortly.

I commend this statement to the House.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I am pleased that, at least on this occasion, the House has been treated to a statement rather than a repeat of the rather shabby deal that was associated with the sale of the Tees and Hartlepool port.

The Secretary of State should reconsider the remarks that he made when I left the Chamber. He is aware that when a statement is made on such complex matters it is necessary to read and consider it before one can be expected to make a response. It is the convention in the House for statements to be given to the Opposition by approximately 2 o'clock so that they can consider the details. If that is done, it avoids any discourtesy to the House that is caused by having to go out of the Chamber to read the statement in order to make a proper assessment of it. In view of that, I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will withdraw his earlier remarks.

In view of the complex matters involved, we have been given insufficient time to make a proper judgment of the Government's assessment—*[Interruption.]* That is the reality. It is difficult to make a proper assessment of the matters involved.

Does the Secretary of State accept that great concern attended the sale of the Tees and Hartlepool port when the preference for the management-worker deal was ignored and the highest bid was refused? The integrity of that deal and the community interest were severely compromised.

Does the Secretary of State accept that the motivation behind and timing of his announcement has much to do with the coming election and tomorrow's Budget? No doubt the receipts from the sales will be used to finance the Government's taxation programmes. Does he accept that his announcement has nothing to do with transport policy or the national interest? In view of that, the Opposition reserve the right to review, where possible, these privatisation deals to ensure that the national interest and employees' interests have been properly taken into account. The Tees and Hartlepool sale failed to do that.

What is the estimated price to be paid for the deals that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has announced, and how much will be secured by the Treasury? When he considered the preference criteria for the management buy-out, were they in any way different from those in the Tees and Hartlepool deal? What protection has been secured for the employees, particularly with regard to their pension rights, from those who have purchased, or propose to purchase, the trust ports?

The Port of London police force, which is publicly accountable, will become a privatised force. What assurances have been given about the use of that privatised force, which has considerable powers and responsibilities in connection with drugs, illegal immigration and contraband? What arrangements have been made with regard to the navigation powers for the Thames, particularly in the Port of London area, and how will they be financed under the scheme?

Mr. Rifkind: The House will have noted the hon. Gentleman's opening comments about his absence, and it will make its own judgment on that matter.

Mr. Prescott: Cheap little man.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should realise that the House would expect him, and all other hon. Members responsible for transport matters, to be present during transport questions.

The hon. Gentleman says that it is difficult to make a judgment about the content of my statement, but he has not found if difficult until now. He has opposed the privatisation of ports. Irrespective of whether they were acquired by management and employees, he and the Labour party opposed the legislation. Why does he now find it difficult to make a judgment? Perhaps it is a late sign of repentance.

The hon. Gentleman made a comparison with the Tees and Hartlepool privatisation, but on that occasion the bid by the managment-employee company was not the highest. It was not the bid recommended by the port authority. Other factors led to the recommendation that was made to the Secretary of State.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the timing of my statement. It has been made today because in the past few days we have received the recommendations from the port authorities. My task was simply to decide whether they complied fully with the objectives laid down in the Act, and I am satisfied that they do.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the price that has been agreed. For the Medway, it is £29·7 million, for the Clyde £26 million, and for Tilbury £32 million.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the position of the police in the Port of London authority. He will be aware that there are ample precedents in other ports already in the private sector for police serving those new port authority companies, and all the proper interests of the police have been taken fully into account.

Mr. Prescott: What about pensions?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course pensions have been covered. That is to be expected, given that management-employee bids succeeded in each case.

The most alarming aspect of the hon. Gentleman's remarks was that he said that if a Labour Government were to be elected they would review the privatisations. I am not sure what was the implicit threat in that remark. In the three companies to which I referred, the employees succeeded in taking over their company. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that a Labour Government would seek to reverse the decision that I have announced today? *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman is nodding. Is he saying that a Labour Government would try to deny to employees in Tilbury, the Medway and the Clyde the opportunity to own the companies in which they work? I am sure that local opinion in each of those three communities will be appalled by the insensitivity of his response.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I warmly congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), on their tremendous personal efforts to bring about these great advances in the port industry. Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the port of Sheerness, in my constituency, which constitutes the bulk of the port of Medway, has transformed itself in the past 25 years from an ex-naval dockyard into one of the most profitable, enterprising and largest ports in the United Kingdom? The privatisation will allow the 650 employees to have an even greater stake in their futures and will attract new investment to our area.

Is he also aware that every advance in the ports industry has been opposed by the Labour party, and this privatisation has also been opposed by the Liberal Democrats? The suggestion by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) that an incoming Labour Government would review the proposals is utterly irresponsible. It introduces uncertainty into the matter, whereas we had hoped that total certainty would be established by today's statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend for his warm welcome, and I associate myself particularly with his tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), who played an enormous part, when piloting the Bill and at subsequent stages, in ensuring the successful progress of this policy.

My hon. Friend was also right to draw attention to the important benefits for his constituents and for those in the local community resulting from today's announcement.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Is it now possible to see details of the bids? I believe that in the case of the Clyde port authority an assurance was given that the value of the management-employee buy-out meant that 60 per cent. was controlled by management and employees. Would it be possible to discover who was represented by the other 40 per cent.? What undertakings have been given to safeguard such ports? What would happen if Clyde port authority decided to move to Greenock and to ignore the rest of the Clyde, as it has done in the past? What undertakings would then apply to ensure that the Clyde was dredged? Will the company give such assurances?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is correct to say that 60 per cent. of the shareholding belongs to management and employees. It is for the company to say who the remaining shareholders may be. Clyde port authority has expressed itself fully satisfied that all the responsibilities that it has undertaken in the past will be carried out by the successor company. The objectives of each sale—they are slightly different in each case, depending on circumstances—have to be taken into account. Both I and the port authority are satisfied that the requirements will be fully met.

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on today's excellent statement about the port of Tilbury. There will be great rejoicing in Tilbury this afternoon and tonight. He will be aware that the hundreds of men and women who work at the port and who have successfully turned it around since the abolition of the dock labour scheme go along fully with his decision;

[Mr. Tim Janman]

and it was absolutely the right one, given all the hard work and dedication that they have put into the port in the past two years.

Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, before the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) decided that this announcement would be reviewed if Labour won the election, at the end of last year, Labour's parliamentary candidate for Thurrock said that he wished there had been a November election and that Labour had won it so that the privatisation would have been stopped?

Mr. Rifkind: I am aware of that. The local Labour party in Tilbury appears to contain the only people in the area who are trying to frustrate the natural aspirations of the employees of Tilbury to own their own company. I suspect that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East will find that his aspirations cannot be realised—first, because he will not be elected, and, secondly, because legal procedures and the strength of local community feeling in each of these ports would unite to prevent any of his suggestions from coming into effect.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): I welcome the statement, but will the Secretary of State explain what he means by

"a substantial part of the equity share capital"?

In the case of Tees and Hartlepool, it meant only 5 per cent., which appeared to be a shambles. Are the figures in these cases substantial—and are they correct?

Mr. Rifkind: I have explained what a substantial share means: it was 60 per cent. in the case of Clyde, 51 per cent. in the case of Medway and 50·1 per cent. in the case of Tilbury. The hon. Gentleman will recall that, under the Act, management and employee shareholding was one of the objectives, not an obligation. Such shareholding would of course strengthen any bid put before the Secretary of State or before the authority. Sad to say, although the Tees and Hartlepool employees' bid met that requirement, it did not meet all the other objectives so that port authority felt unable to make that recommendation. I concurred in that judgment.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Does not the attitude of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) clearly show that on this as on so many other issues the Labour party is torn between the interests of its trade union masters and those of the work force whom it purports to represent? Has my right hon. and learned Friend seen the recently published report of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, which produced the first profit for 29 years and restored traffic levels to what they were in the mid-1950s, and which attributed that almost entirely to the ending of the dock labour scheme—which the Government pursued through the House in the teeth of opposition from the Labour party? Is it not clear that our ports, as with so much else in this country, depend on the continuation of good, sound Conservative government to drag us into the future and to prevent us from being dragged into the past by the Labour party?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. There has been a splendid renaissance of the ports since the repeal of the dock labour scheme. The Labour party's response is typical because it always provides pig-headed opposition to any sensible reform, always in the face of the Government and the employers, and usually in the face of the employees as well.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): The Secretary of State rather flippantly set aside the issue of pensions on the basis that there was a management-employee buy-out. The report on pensions published this morning seems to show that that is insufficient to protect pensioners. Will current pension arrangements be safeguarded and will the scheme continue, or will there be a new scheme under the new management? That is vital, because previous privatisations in the transport industry have led to losses of pensions, as in the case of British Rail Engineering Ltd., where the company was sold to Parkfield which eventually went bankrupt and the members lost their pensions after paying into the British Rail scheme for 25 to 30 years. Will the Secretary of State give a clear understanding on the issue of pensions and on the protection that is required for pensioners who are currently receiving benefits from the scheme and for future pensioners?

Mr. Rifkind: Both the legislation and the various schemes that have been proposed have had to take into account the proper and legitimate interests of pensioners. The hon. Gentleman can assume that the port authority would have been looking especially at that matter in the light of its responsibilities. The Government, as the body required to give final approval, would also wish to take that matter into account.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): Does my right hon. and learned Friend realise that, although his statement will be enthusiastically welcomed in practically every quarter, it is just possible that in certain circumstances it could be less welcome to the British coal industry, of which the Leicestershire coalfield and Selby, in particular, are important parts? I also represent the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart). Will my right hon. and learned Friend kindly tell those who are likely to be newly responsible for the ports featured in his statement that there is already much unused capacity at British ports for coal imports, and that they would be ill advised to seek to provide further capacity?

Mr. Rifkind: It is for each port, irrespective of ownership, to come to a judgment on whether there is likely to be a demand for its services which requires increased capacity. Clearly, it will be for individual ports to decide on that matter, and that would have been true irrespective of my statement. Obviously, matters of energy policy are not for me. My responsibility is to ensure that there is a framework in which the ports can prosper, and it is the ports' obligation to judge the demand for their services and to seek to provide capacity to meet it.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Would the Secretary of State rethink his initial response to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott)? When he demands that a decision should be made irrespective of whether the information is available or whether reflection has taken place, he is asking for a decision based on prejudice. Does he not think that, after 13 years of prejudiced and dogma-ridden decisions, the country would find it refreshing for a politician to say, "I want to see the facts before I make a decision"? On the facts of the Clyde port authority, the Minister said that there would be 60 per cent. control by the management and work force. What percentage of that is non-management control?

Mr. Rifkind: I think that I am entitled to be a little sceptical about the hon. Gentleman's remarks and those of his hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). The idea that the Opposition regularly ask for time to reflect on Government announcements before giving their response so that the response can be fully informed, and not based on misunderstanding or be in danger of misrepresentation, is an endearing suggestion, but not one that the House has regularly identified. If it is to be the policy of the Opposition in the next Parliament to reflect on all Government announcements before responding, I heartily welcome their conversion.

Dame Peggy Fenner (Medway): I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) in whose constituency is the largest part of the Medway port authority. I have the honour to serve the Medway constituency and my constituents will today be saying, "Thank you for a management-staff buy-out." We have always had good industrial relations in the Medway. Does my right hon. and learned Friend think that this sort of buy-out, which really involves staff, quite contrary to the prejudice about which the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) spoke, can only enhance the good industrial relations that we have always had in that port?

Mr. Rifkind: I agree with my hon. Friend. A healthy bid from a management-employee organisation helps to create motivation, and that is always to be welcomed. It is sad that that kind of initiative does not always succeed, but wherever it does, and if it meets the overall requirements, it is proper for it to be welcomed in all quarters.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Is it Government policy eventually to privatise all trusts?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should consult the Ports Act 1991, which makes it clear that the Secretary of State has the power to require privatisation of the 13 largest ports, but only after two years have elapsed since the passage of the legislation. That time will not elapse until July next year. As it happens, once Forth completes its procedure, five of the 13 ports will already have used the voluntary procedure, and that includes four out of the five largest ports.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that I have constituents employed in both the port of Tilbury and the Medway port. They will welcome today's decision and see it not only as underwriting the future and putting it in their hands but as giving them the opportunity to take a personal stake in the ports.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is rightly entitled to feel doubly delighted by the announcement.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Secretary of State clarify the answer that he gave the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) about the importation of coal? Was he saying that, although nearly 20 million tonnes of coal were imported last year and more is likely to be imported this year, he will allow these ports to import as much coal as they like, even though, when it comes to producing food, British Governments, of whatever colour, have always taken the view that it makes sense not to import food but to produce as much as we can and subsidise it here? What he is saying is that as much coal can come into these ports as anybody wants without the Government interfering. Come on, let us hear exactly what the Secretary of State has to say.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that I was making no comment on energy policy, which is a matter for others to comment on, if appropriate. I should have thought that it was entirely obvious what I was saying. The ports' responsibility is to respond to any legitimate request that they receive from any potential customer to handle products either for import or for export. Individual ports do not determine energy policy.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): At my first constituency surgery in 1983, two dockers from the Medway port came to see me and asked whether we could get rid of the dock labour scheme. We have come a long way since then, and the improvement in the ports in Kent has been staggering. Today's announcement carries them a stage further. Will my right hon. and learned Friend remember that, as the volume of traffic increases, the opportunity for a considerable amount of freight to move from road to rail will increase? Given that a new railway line is under consideration, will he make sure that the possibility of taking freight from road to rail is closely borne in mind?

Mr. Rifkind: We are keen to see a move from road to rail and also to sea transport. There may be opportunities for the ports to benefit from the improved freight facility grants that I announced some months ago. Interest in the grants is mostly centred on the opportunity for the railways, but there is also an opportunity for the ports if environmental benefits would result from freight that would normally be carried by road being carried by sea.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Now that we know that the Secretary of State does not care about energy policy, and will pursue his policy no matter what, will he give the House an assurance that he will consult the Department of the Environment? During the passage of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Bill, it was made clear that no consideration had been given to the dreadful and deleterious effects on the local environment of the way in which its provisions would operate. For the future, therefore, will the Secretary of State lay down guidelines on the control of orimulsion and coal, when they are being stored, to prevent happening what has happened in the past in Liverpool?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that it is for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy to comment on the energy implications of the policy. The environmental matters that arise from these decisions, and especially conservancy responsibilities, have been important factors, particularly in terms of the Medway where the port authority was more than satisfied with the determination of the new owners fully to carry out their responsibilities.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, if it had not been for the abolition of the dock labour scheme, his statement could not have been made? My constituents, who are a long way from the sea, would have been pleased to hear my right hon. and learned

[Mr. Geoffrey Dickens]

Friend make his statement. They would have heard that yet again the Government are giving workers their rights, as they gave council tenants and parents their rights. Is it not significant that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), the shadow Secretary of State, did not even mention the coal industry, showing how incompetent he is?

Mr. Rifkind: As always, my hon. Friend is entirely correct in his observations. Without the ending of the dock labour scheme it is conceivable that neither management nor employees would have been remotely interested in controlling the ports in which they work. There is an entirely new spirit in the ports. Those of us who have visited small ports since the ending of the dock labour scheme have been told constantly by management and by the representatives of trade unions that the spirit has changed entirely. There is an enormous amount of co-operation in ensuring that the ports can best meet the needs of local communities. The Opposition know that. There has not been the slightest suggestion from them that they would bring back the scheme. We know very well why that should be their view.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): My constituency, like that of my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens), is landlocked. However, my constituents are second to none in recognising that an efficient, innovative and dynamically managed set of ports is essential for economic growth. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, during the bad old days of nationalisation and trade union monopoly, the registered ports were a costly and moribund incubus on the economy? They were incapable of competing either with private sector ports or, importantly, with Le Havre, Antwerp, Rotterdam, Hamburg and other ports on the continent.

Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that his announcement is excellent news? It constitutes a splendid new step in the revival of our ports. Does he agree with me also that nothing is more revealing in terms of the damage that Labour's industrial policy would do than the scarcely veiled threat of renationalisation that we heard from the Opposition Front Bench this afternoon?

Mr. Rifkind: I agree with my hon. Friend, as do the managements and employees at the ports. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) is the last of the neanderthals.

Points of Order

4.7 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to seek your help and advice on a matter of security at one of the outbuildings that Members use in Dean's yard. Over the 15 years that I have been here there have been some excellent attendants and security guards, and I and others could get in and out of the outbuildings without any problem. About two months ago, however, somebody approved a piece of enormous expenditure and brought in a most sophisticated security system. The only snag is that it clearly was not made in Britain because it does not work. One of the problems is that it is not possible to get into the place. Once one has gained entry, it is often not possible to get out. I am especially concerned because somebody has spent a great deal of money on the system.

Over the weekend—in the past it was possible to get in by using a key—I was unable to gain entry to Dean's yard because my pass was rejected as being unsuitable, although it is an up-to-date pass. In the circumstances, one has to go to a phone box—I did so on Sunday afternoon—to call the security people. To give them credit, they came at great speed. However, as they had been called out half a dozen times that day, the man who opened the door was becoming rather tired of going backwards and forwards opening and closing it.

My understanding is that there is a further problem today—the door will not close. Therefore, despite all the sophisticated paraphernalia, the security is worse than it was previously. In the four or five days before the House rises, perhaps you, Mr. Speaker, would authorise the Serjeant at Arms to get rid of the system so that we can go back to the good old days.

Mr. Speaker: I am aware that there has been some difficulty with that sophisticated entry and exit system. I shall ask the Serjeant at Arms to investigate.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, arising out of questions——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It cannot arise out of questions or it would not be a matter for me.

Dr. Reid: Quite. It is a point of order arising out of questions, not a question arising out of Question Time. Is it in order to ask whether some exception could be made for answers when Ministers are so shocked and taken ill —as the Secretary of State for Transport was today by my suggestion that decisions should be based on rationality rather than prejudice—that they forget to answer the second part of a question? Could not some mechanism be found to ensure that Ministers write to hon. Members to answer their questions—which in my case was what proportion of the 60 per cent. of the Clyde port authority was non-management rather than management?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot answer that question because I am not responsible for Ministers' answers. The hon. Gentleman should pursue the matter directly, possibly by letter, with the Secretary of State.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): On a genuine point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I seek your guidance? Has your office been approached today by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) with a view to his coming to the

House to make a personal statement to apologise for the way in which, over the past week or so, he has distorted Government figures—as highlighted by his embarrassment when he appeared on the Frost programme—on the number of people treated in the national health service?

Mr. Speaker: I did not see that programme. Thank goodness, I am not responsible for what goes on in television studios.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a genuine point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I seek your guidance on the question of privilege——

Mr. Speaker: Order. In that case, the hon. Gentleman should write to me.

Mr. Flynn: I checked "Erskine May" and noted that the proper procedure is to write to you, Mr. Speaker. However, may I seek your guidance prior to doing so? My point relates to the publication of a document that quotes from our proceedings in this House and from the Order Paper. The document refers to some hon. Members and contains information that is wholly untrue. The document has been published by the Conservative party——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is this something to do with a Select Committee report?

Mr. Flynn: It is to do with a document called "Who's Left?", published by the Conservative party——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a Select Committee report and not part of the proceedings of this House. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would ask his question of the Leader of the House. It is not a matter for me.

Sir Anthony Durant (Reading, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I support my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) in his point of order. We are in some difficulty because it has come to my attention that there is a rumour going around that there might be a general election. If that takes place quite soon, there will be no opportunity for us to cross-examine the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on the figures that he has given to the public——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I, too, have heard that rumour, but some other method must be found to raise the issue. What goes on in a television studio is not a matter for me.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We are anxious to ease you into your retirement in a kindly way, Mr. Speaker, so you would not expect a bogus point of order on which to finish the day. I support my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) in his point of order. Try not to tax yourself too hard this week, Mr. Speaker, as the Serjeant at Arms is on duty and has no doubt heard about the problems that we are encountering at Dean's yard. That will save you having to bring the matter to his attention.

Mr. Speaker: I am not sure that I understand the significance of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, but I hope that he does not get locked in.

Orders of the Day

Friendly Societies Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

4.10 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Maples): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Friendly societies have a long and distinguished history of making mutual provision for their members and their relatives against loss of income through sickness or unemployment and for retirement. Most societies provide not only contractual benefits but discretionary benefits to members who find themselves in financial difficulties, and many societies are also engaged in more general benevolent activitis. The nature and range of friendly societies vary considerably, but all operate on the admirable principles of mutual self-help and the encouragement of thrift. They have played a particularly valuable role in providing protection and savings for people on modest incomes who might otherwise be unable to make provision for themselves.

Friendly societies have been recognised in statute for nearly 200 years, although their origins date back to at least the middle ages. The Bill before the House today is the most far-reaching legislation on friendly societies for over 100 years, since the Friendly Societies Act 1875. There has been amending legislation since, but the fundamental structure of the 1875 Act has survived until now, and the consolidated Friendly Societies Act 1974—the current legislation governing the activities of friendly societies—still bears a clear similarity to it.

Time has obviously moved on, as has the environment in which friendly societies operate. Since the late 1940s the state has provided many of the benefits for which friendly societies were originally formed and new financial products have become available. In recent years, the ability of societies to compete successfully with insurance companies and others has been increasingly hampered by the framework that governs them—particularly the limited range of business in which societies can engage. However, they are still significant financial institutions, with millions of members and assets of more than £5 billion, and they continue to perform an important function.

The Government—and, I believe, Members in all parts of the House—recognise that the values friendly societies represent are well worth protecting and fostering. The Bill's main purpose is to enable societies to develop and prosper in the modern world, while ensuring sound standards of investor protection.

The Government set out their proposals for the future of societies in a Green Paper, "Friendly Societies: A New Framework", published in January 1990, which was widely welcomed—not least by friendly societies themselves—and forms the basis of the legislation before the House today. We have, however, made various modifications to the proposals in the light of the comments that we have received. In particular, we sought wherever possible to meet the requests of the friendly societies for further refinements to the framework.

Since the publication of the Green Paper there has been an extensive consultation process. We consulted interested

[Mr. John Maples]

parties on not only the draft instructions to parliamentary counsel for the preparation of the Bill but successive drafts of the Bill itself. The Bill has benefited greatly as a result, and I thank all those who took part, particularly the Friendly Societies Liaison Committee and representatives of the actuarial and accountancy professions. All their main concerns have been met, and the Bill therefore has the full endorsement of the friendly societies movement.

One of the Bill's most important provisions is to allow friendly societies to incorporate. That is an essential prerequisite for their being able to provide a wider range of financial and other services. For prudential reasons, European Community insurance legislation prohibits an institution providing long-term life or general insurance from engaging directly in other activities. It follows that such other activities must be conducted through separately managed and financed subsidiaries.

Friendly societies are currently unincorporated associations of individuals, and under the present law are effectively unable to own subsidiaries. The Bill therefore provides for societies to incorporate as a new category of friendly society, and to form and acquire subsidiaries. Although there will be no obligation—either legislative or otherwise—for existing friendly societies to incorporate, incorporation does offer advantages.

In particular, it offers societies the ability to own their assets directly rather than through trustees and to have legal personality for contractual and other purposes. We therefore hope that, even where they do not intend to take up the new powers provided by the Bill, societies will take the opportunity to incorporate. We have made special provision to preserve the character of societies with a federal structure, such as the Independent Order of Oddfellows and the Ancient Order of Foresters, if they choose to incorporate—but the decision on whether or not to incorporate will be for the members of each society.

Societies that incorporate will be able to establish subsidiaries or, together with other societies or other institutions, to establish the joint control over companies. Through those subsidiaries and jointly controlled bodies, they will be able to conduct a wide range of financial and other services. Those new activities are set out in schedule 7. They are mostly those put forward in the Green Paper, but, at the request of societies, we have added a number of additional activities.

The services that societies will be able to offer through subsidiaries include the establishment and management of unit trusts and personal equity plans; arranging for the provision of credit; carrying on long-term or general insurance business; the provision of insurance intermediary services; the administration of estates and the execution of trusts and wills; and the establishment and management of sheltered housing, residential homes for the elderly, hospitals and nursing homes. Those services can be provided not only for members of the society, but for the public at large.

All the activities listed in the Bill either relate closely to the existing businesses of friendly societies, or are natural areas into which they can diversify. However, the Bill provides for the list of activities conducted by subsidiaries and jointly-controlled bodies to be amended by secondary legislation. That means that, subject to the agreement of Parliament, additional services could be added as appropriate in the future by statutory instrument, without the need for fresh primary legislation. That flexible approach will allow the powers of friendly societies to be adapted to changing market conditions, and will ensure that their ability to compete is not unjustifiably restricted by their legislative framework.

We are conscious, however, that the basic concept of a friendly society—existing to provide a service to its members and controlled by them—should not be compromised by the new powers. We would not want a society to diversify to the extent that its new activities became disproportionate to the traditional business of the society. The Bill therefore provides safeguards in that respect. The purposes of an incorporated friendly society must include the provision of traditional friendly society services to its members, and they are set out in an updated form in schedule 2.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I have been looking at schedule 3, which deals with the procedure of incorporation. Would it be sufficient for a society's members to vote for incorporation by means of a simple majority, or will there be some higher hurdle, as there is in the case of building societies? If members do vote for incorporation, who will be the members of the society when it is incorporated? Who will be the shareholders?

Mr. Maples: There will not be shareholders. Although the society will then be an incorporated body, it will not be a Companies Act company; it will be incorporated specifically under the Bill. A friendly society will need to amend its rules to bring them into line with the requirements for incorporation that are made in the Bill. The resolutions required for such amendments will be those that are required by the friendly society's rules. I understand that, on the whole, rules can be amended by a simple majority, but I shall check that and confirm the position when I reply to the debate. It will be for the friendly society to amend its rules in accordance with its own procedures for amending rules—if that is not tautological.

There are powers to regulate the scale and nature of the activities of a society's subsidiaries if they are considerd to be unsuitable or disproportionate to the activities of the friendly society group as a whole. Societies will, as now, have the option of converting into companies if they wish to diversify further. That, I think, deals with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith): I was not talking about incorporation into a Companies Act company, but that further option is available to friendly societies now. If they find the legislation too constricting, either now or in the future, they can take such action; and, in such circumstances, they would be normal Companies Act companies with shareholders.

The second major element of the Bill is the establishment of a regulatory framework for friendly societies, in line with the best current standards. The prime responsibility for protecting the reputation of friendly societies for soundness will continue to rest with the committees of management of the societies themselves. The Bill tightens the requirements in that regard, including the requirement for at least two members of the committee of management, and the requirement that the committee be subject to re-election at regular intervals.

Clearly, however, we also need to strengthen and modernise the arrangements for the prudential supervision of societies as their business becomes less restricted, and to ensure that members of declining societies are protected appropriately. Although the problems that have arisen in relation to friendly societies in recent years have not been serious—indeed, the movement has a very good record—we must not neglect the need for their proper supervision. The supervisory system for friendly societies provided by the Bill therefore reflects and responds to the developments in regulation which have taken place elsewhere in the financial services sector.

Accordingly, under this legislation we propose to establish a friendly societies commission, to exercise and extend the functions at present carried on by the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies. The new commission will include people with suitable experience outside the public service and the supervisory staff dealing with friendly societies will be strengthened. In parallel with that, the commission will have new powers, based on a requirement for all active friendly societies to be authorised.

The main power of the supervisor will rest in the granting or revocation of authorisation to carry on insurance or other contractual business, and in the imposition of conditions on it. A society carrying on such business without authorisation will be guilty of an offence. Authorisation is, of course, the standard procedure elsewhere in the financial services sector.

The Bill also sets out criteria of prudent management, with which all friendly societies—regardless of whether they require authorisation or are closed societies not conducting new business—will have to comply. The main criteria include the maintenance of any required solvency margin and of requisite accounting records and systems of control; direction and management by sufficient fit and proper persons; and conduct of the society's business with adequate professional skills, and in relation to the insurance business, so as to meet the reasonable expectations of members. In addition, those incorporated societies with subsidiaries will be required to ensure that they supervise the activities of those subsidiaries with due care and diligence.

If the commission considers that a society is failing to comply with the criteria of prudent management or if it thinks that action is needed to protect the interests of the members of a society for other reasons, it will be able to exercise a range of prudential powers. It can forbid a society to accept new members or withdraw or impose conditions on its authorisation. In addition, there will be a general power in relation to closed societies to direct a society to take such action as the commission considers appropriate. The commission will also be able to petition for the winding up of a society on a just and equitable ground, and to order a society to transfer its engagements.

The commission will have accompanying powers to obtain from societies and their subsidiaries the information necessary for its supervisory functions and to conduct inspections and investigations into societies.

The Bill therefore provides a flexible and wide-ranging regulatory structure to protect members' interests. That was the reason why we considered it appropriate to vest these powers in a commission, including independent members, rather than one person—the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies—as at present. However, in line with building societies and banking legislation, the Bill also makes provision for an independent appeals procedure against the supervisor's decisions.

The commission's prudential powers are not the only safeguard for friendly society members. The Bill also requires all societies carrying on long-term life insurance business to appoint an actuary for the society. And all societies transacting insurance business will be required to have regular actuarial valuations of their liabilities, with checks taking place in intervening years.

In addition, new provisions relating to the preparation of the accounts of friendly societies and the duties of auditors are included in the Bill. The provisions reflect those in companies and building societies legislation. They require friendly societies to maintain proper accounting records and systems of control. Each year, the auditors of a society will have to make a report to the commission on whether the society has complied with the statutory requirements. The auditors are also empowered to furnish other information to the commission on the conduct of the activity of the society or the business of any subsidiaries.

Effective management, subject to appropriate supervision, is the best means of providing for the integrity and soundness of friendly societies. But to underpin all that the Bill makes fresh provision for investor protection. There is currently a voluntary scheme to protect friendly society members. However, although all the large societies, which account for the vast proportion of friendly society business, belong to the scheme, a number of the smaller societies have not joined it. It is accordingly desirable—as with banks, building societies, insurance companies and other financial services institutions—that there should be a statutory scheme, which is mandatory on any society which gives its members contractual rights.

Although it would have been possible to establish a statutory scheme just for friendly societies, it makes more sense to bring societies within the existing arrangements provided by the Policyholders Protection Act 1975, which covers the insurance industry. Accordingly the Bill provides for the amendment of that Act so that policyholders of friendly societies are brought within its scope on the same terms as those of insurance companies. Responsibility for the 1975 Act lies, of course, with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and it is outwith the scope of the Friendly Societies Bill to make any more general amendments to that legislation.

We are removing the responsibilities of the Registry of Friendly Societies for hearing disputes between friendly societies and their members. Very few such disputes have been referred to the registry in recent years. In future, if a dispute cannot be settled under the rules of a society, it may be referred to the courts. We consider that the role of arbitrator under the disputes provisions does not sit easily with that of being supervisor of the institution which is one of the parties involved. However, although the commission will have no formal responsibilities in this area, it will continue the registry's role of using its good offices to resolve complaints. Friendly societies will also be encouraged to join one of the existing voluntary complaints schemes which cover insurance companies such as the insurance ombudsman bureau.

We are also taking the opportunity to rationalise the other disputes functions of the chief registrar. In particular, responsibility for determining disputes between the Department for National Savings and its investors will

[Mr. Maples]

be transferred to an independent adjudicator. Although the independence and objectivity of the registry in handling these disputes has not been called into question, we have been conscious that it is rather anomalous for one of the Chancellor's Departments to determine disputes involving another.

The Bill also makes fresh provision in relation to amalgamations, transfers of engagements by and to friendly societies and their conversion into companies. As I said, a number of declining societies have ceased to take on new business. If a society is in terminal decline or if a management void appears, the interests of its members may be better served by a transfer of its engagements to another society willing to accept them than by allowing the decline to continue or winding up the society.

The Bill therefore contains measures to facilitate voluntary transfers while at the same time making provision to protect the interests of the members of the friendly society making or accepting the transfer. In particular, it introduces a conformation procedure so that the commission can be satisfied that the procedures for a transfer have been properly carried out. Where a friendly society proposes to transfer any of its insurance business to another society required to maintain a margin of solvency, the commission must be provided with an actuary's report on the ability of the receiving society to maintain the requisite solvency margin. The commission will also have the power to direct a society to transfer its engagements to another friendly society or other suitable body if it considers that the society is unable to manage these satisfactorily and that a transfer would be in the best interests of the members. A conformation procedure is also provided where societies wish to amalgamate or where a society wants to convert into a company.

The Bill is a long and technical measure. That is inevitable as it is the first major overhaul of the law relating to friendly societies in more than a century. Besides providing new powers for societies, it thoroughly modernises their legislative framework and incorporates many of the provisions that have already been enacted for companies in the Companies and Insurance Companies Acts in recent years and for building societies in the 1986 Act.

The Bill gives friendly societies important new opportunities to respond to the needs of their members and to plan for the future. Our purpose has been to provide a framework in which each society can develop in the way that it judges best, while always retaining the essential characteristics on which the reputation of friendly societies has been based. I am sure that there will still be room for societies of all sorts—large and small, national, regional and local—as long as they continue to provide the services that the public want.

The Bill should not diminish but enhance the diversity of the friendly society movement. It gives those societies with the necessary will and ability the opportunity to move into new areas and to expand their services to their members. It also provides for a regulatory framework in line with the best current standards. Friendly societies have given outstanding services to the community for more than two centuries. This legislation will enable them to continue to do so for many years to come. I commend the Bill to the House.

4.28 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): A Bill to update the outmoded and antiquated legislative framework of friendly societies is hardly likely to excite the passions of the House. It is surprising, therefore, that the Bill should have taken so long to come here.

There can seldom, if ever, have been a measure that has been so long awaited, so well trailed and so desperately needed by the group of organisations and people involved. Our regret is that it has been introduced so late in the day, at the eleventh hour. In their last moments, the Government have chosen to introduce a measure that it was open to them to introduce many months ago had they been so minded.

Indeed, as long ago as June 1989, during a debate on the Finance Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said that the Opposition would be only too willing to co-operate with the Government in identifying a time slot for such legislation and to give it a fair wind. My hon. Friend had been encouraged in saying that by the remarks of the then Economic Secretary to the Treasury during an Adjournment debate initiated—I want to give credit where credit is due—by no less a personage than the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs). He may remember it. At that time he had a slightly different role —a less distinguished role perhaps—but he was at least free to speak his mind. Now he is muted, at least on this topic.

However, on that occasion, the hon. Member for Wyre Forest moved the Adjournment debate and received due credit—his picture was in no less a journal than *The Times* of Saturday 8 April 1989. The hon. Gentleman remembers it well. It is not often that he features in *The Times* in any capacity. The headline under his picture——

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): He looked younger.

Mr. Boateng: Indeed, he did look younger—that is true. The headline was "Taken up the Cause". That was three years ago, which does not say much for the hon. Gentleman's persuasive powers. He is certainly older, but I am not sure that he is wiser. Three years later the measure has found its way to the House.

At the time, the then Economic Secretary—the current Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—said:

> "Friendly societies are an important part of our social and economic fabric."—[*Official Report*, 4 April 1989; Vol. 150, c. 170.]

He also said in the Finance Bill Committee:

> "I welcome their work and wish them to continue to operate."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 29 June 1989; c. 707.]

With such support, we might reasonably have believed that the Government would give the matter priority, but it was more than six months before they managed to arrange publication of the Green Paper entitled "Friendly Societies: A New Framework", to which the Economic Secretary referred. In view of that degree of diligence by the then Economic Secretary, it is no wonder that since he took over at the Department of Trade and Industry the Department has been renamed "The Department of Torpor and Indifference".

I hesitate to introduce a rancorous note into what should be a happy debate, as this is a non-controversial and inoffensive measure. However, for those of us who follow these matters—there are not many of us, but we are nevertheless a dedicated band of observers—it is interesting to note that the process began with the then Economic Secretary, who is now Secretary of Trade and Industry, and continued to cover no less a personage than the Patronage Secretary. The post of Economic Secretary is interesting, because although it tends to paralyse those who hold it, at least in terms of friendly society legislation it does not subsequently impede their advance up the slippery pole. Sadly, the exception to that rule is the personage who now occupies the post of Economic Secretary. I fear, for his sake, that he does not have much further to go up the slippery pole and that he will shortly slip off it altogether.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): In the hon. Gentleman's historical review, will he remind us why, when legislation on friendly societies was consolidated in 1974 and the possibility of new legislation was raised, the then Labour Government chose to do nothing? I, too, do not want to bring a note of rancour into the debate, but I must point out that friendly societies seem to have suffered under all parties in the House.

Mr. Boateng: The Government have had 13 years in which to do something about friendly society legislation and they have chosen to do absolutely nothing. I am glad that the hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) does not want to introduce a note of rancour into the proceedings. He will understand, therefore, why I do not respond directly to his point.

Mr. Tim Smith: Answer him.

Mr. Boateng: I will not be provoked by the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith). He has been trying to provoke me for years and, in my experience, the best course with him is not to be provoked. We shall come to the history of the matter in due course—and there is an awful lot of history.

It is interesting that the Prime Minister, who was then in his incarnation as Chancellor of the Exchequer, was very free with his words of encouragement to the friendly society movement. He wrote:

> "The Government hopes the proposals in this Green Paper will provide the societies with firmer footing in the modern world and secure the future of the friendly societies into the next century."

The Economic Secretary, now the Patronage Secretary, echoed his master's voice, in no less a journal than *The Daily Telegraph*, with uncanny accuracy. He used the words:

> "secure the future of the friendly society movement into the next century".

If the proposals were allowed to continue at the rate at which the Government have dealt with them, it would be well into the next century before a Bill was passed. Mercifully, that will not happen, but not because the Bill has now been published and will be given a Second Reading today. With things as they are in the current political climate and with a general election just around the corner, this is a Second Reading into oblivion.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): Is it?

Mr. Boateng: The Whip, who should be silent bearing in mind his exalted position, asks, "Is it?" It would be interesting to explore that quesiton. The Bill, which has been introduced in these quiet and uncluttered hours of the day, is perhaps being introduced in the light of circumstances about which, until the intervention of the one who should not have spoken, we knew nothing. In 72 hours' time, or sooner, we may be told that the Government will not, after all, go to the polls because to do so would interfere with the passage of the long-awaited Friendly Societies Bill. It may be the secret weapon and it may be what the nation has been waiting for as the excuse for the reason why the Prime Minister, in a state of frit, declines to announce on Wednesday, as expected, that he is to go to the polls.

Mr. Tim Smith: If the Bill is as important as the hon. Gentleman says it is, and if it is about to disappear into a black void, will he undertake that, if we have the misfortune to have a Labour Government, it will feature in their first Queen's Speech?

Mr. Boateng: The pigmentation of the void is neither here not there; I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should have introduced such a note. If the Bill were to disappear—as I fear it will—into a void, in the fullness of time, it would come out of the void under a Labour Government and find itself on the statute book in something approaching its present form.

We have no quarrel with the content of the Bill. What we are concerned about—and what the friendly societies movement is concerned about—is the time that the Bill has taken to reach this place. It is an apt comment on the Government's priorities that, during this Session, they have preferred to introduce controversial, headline-grabbing legislation, which they hope may grub up a few votes in their hour of desperation—much of which they might have done well to abandon—than to introduce a solid proposal on the friendly societies which would have made a measurable contribution to the welfare of ordinary citizens and which could be secured with the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

What a pity it is that the Government did not take that course. What we have here is yet another example of their willingness to render all assistance to the citizens in whose name they produce charters and to do everything for them that they can—except actually to deliver anything that seriously might help them. The Government have still not decided whether they really want the Bill. We understand —the Minister will have his opportunity to deny it if it is to be denied—that Treasury officials and parliamentary counsel worked weekends in January to bring the Bill, with its 126 clauses and 22 schedules, to its published state.

Mr. Maples *indicated assent.*

Mr. Boateng: The Economic Secretary nods his head in confirmation of that. Parliamentary counsel and Treasury officials are to be congratulated on having sacrificed their weekends in so noble a cause. But why, then, did the Bill lie on the shelf for most of February? Why was it not introduced earlier, to beat the dissolution? The Opposition would have done all that we possibly could to ensure that it completed its Committee stage: we would have been prepared to sit until late into the night if necessary to do that.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Is not the Bill one of the few measures in respect of which the Government will not have introduced a guillotine? They have guillotined every single piece of controversial legislation that has come

[Mr. Ian McCartney]

before the House. Every evening last week we had guillotined legislation which was controversial and which had no support from a large section of the House. In one case, legislation was guillotined through in a mere two hours. The present Bill has the support of the whole country, but the Government are not prepared to use the guillotine procedures to facilitate its passage before the calling of the general election.

Mr. Boateng: As usual, my hon. Friend speaks good sense.

Mr. Maples: I am sure that the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) will agree that, even by the standards observed by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) when he was Leader of the House, it would be unusual to guillotine a Bill before it had had its Second Reading.

Mr. Boateng *rose*——

Mr. McCartney: The Minister is being somewhat flippant, given that the Leader of the House has already told us that, in his view, it should be our policy to timetable Bills on Second Reading. That procedure could be implemented for this Bill, and the Leader of the House could announce at the end of this debate—the Second Reading will be unopposed—that a timetable will be introduced to allow it to reach the statute book.

Mr. Boateng: My hon. Friend makes a valid point which echoes a point that was made when the Leader of the House first started to impose guillotine motions. We asked why it was necessary to introduce a guillotine in relation to those measures, given that the Leader of the House had given the clearest and most unambiguous assurances that we would do all that we possibly could——

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Boateng: No. I have already given way more than I should have done—not least to the Economic Secretary, whose last intervention shows what happens when one shows a generous nature and exhibits a generous heart: one is taken advantage of by Conservative Members.

The need for the Bill is unquestioned. The Minister may recall that, back in 1987, the Friendly Societies Liaison Committee, to which he rightly paid tribute—the Opposition are happy to join him in that—argued that the friendly societies offered a unique combination of insurance business based on the principles of thrift and self-help, recognition of a responsibility to care for members going beyond contractual provision and a mutual constitution. The Opposition strongly support those qualities, especially as friendly societies are prepared to deal in smaller sums than conventional insurers and, hence, typically cater for the smaller saver.

We support the principles on which the friendly societies movement is based. We can understand why many people may feel a renewed need for the services that they offer. Undoubtedly, the societies are unlikely ever again to achieve the prominence that they occupied in the last century, but, as job security worsens and as the need for social services and welfare provision increases, it is vital that there should be vehicles to facilitate mutual support in the community and that the regulatory regime under which they operate should permit them to offer their present and potential future customers an attractive service.

That is not the case at present, and that is why the friendly societies movement has suffered a severe contraction in its numerical strength of late. There were some 8·7 million members in 1945. That number has fallen to about 3 million. Meanwhile, the number of societies has also declined—from 2,740 in 1945 to well under 500 now. More than 100 of the existing societies have ceased to take new business.

In that context, it is hardly any wonder that there has been widespread concern in the industry about the Government's record. The societies speak for themselves when they say:

> "The lack of any sense of urgency on the part of the Government is causing severe frustration."

In the aftermath of the Government's last piece of procrastination, one commentator said:

> "New legislation is not a vote catcher, nor does it serve political dogma, as do PEPS. Quite simply, the Government doesn't care about friendly societies."

That is the voice of the friendly societies movement and of the many millions who support it. To be fair, widespread concern has also been expressed in the House. A number of hon. Members present today signed an early-day motion urging the Government to bring forward the present Bill.

The position has been made much worse by the Government's fiscal policy. In examining the history of the matter, we must consider the role of the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson). He is past history. Conservative Members would either seek to forget about him and his role or to paint him as the villain of the piece in the past 13 years of Conservative misrule. They are right to paint him as a villain, but he was not alone. Conservative Members were his accomplices in the same way that they have been the accomplices of his successor. The right hon. for Blaby had a pathological loathing—I use those words advisedly with no sense of exaggeration——

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): On whose advice?

Mr. Boateng: I need no advice to come to that conclusion.

The right hon. Member for Blaby had a pathological loathing of the friendly society movement and, in 1984, he was largely responsible for the sharp drop in the number of new policies taken out with the societies. He cut the maximum tax-exempt monthly instalment from £20 to £9. What possible motive could he have had for that particular act of mean-mindedness? Every rise in the exemption limit since has had to be wrung out of the Treasury, which has been preoccupied either with creating tax shelters for the more affluent savers, who place deposits with banks or building societies, or pursuing its fantasy of popular capitalism through direct share ownership. That was one of the fetishes of the Conservative Government.

Mr. McCartney: I hope that my hon. Friend will point out that the Chancellor and his Cabinet colleagues did not create a level playing field for the friendly societies. In their privatisation of the pension industry, they made it far easier for private pension plans to operate in the market-place, but friendly societies were not allowed to offer the same range of services. That caused the loss of £6 billion from public funds. By encouraging people to come out of the state earnings-related pension scheme and into pension plans operated in the private sector, the Government have handed over £6 billion of public assets. In their attempt to privatise pensions they have undermined the capability of the friendly societies to offer a package of arrangements to potential pensioners.

Mr. Boateng: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point, and he is right. Conservative Members have not hesitated to tip the level playing field, when it suits the vested interests that they represent.

The result of their attitude and of the malice of the right hon. Member for Blaby towards the friendly society movement was to create a strange anomaly. The societies are at a considerable disadvantage when their treatment is compared to that of the building societies and the banks. After all, what is a £200 tax exemption limit on a friendly society policy, if it is compared with £3,000 on a tax-exempt special savings account, or £6,000 on a personal equity plan—£9,000 if single company PEPs are included? Tax exemptions for friendly societies are as nothing when compared to those offered to the building societies and the banks.

The squeeze of the friendly societies has occurred against the background of the destabilisation of the financial services market and as a result of Government policy on deregulation. In the Green Paper on friendly societies the Prime Minister said:

> "The traditional values on which the friendly societies are based may seem to some people to be out of step with the current highly competitive financial services market."

The friendly societies are indeed out of step and long may they remain so. Their traditions run deeper than the uncontrolled competition of the 1980s and those traditions should be highly valued in the light of the problems which deregulation has caused.

I wonder whether, when the Prime Minister referred to the values of the friendly societies as being

> "to some people . . . out of step with the current highly competitive financial services market",

he was referring to a particular legislative restriction on friendly societies the removal of which would be welcomed by many hon. Members from all sides. I refer to friendly societies' inability to issue life policies to couples "living in sin". That is a Victorian restraint on friendly societies, which clearly has no place in the light of modern thinking.

Mrs. Golding: And modern practice.

Mr. Boateng: Yes, and modern practice.

I cannot help reflecting on what are, perhaps, the Prime Minister's ill-judged remarks in relation to the rake's progress and the issue of borrowing.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): They were reported in *The Daily Telegraph* on 21 February.

Mr. Boateng: That is the vehicle in which he shared his thoughts. His language was considerably more colourful than his words on any other subject that he cares to discuss. He may regret the use of the term rake's progress, because that is what we witnessed in the 1980s with the excesses that characterised that period.

To the ordinary man or woman, his or her most important assets are likely to be the home, a pension and perhaps a life assurance policy. In all those cases, he or she will depend on the integrity of financial institutions and the soundness of the regulatory regime under which they operate. That is why we want to reflect upon the importance of the Bill and to examine it in more detail. If we consider the regulatory regime of the life assurance companies, many are competitors of the friendly societies. All too often, the life assurance companies are lax in terms of the methods of protection and the practices they adopt on the sale of life assurance policies. There has been grotesque over-selling. A Securities and Investments Board investigation into determinations published last year said that, on average, more than 30 per cent. of the long-term plans sold by the industry were terminated within two years. The situation is even worse if the sales made through tied agents are considered in isolation because the number of unit-linked insurance policies terminated within two years reaches an astonishing 45 per cent.

Mr. McCartney: I am a member of the Select Committee on Social Security and we have, today, finished our inquiry into pension funds. There is overwhelming evidence of front loading to the detriment of the purchaser of the policy. The industry refused to give the Committee the information that passes between the companies on the payments and commissions paid out in the first three years of a policy. It is a complete fiddle by the industry and those who are most affected are those who purchase a policy. Will my hon. Friend give a commitment that the Labour Government will seriously consider examining the way in which companies front load policies to the detriment of their purchasers.

Mr. Boateng: I assure my hon. Friend clearly and unequivocally that we shall look at that matter. A commitment to consider it seriously is not to be taken lightly. The difference between the Labour and Conservative parties on that issue is that we shall have an opportunity to do so, and the Minister should take that into account.

Mr. McCartney: I am concerned about the flippant manner with which the Minister deals with the issue. Millions of pounds worth of assets are involved, paid for by people who expect a deal out of those companies. The Minister flippantly implies that he sees no problems, whereas a Select Committee has just reported to the House that serious problems exist. We expect a better response than that from the Minister.

Mr. Boateng: We look forward to the Minister's response on that point when he sums up.

Insurance companies are still encouraged to bombard the public with unsolicited mail and to use fat commissions to secure tied agents.

Mr. Michael Morris: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Boateng: The hon. Gentleman has no need to make false points of order. I would have given way to him.

Mr. Morris: The hon. Gentleman declined to give way to me earlier.

Are the marketing practices of life assurance companies within the compass of the Bill? I understood that the Bill related to friendly societies, which are distinct from life assurance companies.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The Second Reading of a Bill of this nature is very wide. The

[Madam Deputy Speaker]

hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) is in order in making that point, but he should now return to dealing with the Bill.

Mr. Boateng: I am only too anxious to do so. I wish to draw a comparison between the Bill and the regulatory mechanisms that it contains and the current practices of life assurance companies and am compelled to point out the fat commissions that are used to secure tied agents such as banks and building societies, whose customers might reasonably expect to receive objective advice on matters such as life assurance.

No wonder that, as a result, the leader of the *Financial Times* of 24 January stated that the

> "quality of the product has never been as low as now, and the power of a well-organised sales force never as high."

Nor is the customer told the cost. Only last month, from figures submitted to the Department of Trade and Industry by the life assurance companies but never before published, were we able to identify the true price tag attached to their products. The cost of selling a policy in 1990 typically amounted to the whole of the first year's premium payments, but it could be much more. In one case it amounted to more than 250 per cent. of the first year's premiums, which is precisely the point that is made by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield——

Mr. McCartney: Makerfield.

Mr. Boateng: The brief exchange with my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) gives me a distinct sense of deja vu. It shows how long it is since we have had the pleasure of contributing together to such a debate. I have learnt a lesson at my hon. Friend's hand once again.

The chief executive of the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation, Kit Jebens, said at the time—he was right—that

> "On policies, the consumer eventually pays the acquisition cost, sometimes indirectly."

It may therefore take a policy holder seven to 10 years on average just to get back the premiums that he or she has paid. Meanwhile, according to LAUTRO's figures, the sales agent receives on average £570 for a typical sale, such as a mortgage-related endowment policy with premiums of £50 a month. In a working year of 48 weeks, therefore, he has to make only a couple of sales a week to earn a salary of well in excess of £50,000 per annum. Yet nothing in the law obliges a life assurance company to reveal the cost of the product to the customer at the point of sale.

However, the Securities and Investments Board's review, to be published later this week, is simply a commitment to reveal an industry average, and even that will be expressed not in pounds sterling but as a reduction of percentage return over the life of a policy, if it runs to maturity. The practices of life assurance companies bear heavily on small savers. They show why a healthy friendly society movement based on self-help, mutuality and a sense of responsibility towards its members over and above its contractual obligations is so desperately needed and why we wish that the measure had been brought before the House earlier.

My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield raised a second matter relating to pension funds and their regulation. *[Interruption.]* I hear the Economic Secretary moaning and groaning about the time that consideration of this matter has taken. That is a bit rich considering the time that the Government have taken to bring the matter before the House. We shall take as long as we think necessary to consider the matter and no amount of harassment, muttering or fulminating by Conservative Members, who should be silent but who are incapable of being so, will change the time that we take to deal with this important issue.

Despite warnings 10 years or more ago from the Wilson committee reviewing the functioning of financial markets and the Gower report into investor protection and the Occupational Pensions Board in 1982, the Government have done nothing to protect savings made through pension schemes from their hopelessly inadequate basis in trust law.

The all-party Social Security Committee, reporting today on the operation of pension funds, says that the fact that there have not been scandals of an equal dimension to that perpetrated on Maxwell-owned pension funds owes more to the decency of employers and the integrity of trustees than it does to trust law. The fact that those matters have come to light calls attention to the undue reliance on the decency of employers and the integrity of trustees. That decency and integrity have been a greater protection than existing trust law. When that decency and integrity break down, the consequences are grave, as they have been for those who put their trust in the Mirror Group pension fund.

Mr. Maples: The hon. Gentleman mentions the Select Committee's report published today and points out the dangers and inadequacies of trust legislation. Does the Select Committee come up with examples other than that of a socialist newspaper proprietor—a long-term supporter of the Labour party and ex-Labour Member of Parliament—robbing his pensioners of £400 million or £500 million?

Mr. Boateng: The Economic Secretary, even in his hour of need—we understand the problem that he faces in his constituency, although we do not sympathise with him—should not stoop so low as to suggest that the political philosophy espoused by the late proprietor of Mirror Group Newspapers had anything to do with his dishonesty. To suggest that there is a link between the two—bearing in mind the current funders of the Conservative party, such as Asil Nadir and the clutch of Greek and Hong Kong entrepreneurs to whom the Conservative party has been obliged to go to shore up its depleted electoral funds—is a bit rich.

Mr. McCartney: The Minister—*[Interruption.]* Protect me from these hordes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman needs little protection from me.

Mr. McCartney: The Minister asked for other examples from the report—I can give him one. The Government sold Mr. Maxwell the privatised helicopter section of British Airways. Pensioners in that industry now face the loss of all their pensions——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We are now straying some way from the Bill.

Mr. Boateng: The recommendations of that report should certainly be taken seriously——

Mr. McCartney: They were unanimous.

Mr. Boateng: Indeed they were.

On the role of the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation, the only part of the regulatory regime to have been significantly modified by the Government, the report has this to say:

> "The way IMRO has gone about carrying out its duties suggests to the Committee that this aspect of the system of self-regulation is—when the chips are down—little short of a tragicomedy. What IMRO appeared to be telling the Committee was that their part of the self-regulatory system works well providing all the participants are honest. In other words, the system works in those circumstances where there is little need for a regulatory system at all."

So the regulatory regime provides no protection for pension scheme members, and does not protect the manner in which assets are managed. Now that the public are beginning to appreciate how exposed their pension rights are to malpractice, the matter is giving rise to great concern throughout the country.

The consequences of deregulation are becoming all too clear in the context of a third matter, and here, too, the friendly societies movement shows the way. I refer to housing and owner occupancy. The Government want us to believe that this is one of their great triumphs, although that claim rings hollow now, with more than 150,000 households six months or more in arrears with their mortgages and with 80,000 homes repossessed last year. It is interesting to note that in 1980 fewer than 4,000 homes were repossessed—in the immediate aftermath of a Labour Government—yet after 12 years of Conservative rule, 80,000 are repossessed.

I draw the attention of the Minister to the plight of up to 100,000 pensioner households who owned their homes outright until they fell foul of unscrupulous financial advisers. The advisers who sold them investment bond-related home income plans, aided and abetted by the building societies, robbed these pensioners just as surely as if they had backed a van up their drives and removed all the furnishings and fittings of their homes. I hope that, even at this late stage of a Parliament, Treasury Ministers will take the plight of these people seriously.

The Government's only response so far has been to set up committees of regulators. The victims and the House are entitled to know from the Minister tonight whether he and his Treasury colleagues will do more. When will he put some political weight behind the victims' search for restitution? When will he make it his business to ensure that building societies do not repossess the homes of persons suffering from this fraud, at least until each case has been reviewed by a committee of regulators? Will he make it clear to the Building Societies Association that building societies are obliged to take account of the ability to repay of the people to whom they lend? This is a growing scandal and something must be done about it. Hitherto, there has been too much to-ing and fro-ing between the Treasury and the DTI about who should take responsibility for it. When will the Minister ask his DTI colleagues to do something about the sharks who sold these plans and who remain in business to this day?

The slack regulation of financial services has not only hit consumers; it has also been reflected in the employment prospects of those who work in the sector. Service sector growth was meant to be an engine room for the economy but that engine room is decidedly debilitated now——

Mr. McCartney: Knackered.

Mr. Boateng: I can understand my hon. Friend's frustration. He represents very well those of his constituents who work in the financial services sector. The many bank employees in Makerfield will be mightily relieved to know that my hon. Friend has their interests so closely at heart. The good folk of the building societies and banks of Makerfield will breathe a sigh of relief when they hear that my hon. Friend has made these remarks.

There has been a dramatic fall in business confidence throughout the sector. Not only building societies but banks and fund managers are beginning to display their lack of faith in the policies of this Government. About 37 per cent. of them are less confident than before; the negative balance is a massive 27 per cent. There is a widespread lack of consumer confidence. The uncertainty of business prospects is holding back authorisation of investment in all areas except information technology. The only bright feature is the steadiness of overseas demand, which is a tribute to the competitiveness of British financial services—hardly an argument in support of the Government's contention that our economic problems are part of a world-wide recession.

Employment in banking, finance and insurance has declined from a peak of 2·7 million in June 1990; it had fallen by 140,000 by September 1991, on the latest available figures. Under the Conservatives, 1992 can only bring more of the same. The signs are that losses will be even greater.

The clear conclusion is that no sector is safe from the recession. Previously secure jobs are being considered for the knife, and a wave of fear spreads through the country, especially in London and the south-east where jobs in the financial sector are most concentrated. For the first time, thousands of people must ask themselves whether they will still be in a job by the end of the year.

We welcome the Bill and the attention that it gives to friendly societies. Our three areas of concern may be summarised in the following way. First, the regulatory framework must be robust enough to cope with the problems of closed-down societies and possibly new ones, as well as allowing the smooth expansion of successful societies. The tax privileges accorded to friendly societies justify the new commission in closely supervising their activities. The commission should make it its business to ensure that each society operates as it should. We cannot afford the sort of laissez-faire approach which has so characterised other parts of the regulatory system. The commission must reassure itself that societies are at all times managed by people who are fit and proper to do the job. It must keep a particularly close watch on sales methods, especially as marketing is seen by many in the friendly societies movement as the key to future success.

LAUTRO rules on the training of sales staff mean that traditional methods of selling have already had to be abandoned. The societies undoubtedly face a mountainous challenge, given the head start of their competitors who built up networks of tied agencies in the 1980s. So far the friendly societies have not been seen as perpetrators of overselling or misrepresentation, but they must avoid any future temptation to cut corners.

Secondly, there must be suitably high barriers to demutualisation. Of course there are advantages in limited company status which gives access to outside capital. However, many other savings vehicles can fulfil that need. Only friendly societies recognise implicitly in their constitution that security for members cannot always be

[Mr. Boateng]

achieved by pursuing profit maximisation. Mutual status permits social, philanthropic and welfare activities to be pursued as well. The pursuit of those activities is important, because they are valuable and must be preserved in the friendly societies movement. We do not want to see them lost in the marketplace. That is not popular with the Government, but it is a popular idea with the public as a whole and it has found its time. The friendly societies commission should permit mergers in the movement, in preference to take-overs by insurance companies, which is the last thing we want to see as a consequence of the Bill.

Thirdly, we require an appropriate compensation scheme because we have learnt from recent experience across the sector that sooner or later such a scheme is required. The present voluntary investor protection scheme is clearly unsatisfactory, and a move to join the policyholders' protection scheme with its more generous terms must be welcomed. It must be kept under review to ensure that it meets the needs of friendly society customers, even those whose savings are relatively small.

Legislation on friendly societies dates back to before the 19th century, and it was in 1793 that the movement was truly born. The movement dates back to Roman times and must be allowed to continue to prosper well into and beyond the 21st century.

The first friendly society in Roman times was known as the Hornblower society, a fact which will not have escaped the Economic Secretary to the Treasury. It was established by soldiers to provide for funeral expenses. We are about to witness the Government's funeral, mercifully the end of an era, and I suspect and hope that it will be the end of the Economic Secretary's career. No doubt he is a perfectly reasonable person.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: The hon. Gentleman is not a disinterested party.

Mr. Boateng: I am disinterested in the sense that I have no particular—I am not quite able to bring myself to say what I was about to say, but, while we are on the subject of Roman Britain, may I say that I have no specific or personal animus against the Economic Secretary. I regret that he is on that side of the House and the sooner that many Conservative Members are translated to the Opposition Benches or are out of the House altogether, the happier we shall all be and the more certain will be the future of friendly societies.

5.24 pm

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): I shall be brief. I support the Bill. Since I entered the House in February 1974, I have watched what has been happening to friendly societies. I certainly recognise that nothing moves swiftly in the House on any front.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) because, in the past couple of years, a great deal of time, patience and care have gone into the Green Paper. I pay tribute to the Economic Secretary who did so much of the groundwork in preparing the Bill. The size of the Bill is a credit to all those who were involved. A great deal of preparatory work by hon. Members from all parties and by the steering committee has gone into its production. I am no expert in financial law, but it seems to me that, unlike many Bills, amendments to this one would be superfluous. I wish it a fair passage.

Society is changing. All hon. Members appreciate the role of preventive medicine and, in terms of social welfare, the role of the friendly society is to provide preventive medicine. The success of the societies is based on mutuality, the involvement of members and the societies' personal involvement with their members in terms of social and welfare need. That applies especially to death benefits, sickness and accident insurance.

The friendly societies add a much-needed dimension to our society. As we approach the general election, it is important to give a common message to the British people, which is that there is a future role for friendly societies. I hope and pray that the Bill will be given the green light by all hon. Members.

5.26 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I shall be brief, mainly because my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) in his excellent speech spoke for me as well, so I do not want to repeat what he has said. Like the hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) but probably for different historical reasons, I am a firm supporter of the Bill. It is a tragedy that it will be stillborn because we shall run out of time. From the wide expanse of the Back Benches, I should like to pose a question to Front-Bench spokesmen. Irrespective of the result of the general election, will they make a commitment to reintroduce the Bill at the earliest opportunity?

Mr. Boateng: Hear, hear.

Mr. McCartney: The friendly societies have spent eight years campaigning for the Bill and I hope that we shall not have to wait another eight years for its proposals to reappear. If we are serious about the development and promotion of the friendly society movement, and are committed to its long-term future, we should not be prepared to wait another eight years for legislation on its relationship to other financial institutions. Warm words of support for friendly societies in the House and in the marketplace are not enough because, as a result of inactivity, friendly societies have been undermined. There must not be further diminution of their activities, to the point where they could be confined to the dustbin of history.

I come from a mining community, and I am proud of it. I was brought up in that community which lived on five basic principles. They were: the church, the miners' welfare hall, the National Union of Mineworkers—before that the federation of mineworkers—the co-op and the friendly society. I do not put them in any particular order, but they formed the bedrock of the mining community into which I was born. My grandfather worked in it and my grandmother raised a family there, as did my parents. Therefore, friendly societies, and the concepts and principles of them, were an essential part of mining communities.

I may represent a mining community in England rather than a mining community in Scotland, but those concepts are as relevant today as they were then. The priorities may be different because of the social changes brought about by campaigning—for example, the creation of the national health service—but, as the hon. Member for

Northampton, South realises, friendly societies were set up to provide benefits in mining communities, such as sickness and accident benefits. Those who control the mining industry had no real interest in the protection and maintenance of the health and welfare of those in the mining communities.

My constituency is suffering not just from the closures in the mining industry but from structural unemployment and structural poverty. Therefore, I shall base my remarks on clause 10 and I hope that the Minister will comment on this important clause. I shall deal with friendly societies as credit unions. Those of us who represent, on both sides of the House, both small and large pockets of poverty realise that those who live in them are at risk from loan sharks and the activities of those who prey on people with low incomes or no incomes, or people who, because of the circumstances in which they find themselves, are unable to secure loans from recognised financial institutions. They rely on people, either within the community or outside it, who prey on them—loan sharks.

In my community, we have had serious difficulties with loan sharks. Three years ago, with a grant from the Department of the Environment, we developed a network of credit unions throughout the borough. Recently, the Department recognised it as one of the most successful stories of a self-help group involved in the community, handling its debt crises, evolving alternative ways to deal with debt and enabling people to save and to take out loans without the consequences that come about when racketeers prey on people desperate for additional financial resources.

Clause 10 is a general clause. I hope that the Minister will tell us whether friendly societies will be able to maintain and develop in communities such as those that I have described the credit unions and the work that they do. Credit unions are the one way, in areas where there is desperate poverty, to prevent people falling into the debt trap or not being able to save because they have such a small income. When breakdown takes place, criminals move in. Not only are extortionate rates of interest charged but physical violence and intimidation are used on those individuals unfortunate enough to get into the clutches of loan sharks.

Recently in my constituency a loan shark was taking from my constituents income support books and, in the case of those who were chronically sick and disabled, attendance allowance books. He was keeping them and cashing them until the loan had been paid off. He is now being sought by the police and the Department of Social Security on fraud charges, so I shall not name him, but that is an example of what can and does take place when poor people do not have an effective way to approach financial institutions to obtain financial advice and help, and loans and small saving schemes. Therefore, credit unions are a vital part of the development of the role of friendly societies. I would like the Minister to give a commitment that clause 10 is about developing a range of services, including, at a local level, activities such as credit unions.

I also ask the Minister to look into the historical system of bereavement benefits in mining communities. Because of the major changes in the past three decades, with the splitting up of mining communities and diversification, many friendly societies are run by an aging population with a small number of beneficiaries, spread not only throughout the coalfield in which they joined the scheme but throughout Britain. In my area, there have been difficulties under current legislation. I do not say this to criticise the friendly society registrar—it is a complication of the rules which means that it is difficult to wind up these small and dying funds and to disburse what is left of them to those who still remain members of them.

Irrespective of the passage of the Bill, will the Minister look at this issue? I am prepared to provide the Government with additional information about this problem in the mining communities. Sometimes bereavement schemes are 50, 60 or even 70 years old and the people running them are elderly pensioners with no resources, and they have great problems in administration. Because of the rules, they also have difficulty in winding up the schemes and disbursing the small amounts of cash left in them.

It is ironic that this Bill, whose 126 clauses make it one of the largest Bills to be brought before the House during the five years that I have been here, has the unanimous support of the House. This is the only time I can remember a Bill this large having such support. Therefore, without making any party political or partisan points, I ask the Minister to ask the Leader of the House to organise discussions between both sides of the House to see whether there is some way in which the Bill can be granted a swift passage through the House. I can see no reason why not.

Irrespective of the battle that will take place in the country at the general election, the last memory of this House could be one of unity in passing a Bill that has the full support not just of the House but of the country. That would be a fair epitaph to what has been one of the most turbulent parliamentary Sessions. I ask this genuinely because I am certain that the Bill could be through the House and on to the statute book within 48 hours.

5.36 pm

Mr. John Watts (Slough): The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) is to be commended at least for addressing his remarks to the substance of the Bill, in stark contrast to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng). We listened to a remarkable speech, which lasted for 55 minutes and seemed to take longer, and which included a 20 minute preamble in which he managed to make no reference to the content of the Bill. It is a tribute to his professional training as a barrister that he can speak for so long about nothing. In the remaining 35 minutes of his speech, while he took us into some interesting territory, its relevance to the contents of the Bill was, at best, minimal.

The hon. Gentleman professed not to understand the connection between the criminal activities of Mr. Maxwell and the political philosophy of the party that he supports. Let me enlighten the hon. Gentleman. It is at the centre of socialism to take money away from the people to whom it belongs and to spend it. Admittedly, it is normally done by Governments, not by individuals spending as they would wish, but none the less that is the connection between criminal activity and the underlying political philosophy.

The hon. Member for Makerfield introduced, in an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Brent, South that made his speech more interesting, the question of timetable motions. I deduced from the absence of substantial comment about the content of the Bill from the hon. Member for Brent, South that the Labour party does not oppose the Bill and does not wish to see it amended.

[Mr. John Watts]

If that is so, I am puzzled by the reference to timetable motions. If the Bill is agreed to by all parties, even if we were to hear an announcement later this week of an event that would bring this Parliament to a fairly speedy end, it might be possible still, with the good will of the business managers on both sides of the House, for the Bill to pass on to the statute book.

I noted that when the hon. Member for Makerfield asked the hon. Member for Brent, South for an undertaking that, should there be a Labour Government after the election, they would bring forward a Bill on these lines at the earliest opportunity, although the hon. Member for Brent, South sat there "hear, hearing", he did not say yes. I do not know whether he would like to take the opportunity now of clarifying whether this Bill, which he has said is important, would be regarded as a high priority. I note that the hon. Gentleman still remains silent.

Mr. Boateng: I do not understand what the mystery is all about. I can give a clear, unequivocal assurance, as I already have, that the Bill will be brought forward in substantially unchanged form as soon as parliamentary time can be found for it. We can be certain that the Bill will be dealt with more expeditiously by a Labour Government. About that there can be no doubt. What greater assurance could the House have from so humble a personage as myself?

Mr. Watts: I think that that counts as an assurance from the hon. Gentleman. I understand his reluctance to commit himself. I recall that he found himself in deep water earlier in the year over assurances about relief for those who incurred losses at Lloyd's. Against that background, I understand his reluctance to step out of line with his bosses.

The House will know that I am the parliamentary adviser to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary referred—

Mr. McCartney: What happened to the building society? Has the hon. Gentleman given it up?

Mr. Watts: The hon. Gentleman is referring to an organisation called the Kenton and Middlesex building society, which is dormant. It has never traded and therefore I have no financial interest to declare in it.

My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary referred to the consultations that have been undertaken with accountancy bodies, which have been welcomed and valued. However, there are still three concerns that need to be resolved the first of which involves systems of internal control.

My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary said that there would be a requirement that friendly societies should have adequate systems of internal control, and in general that would be welcomed by professional accountants. There is, however, a problem of scale. For a friendly society to operate a system of control as envisaged in the Bill, it would need to have at least three accounting staff involved in internal accounting procedures. The threshold at which the society would be required to meet these requirements is income or assets of only £5,000. It would clearly not be a practical proposition for a small friendly society to employ three accounting staff to operate an adequate system of internal control. Indeed, my institute doubts that even a society with a gross income of £100,000 a year would have the necessary resources to provide for that level of accounting staff, at least not without undue cost, which would be to the disbenefit of the members of the society.

My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary explained that the Bill contains provisions to enable amendment by means of delegated legislation. It may be appropriate for thresholds to be raised by making use of such powers once the Bill reaches the statute book, if there is not time for amendments to be made at an earlier stage.

Secondly, societies that carry on insurance business will be required to have a sure and fair opinion on their accounts. My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will be aware that at present there is no agreement on how a true and fair requirement for companies conducting long-term business can be determined. As this is a problem for the life assurance industry generally, it will be a problem also for friendly societies conducting such business until such time as these matters are resolved. It seems likely that they will have to be resolved before the European Community's insurance accounts directive is implemented.

Thirdly, it seems that the definition of subsidiary in the Bill differs from that which is used in the Companies Act. There seems to be no good reason why the wheel should be reinvented. Why is there a different definition of subsidiary in this Bill from that which has been used in Companies Acts or in building society legislation?

I shall be grateful if my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary gives further consideration to these matters. If they are taken up, I think that they will enhance the Bill. They will make it more likely that friendly societies can continue to thrive.

5.44 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I welcome the Bill. Before I say anything about it, however, I wish to comment on one or two matters raised by the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng). First, the hon. Gentleman seems to be unaware that in respect of home income plans the Securities and Investments Board has made an announcement that will make it much simpler for people to complain. Instead of there being a range of regulators to whom complaints can be made, there will be a simple channel. In other words, the process has been simplified. I am sorry if the hon. Gentleman does not know about that. As I have said, the announcement has been made. It includes a clear description of the compensation arrangements. The process has been considerably improved.

The hon. Member for Brent, South referred to home repossessions and debt. Last week, I went to St. George's house, Windsor, to speak at a conference that was taking place over two or three days, at which were represented leading banks, building societies, other financial institutions, the Bank of England and the Director General of Fair Trading, who chaired the session which I attended. Also present were many people representing borrowers and others representing advice centres. Important discussions took place, yet there was nobody representing the Labour party. The organisers made a great effort to arrange for somebody from the Labour party to speak at the conference, but it seems that no one was available to do so. That shows how much the Labour party cares about these issues. It was an important conference at which we were able to discuss the measures that the Government have taken to help those who have had problems with home repossession.

The hon. Member for Brent, South complained that the Government had delayed introducing the Bill. That is why I asked him to give a clear undertaking that the Bill would be reintroduced quickly if we had the misfortune to have a Labour Government. He has given no such undertaking. Instead, he has used the standard form of words about parliamentary time permitting.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that in 1973 a companies Bill before the House fell because of a general election. One of the Bill's key provisions was designed to make insider trading a criminal offence. For five years the then Labour Government did nothing about it. We had to wait for a Conservative Government to reintroduce the measure. It did so and insider trading was made a criminal offence.

Indeed, that Labour Government did nothing to improve things in the City. There was the short Companies Act 1976, which related solely to the books and accounts of companies. There was nothing else. Since then there has been a series of companies Acts, which have implemented European Community directives. We have had the Building Societies Act 1986, the Banking Act 1987, and the Financial Services Act 1986. A range of measures has improved regulation in the City.

In my view, there are now only two important omissions, of which the Bill is one. It will fill a gap. I recognise that there is a need for it and that is why I welcome its introduction. Pensions legislation is another gap. The hon. Member for Brent, South should recognise that my view was not widely held.

I have always believed trust law to be inadequate to monitor pensions. The hon. Gentleman referred to the Wilson Committee and the various reports of the Occupational Pensions Board. If he reads the OPB report of as late as 1988, the recommendations of which formed the basis of changes to occupational pensions legislation which appeared in the Social Security Act 1988, he will find that the OPB recommended—this was only four years ago—that there was no need to change the basis of the law on which pension scheme regulation is based. Those who say now that the law is inadequate are doing so entirely with the benefit of hindsight in the light of one major scandal in which a former Labour Member—a supporter of the Labour party—ran off with pension scheme money. Although it was a major incident, it was an extremely isolated one, fortunately.

I have only one minor concern about the Bill, and that is about cost. As my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) said, some of the societies are very small. He made an important point about internal control costs and the number of staff that might be needed to implement an adequate system.

I am concerned about the cost of regulation. My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware that all friendly societies—certainly those which do investment business—are already authorised under the Financial Services Act 1986 and are paying the costs of complying with that legislation. Now, we are told that the cost of this Bill will be £1 million a year, and a further levy will be made on friendly societies to meet that cost. It is important, especially for the small societies, that there are not excessive regulatory costs, otherwise the costs will exceed the benefits to the customers of such societies.

I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that one detailed point has been put to me by the Association of British Insurers—the question of the Policyholders Protection Act 1975. If that Act is extended to friendly societies, not only are the benefits extended, but the costs. The ABI says that because of the definitions in the existing legislation large partnerships in Canada and the United States are making claims under the Act, for which insurance companies—and, if the Bill is passed, the friendly societies—will have to pay. I should be grateful for my hon. Friend's response to that particular concern.

5.51 pm

Mr. Boateng: With the leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker. This has been a good debate, in which enthusiasts and hon. Members committed to the progress of the Bill have taken part. I hope that the Economic Secretary will give a clear undertaking, along the lines that we have given, that in the event of there not being time—and I fancy that there will not—for the Bill to complete its stages in this Parliament, in the next Parliament, when the Government will be the Opposition, they will do all that they can to give the Bill, as reintroduced by a Labour Government in substantially the same form, a fair wind. If the Economic Secretary can give that assurance clearly and unequivocally tonight, I have no doubt that, at an early date, the Labour Government will find the opportunity in the parliamentary timetable, which we all seek, to get this important and long-overdue Bill on the statute book.

5.52 pm

Mr. Maples: With the leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, may I say that I am surprised that this humble and uncontroversial Bill should have given rise to 55 minutes of coloratura oratory from the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng). At first, I felt that I should sympathise with him for having such a small audience, but I remembered from previous occasions that he does not really need an audience for his speeches—he enjoys listening to them himself.

I wish quickly to deal with the points raised in the debate. The hon. Gentleman welcomed the Bill and, by and large, agreed with its provisions. We welcome that. The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) suggested that the Bill might have been guillotined. I hope that that will not prove necessary. In the unlikely event of our proceedings being foreshortened by a general election being called, this is one of the Bills that will have to be discussed between the usual channels. My understanding is that there is very little, if anything, between the parties. I hope that the usual channels will be able to ensure that the Bill becomes law.

Mr. McCartney *rose*——

Mr. Maples: The hon. Gentleman spoke for a long time and I have dealt with his point.

Mr. McCartney: There is no need for the Minister to be tetchy; we are trying to be helpful. If, last week, the Government could introduce guillotine measures a week from the election being called, why cannot they now give

[Mr. McCartney]

an assurance that they will introduce proposals to guarantee the Bill's passage through the House? That is all I am trying to say.

Mr. Maples: The hon. Gentleman invites me to repeat my joke, which was that even the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), when he was Leader of the House, did not guillotine a Bill before its Second Reading. I have no reason to suspect that such action would be necessary. There is little of controversy between us on the content of the Bill. If time permits, I am sure that we can get through the remaining stages quickly. If time does not permit, I hope that the usual channels can arrange matters so that the Bill becomes law.

The hon. Member for Brent, South criticised what he called the delay in introducing the Bill. He said that we could and should have introduced it earlier. We could not have done so. The Bill was presented to the House and printed within about two days of its drafting being completed. The final delay was just one week, when there were some points that needed clarification. The Green Paper was published in 1990 and there was an extensive period of consultation because it is a very long Bill. The result of all that consultation has been that not only the Opposition but the friendly societies are happy with the Bill. It is a long and complicated Bill which we believe is in as near a perfect form as we could get for a Bill this long. It should proceed through the House without amendment, so the delays in bringing it forward were worth while.

The hon. Gentleman also criticised us for reducing the friendly societies tax exempt limit. That begged some interesting questions. It may be another uncosted Labour party promise, but to what level should it be raised, and would that privilege also be extended to the life insurance companies? If not, and if it began to overlap their business, they would claim that friendly societies had an unfair advantage. If the hon. Gentleman considers the issue, I am sure that he will agree that the tax exempt limit must be set at about the bottom of the limit for life insurance companies if it is not to create an unfair competitive advantage for friendly societies. If it were to be much higher than that, it would cost a great deal of money. As we know, the Opposition are pretty cavalier with the way that they spend £1 billion here and £1 billion there. Perhaps £50 million or so spent on such a provision would not really matter.

The hon. Gentleman referred to home income schemes. My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) effectively answered that point. Action has been taken by the appropriate self-regulatory organisations on the marketing of home income schemes. The Building Societies Commission has tightened the capital adequacy requirements relating to mortgage lending associated with equity withdrawal and action is being taken to help those unfortunate investors—and I have some in my constituency—in the schemes. Last week, the SIB announced a one-stop complaints procedure to facilitate compensation claims, providing a free alternative to legal action and so simplifying the process for elderly investors.

One substantial building society is effectively committed to making arrangements to ensure that those investors are not subject to repossession and, whatever happens, are able to stay in their homes. If the hon. Gentleman is aware of any facts or problems that contradict what I have said, I hope that he will bring them to my attention. I shall then ensure that they are brought to the attention of those who have the power to deal with these matters.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) for welcoming the Bill. He was involved in its prehistory much longer than I have been involved with it. As he said, the friendly societies have looked forward to the Bill for a long time. We are grateful for the recognition that the Bill is in the form that the friendly societies can readily accept.

I extend the same gratitude to the hon. Member for Makerfield. What he told us about friendly societies being the bedrock of welfare in mining communities was interesting. He asked me a couple of specific questions. Clause 10 allows friendly societies to engage in social and benevolent activities. They can make grants and gifts to people but they cannot make loans. The Bill does not affect credit unions. Obviously, friendly societies cannot be deposit-takers. Credit unions are regulated by their own legislation. Friendly societies, except to the extent of making benevolent payments to members, will not be able to help in the circumstances that the hon. Gentleman described.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the few societies that are old and have few members for whom to provide bereavement benefits. Without further details, I cannot answer that point now. If he provides me with the details, I can give him the probable answers under the Bill. There is power for the commission to order the transfer of engagements from a friendly society which it feels cannot manage its own affairs properly to another friendly society. Those may be the sort of circumstances that the hon. Gentleman described. If there was a society of relatively few engagements, being run by a few elderly people who, perhaps, would prefer to have their responsibilities transferred, the commission could organise that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) raised three points. On the question of internal controls, the provisions will not necessarily require a particular number of staff, but they will require particular controls to be exerted. It certainly is not our intention to make life impossible for small friendly societies. However, it is a primary purpose and responsibility of the Government and of the Bill to ensure that the members of friendly societies are protected. A clear ingredient of all supervision of banks and building societies—and, in future, friendly societies—must be adequate systems of internal control. If societies are so small that they are not viable if they have to provide that control, they will have to transfer their engagements elsewhere. We hope very much that that will not force unnecessary changes.

We recognise the problem of arriving at a true and fair view of companies that engage in long-term insurance business, but that must be resolved in an insurance rather than a friendly society context.

Friendly society subsidiaries will be able to undertake only a limited range of activities, as set out in schedule 7. The subsidiaries of friendly societies will not themselves be able to have subsidiaries. They are in that respect different, but in other respects, and in the broader context, the Bill's provisions for subsidiaries correspond to those in the Companies Act 1989, and subsidiaries of friendly societies will often be Companies Acts companies.

I checked to ensure that I answered correctly the earlier point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for

Beaconsfield concerning the Association of British Insurers and the Policyholders Protection Act 1975. We are aware of the problem that in most circumstances that legislation extends only to individuals but that partnerships can involve large claims. That point must be resolved, but outside the context of friendly societies legislation.

My hon. Friend asked about the cost of regulation. It is a principle in other areas legislation that those who are subject to regulation pay for it. Friendly societies already pay under the 1974 Act, though they will have to pay for more extensive regulations under the Bill. We and the commission will try to ensure that the cost of regulation will not exceed the benefits. However, I believe that it is a correct principle that organisations that are members of regulatory bodies should pay for their own regulation.

I believe that I have dealt with all the points that were raised. I again commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

FRIENDLY SOCIETIES BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Friendly Societies Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

- (a) any expenses incurred by the Friendly Societies Commission established by that Act which are attributable to that Act;
- (b) any expenses incurred by the Treasury—
  - (i) for the purposes of tribunals established in pursuance of that Act to hear appeals against decisions of that Commission; or
  - (ii) for the purposes of any person appointed under that Act to determine disputes under the National Savings Banks Act 1971 or the National Debt Act 1972;
- (c) any expenses incurred by the Chief Registrar of friendly societies which are attributable to any functions of his or of the central office under the Act;

(2) any increase attributable to that Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment.—*[Mr. Maples.]*

WAYS AND MEANS

FRIENDLY SOCIETIES BILL

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Friendly Societies Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the levying of annual charges on friendly societies towards the expenses of the Friendly Societies Commission; and

(2) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Maples.]*

New Parliamentary Building

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House approves the First Report from the Accommodation and Works Committee in respect of the New Parliamentary Building (Phase 2) (HC 269-I).—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

6.2 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) is not in his place, because over the years he has promised to provide me with an orange box when I speak at the Dispatch Box so that Government Members will be able to see me. I will not answer any comments about my height, because it is the quality that counts, not the size—whether outwards or inwards.

As Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee, I support the motion on the Order Paper in the name of the Leader of the House to approve the Committee's report on the sketch plans stage of the second phase of the new parliamentary building programme. I place on record my thanks to my colleagues on that Committee and to those who served on the former New Building Sub-Committee for their valuable contributions during the inquiries, and for their hard work within what was necessarily a tight timetable.

No doubt some members of the Committee will try to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, during this debate. I refer particularly to the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), who is in his place, who served on both Committees and was a regular attender at both. He gave myself—the Chairman—and the staff in general tremendous support.

I express my appreciation and that of my colleagues for the work done on our behalf by the Clerk to the Committee, by Ken Brown, and by the architects, Michael Hopkins and John Pringle, and their staff; the officials in the Parliamentary Works Office and their secretariat; and the Property Services Agency project team.

I thank also the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), the Secretary of State for the Environment, for his personal interest in the project. I trust that that valuable support will continue and will be strengthened, with whatever influence can be brought to bear by the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), to ensure that London Underground's preparation of the site will be completed as soon as possible.

The House has waited far too long for adequate, not luxurious, accommodation to enable the members of a modern Parliament to peform their many tasks and to serve their constituents efficiently. The days when right hon. and hon. Members had to be crowded four, five, or more to a room and in Corridors such as the Cloisters must be brought to an end as soon as possible. Right hon. and hon. Members have displayed patience, bordering on despair, and eventually complete indifference to their inadequate office accommodation—although for decades they legislated to ensure that staff everywhere were protected by shops, offices, and factories legislation. If it had applied to the House, Parliament would have been compelled to act sooner.

No. 1 Parliament street, which was opened by the Prince of Wales last year, helped to ease the problem, but we are far from solving it. When I presented a report to the House on that development, right hon. and hon. Members expressed amazement that agreement on it was reached as

[Mr. Ray Powell]

long ago as 1963—28 years before its completion. That indicates clearly that not only the interest of right hon. and hon. Members but their total commitment to taking action is necessary to ensure that the latest plan is approved, and that the Committee's reasonable requests and recommendations—especially that which emphasises the need for construction to commence as soon as possible—are met.

If it had not been for the resolve since 1987 of the members of the New Building Sub-Committee, in which my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) in particular was a most active participant, No. 1 Parliament street would not yet be open. The new and exciting proposals for right hon. and hon. Members and their staff and for other services will be realised only if right hon. and hon. Members take a constant and continuing interest.

I make this personal and perhaps controversial observation about accommodation. At every general election, some right hon. and hon. Members retire voluntarily, while others are forced to do so by the electorate. Consequently, there are over the years great changes in the individual membership of the House, whereas officers and staff remain in their posts until they retire. I have a high regard for their work, and for the efforts that they make on behalf of the House, but their continuing employment means that they are better placed to ensure adequate accommodation for themselves. I have no objection to that, provided that it does not supersede the rights of right hon. and hon. Members to be treated fairly in respect of whatever office accommodation may become available.

That aspect needs to be kept under close scrutiny over the next decade, while awaiting the completion of phase 2, if right hon. and hon. Members are to receive the priority that is their right to demand—even if that is at the expense of their secretaries or researchers. Constant supervision of the space audit will be an absolute necessity.

In view of the comments made to me during the phase 2 exhibition in Westminster Hall, I believe that it is absolutely necessary to place on record that neither the former New Building Sub-Committee nor the present Accommodation and Works Committee was in any way responsible for the delay. Phase 2 could be halfway to completion had the House not received proposals from London Underground for the proposed Jubilee line. Those proposals were placed before the Committee without a whisper of prior knowledge, when London Underground had been well aware of the phase 2 development. As hon. Members will know, the initial proposals even made the bizarre suggestion that Parliament square should be turned into a building site for five years or more.

Both Committees have spent many hours attempting to resolve differences. I firmly believe that it would be unreasonable to accept further delays, and that the Committee's successors in the new Parliament should be made fully aware of the problems of delay—unless Parliament is to be deprived of a long-overdue development in the years ahead.

The main purpose of this evening's debate is to approve the sketch-plan design for the building so that we can make further progress towards its completion. The report addresses other important issues about which the House should know before reaching a decision. First, however, let me deal with the design.

Discussions on the proposal for the present phase 2 site began as long ago as 1985, and were initially based on a staged development that retained a number of the listed buildings. In 1989, however, London Underground deposited what has become the London Underground Bill on which consideration of Lords amendments has been tabled today. The disruptive effects of the proposals were greeted with dismay by the former Services Committee, but in the event they have been turned to advantage, and have resulted in the exciting design that confronts us today.

Not only did the building have to meet the demanding specifications that were laid down for its use in the initial briefing, and to complement its prestigious neighbours; it had to be founded on the box that was being excavated for the new Westminster station, and to straddle with precision the District and Circle lines. Michael Hopkins has responded marvellously to that trio of challenges, and —as the report commented—has produced

"an excellent design for a difficult, sensitive and internationally acclaimed site."

The Committee is therefore confident

"that the building will be an impressive and worthy companion for Barry's Palace of Westminster and Norman Shaw's buildings; that it will complement the skyline of Westminster; and will serve Parliament well."

That, however, is not the end of the story. Given the constraints imposed on it, the phase 2 building cannot be expected to accommodate all the needs of the House; nor does it attempt to do so. It must be seen as only one part —albeit a significant part—of a parliamentary campus that will eventually require the refurbishment of the Norman Shaw buildings and Canon row to accommodate all the reasonable needs of the House.

In the short time available for consideration of the report, I cannot go into detail about the design; it is, in any case, displayed and described more than adequately in the sketch plan report, and in the exhibition that is currently to be seen in Westminster Hall. It is worth noting, however, that the building's design has drawn encouraging comments from the planning authority—Westminster council—and from English Heritage and the Royal Fine Art Commission. The evidence given by those authorities will be published in due course.

The building also meets all the major requirements of the initial brief. It is expected to yield in excess of 200 rooms for hon. Members, in a variety of configurations, and a similar number of work places for staff. It will provide accommodation for the Committees and for overseas offices, as well as badly needed extra Committee Rooms and conference space. It will also include within its walls—and in the exciting courtyard concept—a cafeteria, a dining room and a comprehensive range of support services.

The arcade of shops and shop units that is planned for the Bridge street frontage of the phase 1 and phase 2 buildings will be under the control of the House, and can therefore be expected to provide a range of high-quality and complementary services for hon. Members and for visitors to the area. It will be for the Committee's successors to ensure that that objective is realised.

Although it is fair to say that the design has been generally acclaimed, it is also fair to say that one point of contention exists. It relates to the chimneys. Some say that they are too tall; some say that they are too short; and some say that they should not be there at all. I have certain reservations about them myself, but I know that they are intended to play an important part in the heating and cooling system.

I am somewhat reassured when I look across the river to county hall and see that that building has a large number of stone chimneys that do not offend the eye. Indeed, the whole building is pleasing, and would have made an ideal parliamentary annexe at a far lower cost—but that is another story, and I had better not embark on it now. The Committee has asked for a special presentation on the chimneys, and, if that is precluded, we shall recommend that our successors pursue the issue.

I mentioned earlier that the Committee's report addressed other issues. All those issues relate to the interrelationship between the House and London Underground in the construction of our respective projects. First, I must point out that one of the provisions of the London Underground Bill requires the House's approval of the design of the new building before the listed buildings on the site at 1 and 2 Bridge street can be demolished. Once that approval had been given and the Bill had received Royal Assent, London Underground would, in normal circumstances, be allowed to begin clearance of the site; but paragraphs 5, 45 and 60 of the Committee's report make a strong recommendation in that regard. We stated that we would not expect London Underground to proceed with demolition of the listed buildings and excavation of the site until the outstanding issues had been resolved. Of those, the most important is the date when the House can expect to get on site.

Let me explain the reason for our insistence. In the negotiations between the Committee's predecessor—which I also had the privilege of chairing—and London Underground, it was agreed that, in constructing the underground box for its new ticket hall, London Underground would incorporate the founding substructure for the phase 2 building and the decking from which the new building would rise.

In a number of paragraphs, the Committee's report reflects the anxiety that is felt about the long delays that have featured in work towards the completion of the parliamentary estate. Let me put that anxiety in context. The former New Building Sub-Committee had been considering the phase 2 design since 1985 and had published two reports on the subject before London Underground presented its proposals for Westminster station. That introduced further delays. Since then, five more reports—including the one that we are now considering—have been published, and more are to come.

Indeed, later this week the Committee will take further evidence from our architects, the Minister for Public Transport, London Underground and others on two specific issues: the vexed question of the time that will elapse before the House can gain access to the site—an issue addressed in paragraph 47 of the report—and the joint site management.

On the question of the timetable, the Services Committee's second report recommended, in early 1987, that by 1995 every hon. Member should have a room of his own if he wanted one. In its last report on phase 2 of the initial brief, the Committee looked confidently ahead to occupation of the building in the autumn of 1997. That projection was based on an assessment that access to the site would be provided between 18 and 24 months after the spring of 1992.

As hon. Members will note from our latest report, London Underground now estimates that the handover will take place 41 months after Royal Assent is given to the Bill. That will push back the earliest occupation date to the beginning of 1999. The Committee has agreed unanimously that that is unacceptable, and we have therefore commissioned experts, who have suggested that the delay should be reduced considerably. We expect London Underground not to commence work on the site until agreement has been reached on that point. That is one of the recommendations which the House is invited to approve.

The complexities of the site and the potential for conflicts of interest between the two work forces lead the Committee to support advice that the House and London Underground should seek to establish a joint management team as part of a plan to strengthen co-operation in areas of planning and construction where that would be mutually beneficial. We shall pursue that proposal this week with the Minister for Public Transport and London Underground. We, or our successors, will report further to the House in due course.

The report also highlights other areas of concern between London Underground and ourselves, which include the height at which the ground level of the building is to be set, ownership of the site, noise and vibration, ventilation shafts and access. Members will see that the Committee has given its qualified recognition of those problems and has recommended means by which solutions can be agreed. It is important that the House realises that some of the ventilation shafts will be situated within the parliamentary estate—in our own backyard, or rather in New Palace Yard and Canon row. We have satisfied ourselves that those locations are unavoidable and will not be disruptive. To ensure that they are as unobtrusive as possible, we shall monitor their development and have gained an assurance from the Royal Fine Art Commission that it will also examine the designs.

We have also made stipulations about access, noise and vibration and have received assurances, but we shall nevertheless monitor those matters. London Underground has undertaken to keep the subway and pavements open for Members who have to move between the Palace and Norman Shaw buildings.

On costs, the House will realise that the estimated all-inclusive cost is between £120 and £130 million. We have recommended that our successors are provided with detailed advice on that estimate in the near future and we are confident that they will wish to report further to the House on that subject. For that reason, it is important that the Accommodation and Works Committee and the other domestic Committees are set up as soon as possible after the House assembles in the next Parliament.

In conclusion, I am pleased to support the Committee's unanimous recommendation in our penultimate paragraph and have no hesitation in commending the sketch plan design to the House for approval. I hope that the Leader of the House will be able to give some assurance on the question of access to the site and on future finance.

6.22 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I am delighted to be able to follow the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) who, in this context, is very much an hon. Friend and who has been Chairman of the

[Mr. Patrick Cormack]

Accommodation and Works Committee since its inception and was Chairman of the New Building Sub-Committee. I have been delighted to serve on that Committee with him. I thank him for the kind things that he said and I warmly reciprocate them. He has been an extremely hard-working, indefatigable Chairman and we are all in his debt, as are hon. Members who are not present. It is a surprise to be debating this motion at this hour, as we expected the debate to be at 10 o'clock. I suspect that that is why many hon. Members who would have liked to take part are not here.

The Chairman of the Committee has outlined clearly and carefully what the report contains and has commended it unequivocally to the House. I endorse everything that he said. At the beginning of his speech he said that the House had waited too long for this building. How right he was. He also said that this building is about giving Members decent office accommodation, so that they can be of proper service to their constituents. Anyone who has served in the House for any length of time—I am approaching 22 years now—knows that the workload of a Member of Parliament has greatly increased during the past couple of years, regardless of what part of the country we represent, or of the side of the House on which we sit —*[Interruption.]*. I shall not give way to sedentary interventions or I shall make a long speech and some people do not wish me to do so.

Our workload has greatly increased. It is impossible for a Member for Parliament to give that service to his or her constituents and constituency unless given a private office where telephone calls can be made in privacy, letters can be dealt with properly and efficiently, and where the inevitable paraphernalia of the modern office can be properly stored. When I first came to the House I think that there were five photocopiers in the parliamentary precinct. Now, very few Members of Parliament do not have access to a fax machine and we find it increasingly necessary to have one in our offices. We are dealing with an increasingly sophisticated and—let us face it—demanding electorate. A great number of them write to us and they expect, and have a right to expect, a courteous and efficient service and a prompt reply. One cannot give that sort of service and fulfil the role of a Member of Parliament in the Chamber and on Committees—when you have been in the House for some time, as you must know, Madam Deputy Speaker, one finds oneself on numerous Committees—if one does not have decent office facilities.

Let no one put abroad the myth that we are engaging in a massive orgy of self-indulgence—nothing could be further from the truth. We are talking about providing adequate facilities for Members of Parliament, but providing them in a setting that befits Parliament. For the century and a half since it was built—the foundation stone for this building was laid in 1840, and it was virtually complete by 1860—this building has become a symbol throughout the world of parliamentary democracy and the decent things in democratic life. Wherever one travels abroad people talk about our clock tower. Generally they mistakenly call it Big Ben and they see it as a symbol. Throughout the war years it was a symbol of something proud, defiant and good. One only has to travel in eastern Europe today and talk to people in Czechoslovakia, Romania or parts of the former Soviet Union, as I have done, to know that when they were depressed and suppressed they looked to this building and to what it stood for—*[Interruption.]* It would be good if the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) would cease his private conversation and behaved himself.

Throughout those years this building was seen as a symbol of hope and expectation. One of the reasons for that is that the building has great architectural merit and worth. We owe it to our contemporaries and to our successors to provide in the new parliamentary building —which will be the largest building in the parliamentary precinct to be erected since Barry's Palace—a building of equal architectural distinction, as far as that is possible.

The Committee was singularly fortunate in its choice of architect. Michael Hopkins's design will lead to the erection of one of the distinguished buildings of the 20th century. Some people will say that that is not saying very much, because I suspect that the 20th century will not go down as the greatest century in the history of architecture. However, Michael Hopkins has produced a building which will fulfil our needs and requirements and which is distinguished in its own right as a piece of architecture, above all because it is a well-mannered piece of architecture. It fits in well with its surroundings. It does not seek to challenge in an aggressive or unmannerly way, as the enormous bronze and glass box proposed in the early 1970s would have challenged and oppressed. By its use of stone, brick and other traditional material the building will fit in well with its surroundings and will provide a seemly and an efficient setting.

Therefore, it is important that we approve the report because we are determined to give Parliament, our successors and this country something worthy of the most important site in London, and let no one be in two minds that it is the most important site.

The hon. Member for Ogmore referred to our discussions with English Heritage, the Royal Fine Art Commission and, not least, Westminster city council. It is right that we should discuss the design in detail with those bodies as they have all expressed certain misgivings about it. Only this morning I received a letter from Westminster city council's chairman, who says that, in this sense, Parliament is sovereign and does not need planning permission. Therefore, a greater obligation is placed on us to ensure that the design is the product of detailed, careful thought and that we take into account the points that have been made by those bodies.

The hon. Member for Ogmore referred to the chimneys, for which some refinement and reassessment is needed. However, such small points can easily be met by an architect whom Lord St. John of Fawsley described in evidence as a genius. I believe that Mr. Hopkins is well up to meeting the challenge that we have presented to him.

Most important, the chairman of Westminster city council said:

> "Westminster is anxious that the site is not left undeveloped for any length of time, and that the new building is suitable for the key location it occupies."

The Chairman of the Committee referred to our not always easy relationship with London Underground. Let us now proceed with London Underground, determined to ensure that London has not only a parliamentary building of which it can be proud but the finest underground station in the country, that they are built simultaneously, that there is no attempt by either responsible body to delay or frustrate the other, that we ensure that by the target date of 1997 passengers are alighting at a station that is the pride of the underground and that Members of Parliament are occupying a building which is worthy to sit side by side with Barry's and which gives hon. Members the facilities and services that they need if they are to serve their constituents.

6.31 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I shall be extremely brief, but as the new boy on the Committee I want to make a short speech.

No one could deny that office accommodation is needed for Members and their staff. On 3 December, when I attended my first meeting of the New Building Sub-Committee and subsequent meetings, I soon realised what frustration previous members of the Committee must have felt for many years. I accept that the bodies that were mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) should have been considered and debated, but we should not now delay any further.

Delays on the Jubilee line have been mentioned. The scheme has been delayed for two years and it is expected that it may be delayed for a further three years—in total, a five-year delay. I well recall our early meetings, at which the Chairman asked what other Parliament in the world would allow any organisation or body unnecessarily to delay or frustrate plans for parliamentary buildings. He suggested that only the mother of Parliaments would be prepared to do so.

I believe that there has been enough talking and consideration. The House should not tolerate any further delay, and that message should be made clear to London Underground and anybody else. Despite my short service on the Committee, I am satisfied that the proposal has been properly considered. People's views and interests have been taken into consideration, so I hope that the House will give the Bill a Second Reading and that we shall have the building as soon as humanly possible.

6.34 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): When subjects such as this are discussed, strong pleas are made about the urgency of the matter and the vital nature of the proposal. Yet a few days ago we were discussing a report that, essentially, proposed to cut the hours of work of Members of Parliament. We are told that this new building is essential because of the additional burden that hon. Members are facing. I gave evidence to the Select Committee on Sittings of the House and pointed out that the supervision and scrutiny of statutory instruments was not adequate. That was swept to one side by the Committee, which proposed in its report a diminution in the facilities to deal with statutory instruments.

It is said that the new building is vital as hon. Members are terribly overworked and over-burdened.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): For some time, the hon. Gentleman and I had an office in the same corridor. He will accept that for many hon. Members the question is not extra hours—I do not agree with some of the sittings motions that have been passed—but the pressure of working in an inadequate office. With the greatest respect to the hon. Gentleman—and I do respect him—he is making the wrong point. The problem is that our offices are not sufficient for the job that we have to do.

Mr. Cryer: I accept that there is a shortage of office space. The situation is far from satisfactory, but I must look askance at a proposal costed at between £120 million and £130 million to remedy that deficiency. Many people outside will think that the housing crisis that engulfs this nation should be eradicated first. Let us get rid of cardboard city and elect a Government who give money to local authorities to reduce housing waiting lists and who build houses, flats and maisonnettes built for low rents that ordinary working people can afford rather than spend £120 million or £130 million on offices for Members of Parliament. We can struggle on a little longer, despite all the inadequacies and difficulties, in the knowledge that the money will be spent on people who are facing much greater difficulties and inadequacies who do not need a carpeted, panelled, lush air-conditioned office to satisfy their needs. All they want is a roof over their heads. There are 100,000 homeless people, yet we are talking about spending £120 million or £130 million on offices. I am not happy about that.

Last July, I raised with the Leader of the House the problems experienced by some visually handicapped children from a school in Bradford whom I brought here. There were no facilities for them to have a meal in the Palace of Westminster as hon. Members can take only three people into the cafeteria. Apparently my query has been dealt with by a labyrinthine series of Committees over month after month.

Why have not proposals been made to deal with such problems, because the reality is that that wonderful group of youngsters had to eat their meal on a park bench outside St. Stephen's entrance. It takes them six hours to make a round trip. If the report made provision for such facilities in the Palace of Westminster and not in a distant outbuilding, I should support it. Since I raised the issue last July, the Leader of the House has not said that there are to be any facilities for such people in the Palace. He has not said that there is to be a conversion of, for example, one of the private Dining Rooms which the commercial lobbying organisations hire so regularly. He has done nothing. Why not convert one of those Dining Rooms to provide facilities for the disabled?

I have a solution to the office problem. It is claimed that some Members of Parliament have an increased workload. I am a full-time Member of Parliament without any outside interests. I have a large volume of correspondence, but I do not mind, as this is a good job and I enjoy it. I look forward to returning to the House after the general election. However, some hon. Members are not full-time Members of Parliament, and we know who they are because they are mentioned in the Register of Members' Interests. Those who have directorships and parliamentary adviserships cannot be here all the time. If they were, they would be shortchanging the boards from which they get money.

A simple solution which would not cost £120 million to £130 million would be for those hon. Members with full-time or part-time outside directorships or parliamentary adviserships to go down to the Cloisters and for full-time Members of Parliament who have only their parliamentary salary for income to get the offices. Why should there be two classes of Member of Parliament, one

[Mr. Cryer]

class existing on their parliamentary salaries and working full time to do a decent job for their constituents, and the other class which, as soon as it gets here, offers itself for hire? That is what it boils down to. They get as many parliamentary adviserships as they can, roll up a few directorships and double, treble and quadruple their parliamentary salaries. Let them have offices in the boardrooms where they are employed rather than call on the taxpayer for £120 million to £130 million for lush offices across the way.

Phase 2 is estimated to cost £120 million to £130 million. The report rightly states that we expect

"our successors to be provided with detailed advice on these projected costs".

I bet they should. If this is anything like the Ministry of Defence, the costs will soar. They may start at about £120 million to £130 million but they could double in about five years. We should examine the project carefully before we give it the go ahead. It is not a sufficiently high priority.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and his colleagues on the Committee were given a task that they carried out and they have brought the report to Parliament. It is not their fault that the Government have created a housing crisis. Let us solve that crisis first and put builders back to work not on this prestige project but to give people shelter, to get rid of cardboard city and to reduce local authority waiting lists. When we have done that, we can consider this prestigious project.

Yes, this is the legislative centre of the United Kingdom although some Conservative hon. Members—and one or two of my colleagues—do not object to the shift of power to Brussels. I object, and I want to keep Parliament as the centre of legislative power in the United Kingdom. However, we must bear it in mind that many initiatives are now coming from the Common Market and some members of the Government do not seem keen to stop the flow of power from this place to the Common Market.

We must get our priorities sorted out before continuing such a project with enthusiasm. I hope that the Leader of the House will agree that the priorities that I have mentioned are more important than the glass palace proposed across the road.

6.43 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): I very much welcome the opportunity to reply to this important if brief debate, and I hope that the House—with the usual exception of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer)—will give its full and unambiguous backing to the design by Michael Hopkins & Partners for phase 2. We thank the company for all the work that it has done so far on the project.

We all agree with the hon. Member for Bradford, South about the priority of housing the groups of people to which he referred but that does not cut across what we are discussing. This project is to provide the right facilities for us so that we can provide a good service to our constituents. I remind him that there are many empty council houses which he could consider as a means of solving the problem that he mentioned.

There is no doubt that the whole House owes a considerable debt of gratitude to the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and to his Committee. As Chairman of the New Building Sub-Committee and, during this Session, Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee, the hon. Gentleman has devoted an enormous amount of time and energy to ensuring—we are all in his debt—the successful completion of phase 1 of the new building programme and, more recently, the development of designs for the remainder of the Bridge street site. The design which is on display in Westminster Hall fully justifies the effort which the hon. Gentleman and his present and former Committee colleagues have put into this enterprise. It is a design for a major new public building which will stand up well to comparison with the Palace of Westminster. As my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) said, that is not just my personal view. It is a view endorsed by many independent authorities, including my right hon. and noble Friend, Lord St. John of Fawsley, the chairman of the Royal Fine Art Commission. Indeed, despite the minor reservations that are inevitable in respect of such a major project, the most remarkable feature of the Committee's inquiry has been the absence of any fundamental disagreement with the basic design concept endorsed by the Committee and incorporated in the achitects' plans. I have a minor reservation that I hesitate to express but, as it was mentioned earlier, I shall. It involves the chimneys, but it is a minor point and it can still be dealt with if others share my view.

The House is therefore grateful to the hon. Gentleman, to his Committee colleagues, to the Committee staff and to the architects. I am sure that I am not alone in looking forward with eager anticipation—indeed, all those who have spoken have done so with the exception of the hon. Member for Bradford, South—to the completion of the collegiate courtyard plan for the parliamentary estate, which will at last bring these disparate buildings together to form a single complex for the House, its Members and those who devote their working lives to Parliament.

The hon. Member for Ogmore mentioned the need to avoid further delays and I agree with him. I am sure that he will acknowledge that I could not have moved faster in asking the House to approve his Committee's report so soon after it was published. That shows where I stand, and I am sure that the House will support my view.

I am also grateful to the hon. Member for Ogmore for his remarks at the beginning of the debate about the role of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in supporting and moving forward the plans for the phase 2 building. I know that he has taken a very direct personal interest in the development of the plans, which we hope and believe will provide new buildings which will be worthy of the House and will represent all that is best in late twentieth century British architecture.

Important questions remain about how the project is to be financed, and how quickly it can be executed. As the report brings out and as the hon. Member for Ogmore said, the total estimated cost of the project at present is about £120 million or £130 million. The House will recall that, as a result of the Ibbs report, formal responsibility for the cost of all parliamentary works will pass on 1 April this year from the Department of the Environment to the House of Commons Commission. Although the Commission has in turn agreed to co-operate with the Treasury in the development of its longer-term works programme and to consult on the size of the annual estimates, it is not, and never has been, the intention of the Government to seek to interfere unduly with the House's freedom to set its own budget for works. The Government's track record in this matter is good, and I can assure the House that it is not the Government's wish to seek to impose unreasonable delays on the progress of the new building project for purely financial reasons. I very much hope the same will be true of future Governments. The basis on which such matters are resolved between the House and the Treasury was recently outlined in the Government's response to the Ibbs report.

As the hon. Member for Ogmore made clear in his opening speech, the timetable for the commencement and completion of the phase 2 project is very much dependent on the progress made by London Underground in its own work to rebuild the Westminster underground station as part of the Jubilee line project.

The hon. Member for Ogmore has already referred at some length to the problems that the Committee has identified in the area and I do not propose to add tonight to what he has said. He has said that the Committee will take further evidence on the problems later in the week from London Underground and from my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport, who has been here throughout the debate. That will cover the problems of access to which the hon. Member for Ogmore referred.

The design before the House anticipates a day when the Leader of the House will no longer have to apologise to his colleagues for the accommodation and services that are made available to them. I agree with the hon. Member for Ogmore and with my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) about the inadequacies of the accommodation and facilities in this place for many hon. Members and for their staff which have existed for too long. I am sure that I echo the sentiments of my predecessors in the job in saying that the day when we have full accommodation and services will come not a moment too soon.

Although some important questions of timing and funding remain to be resolved, I wholeheartedly commend the Committee's report to the House and express the hope, on behalf of hon. Members of all parties, that a project on these lines can be proceeded with at an early date.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House approves the First Report from the Accommodation and Works Committee in respect of the New Parliamentary Building (Phase 2) (HC 291-I).

Pensions

6.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): I beg to move,

That the draft Social Security (Class I Contributions—Contracted-out Percentage) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 27th February, be approved.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I understand that it will also be convenient to consider motion No. 6 on the Order Paper:

That the draft State Scheme Premiums (Actuarial Tables) Regulations 1992, which were laid before the House on 27th February, be approved.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has a statutory duty to review the contracted-out terms at least every five years. The Government Actuary's report and my right hon. Friend's response were laid with the statutory instruments and they reveal how technically complex the subject is. I propose to do my best to avoid burdening the House with too many technicalities, but rather to concentrate as far as possible on the broad principles. Widespread consultations took place on the contracted-out terms in 1991 following the preparation of memoranda by the Government Actuary. His formal report to the Secretary of State took into account comments that were received.

Since 1978, schemes have been able to contract out of the state earnings-related pension scheme, known as SERPS, if they guarantee to provide a pension, which is broadly equivalent to the state additional pension, known as "the guaranteed minimum pension". In return a reduction, commonly called "the rebate", is made to the national insurance contributions for contracted-out employments.

In 1988, we introduced changes which increased flexibility and choice in contracting-out arrangements for millions of people. The way was opened for money purchase schemes and personal pensions to contract out of SERPS. In addition, the changes gave greater scope for individuals to enhance their retirement provision with additional voluntary contributions.

Some 22,000 contracted-out money purchase schemes have since been established by employers and more than 6,000 salary-related pension schemes are attracting the current 2 per cent. incentive which is payable to new contracted-out schemes. In addition, 4·7 million people have taken out an appropriate personal pension. Increased choice has meant that more than 90 per cent. of the nearly 16 million members of occupational and personal pension schemes have been contracted out.

The Government Actuary reports that the cost of providing guaranteed minimum pensions has been decreasing as the average rate of accrual of guaranteed minimum pensions declines. That is because those who were in the scheme from 1978 enjoyed a faster rate of accrual than those who joined later. For the five years from April 1988 to April 1993, the rebate is set at 5·8 per cent. In the consultation paper issued last autumn, the Government Actuary indicated his initial view that the appropriate rate for 1993 to 1998 would be 4·68 per cent. Following consultation, he has concluded that the range of uncertainties caused by the European Court of Justice judgment in the Barber case concerning equal treatment in occupational pension schemes makes it more sensible for

[Miss Widdecombe]

the rebate level to be based on the costs for the first three years of the period only. He assesses that figure as 4·77 per cent. including the contingency margin in his final recommendation. My right hon. Friend has accepted both his view and his recommended figure, subject only to rounding the figure to 4·8 per cent.

As my right hon. Friend made clear in his statement to the House on the pensions rebate review on 27 February, we wish to see salary-related contracted-out schemes continuing to flourish alongside personal pension and money purchase schemes. The amount of the rebate will assist in this aim. The 4·8 per cent. rebate will be shared so that employees receive 1·8 per cent. and employers 3 per cent. That reflects the current apportionment between employees and employers.

In some circumstances, contracted-out schemes may transfer their liabilities for guaranteed minimum pensions to the state scheme. This "buying back" is achieved by paying premiums. A state scheme premium is payable when responsibility for an individual's accrued guaranteed minimum pension right is transferred from a contracted-out pension scheme to SERPS.

Actuarial tables represent the average cost of providing guaranteed minimum pensions. The cost is adjusted to allow for investment yields at the time of the buy back by a device called the market level indicator. That is to prevent schemes being in difficulty in paying the premiums if there is a fall in the market level of their investments. The recommendations made by the Government Actuary will, in most cases, reduce the level of the state scheme premium payable. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has accepted the Government Actuary's recommendations for this relatively small, sensible, adjustment.

Although it is not part of the regulations, my right hon. Friend has announced a new age-related addition from April 1993 for personal pension holders aged 30 and over which is entirely relevant to the wider context of tonight's debate. Personal pensions have proved an outstanding success and are now well established. More than 4·7 million people have chosen to save for their retirement by contracting out of SERPS in that way, taking advantage of the choice, flexibility and portability that such pensions can provide. Many of them would not have had access to an occupational pension scheme and they include many who would not previously have planned ahead for retirement in that way. We regard that as a significant contribution to creating a strong pensions structure for the twenty-first century.

The flat-rate nature of the rebate has meant that the advantages of personal pensions have been greater for younger than for older people. The latest information available shows that more than 50 per cent. of all personal pension holders are aged under 30 and more than 80 per cent. under 40.

It being Seven o'clock, and there being private business set down by direction of THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS *under Standing Order No. 16 (Time for taking private business), further proceeding stood postponed.*

London Underground Bill *(By Order)*

Lords amendments considered.

Lords amendment: In the preamble, page 2, line 21, leave out ("in addition to") and insert

("will contribute both to the").

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Thorne.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I understand that it may be for the convenience of the House to discuss all the Lords amendments together.

7 pm

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I shall try hard to stick to the narrow amendments before us, Madam Deputy Speaker. I want specifically to refer to the amendments to clause 33, but, before doing so, I would draw to the attention of the House the continuing concern that exists in the Waterloo area not just about the Bill and its repercussions but about the way in which some of the proposals have been handled by London Underground.

After the House of Commons Committee had finished considering the Jubilee line extension Bill last year, London Underground made several significant changes to the proposals for the part of the Jubilee line extension that passes through the Waterloo area. Admittedly, the changes were located within the limits of deviation, but they were significant, and people in the area are extremely angry about them. We feel that we were grossly deceived by London Underground. Three main changes were proposed. First, the tunnels were to be moved underneath many of the houses in Roupell street, with the area of settlement including much of Whittlesey street and Theed street. Secondly, a completely new large ticket hall was proposed for Waterloo road, involving the permanent loss of many shops. The bus station proposed for Tenison way was the third major change, again involving the permanent loss of shops.

We believe that, in making those changes, London Underground has been guilty of unreasonable and unacceptable behaviour. The House was deceived, and information concerning the changes was withheld from 42 petitioners until it was too late for them to petition the House. A large number of Waterloo residents thus did not have the opportunity to petition to protect their interests. There was no environmental impact assessment study of the effects of the changes before the decision was made to promote them in the other place. Finally, promises that had been made and repeated many times at public and private meetings—that the tunnels would not be located under houses in Roupell street, which are of simple construction and, therefore, vulnerable—were broken. The community could not even petition the House on the matter.

A number of other consequences arose. The London Underground (No. 2) Bill was suddenly included within the London Underground Bill when it reached the House of Lords. That happened not after we had completed our proceedings on the first Bill but in the middle of our deliberations. Insufficient warning or explanations were given and, again, there was not time to inform the petitioners. The London Underground (No. 2) Bill dealt with the new underground station in The Cut, and had serious implications—although I think that the hon.

Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) will agree that some of the problems have been dealt with satisfactorily.

I wish to make a formal complaint about the way in which people in Waterloo have been treated. That brings me to clause 33, which I consider to be of concern not only to Waterloo but to London generally. The original Bill makes it clear that there is a protection clause which does not allow work to be done or the spill site to be situated beside county hall. I remind hon. Members that that was the site that London Underground originally wished to use. It would not in any way have affected the green space of Jubilee gardens, and would have worked out a great deal less expensive, thus saving London Underground money. The London residuary body, which still controls county hall, refused to negotiate over the use of that site. Last week—more than a year after our original discussions—the *Evening Standard* carried the headline

"County Hall—Crisis Looms for Cabinet".

The future of county hall is again very much in doubt. Only when there is a change of Government will county hall be secured for public use—perhaps joint use for educational purposes by the London School of Economics and others. At the moment, however, no planning permission exists for any development at county hall. The matter is being considered by the Court of Appeal this week and, if a decision is made, it is likely to go further. Because of the seriousness of the matter, the local authority is likely to seek leave to appeal to the House of Lords.

The building has been left empty for all this time. No developer wants to buy it. Yet the Departments of the Environment and of Transport have not found a way of getting together to make arrangements that would allow the beautiful and unique open space of Jubliee gardens to be left uncluttered during the building of the tunnel. The House should be concerned about that, because we shall lose the use of Jubilee gardens for five to seven years.

Clause 33(3) prevents London Underground from using the car park even though that would be cheaper and less disruptive. Clause 33(4) gives the LRB power to extend the period during which Jubilee gardens is used as a works site beyond the four and a half years specified in the Bill. Clause 33(6) gives the LRB power to decide the extent and specification of the reinstatement of Jubilee gardens. The amendments would provide for any person to whom the LRB transfers part of Jubilee gardens—including the car park—to assume powers given to the LRB. Anyone buying land to develop the Hungerford car park on one side—which is likely to be the South Bank Board—or county hall on the other, would be in a position to extend the use of Jubilee gardens as a work site without reference to the Government or to a local planning authority.

We see what is likely to happen in four and half or five years' time. We do not know what will have happened to county hall by then, but I hope that the works resulting from the London Underground Bill will be nearly finished. However, the policing of the arrangements to put the gardens back to their original state will be left between whoever has taken over responsibility for county hall and the South Bank Board. The board has plans to develop part of its area.

If we do not stop county hall falling into the hands of a private developer I do not know what plans will be drawn up. However, it may be in the interests of the owner of the new buildings not to return Jubilee gardens to their original state. There is nothing in the Bill that would require the gardens to be returned to the state that the local authority and local people want. It may be in the interests of those who eventually control the LRB's functions to keep Jubilee gardens as a private extension to this development, if it is carried through. They could then say, "We are sorry, we do not want to put it back into public use: we want to extend the private gardens of county hall."

The amendment to clause 32 on how the gardens will be reinstated gives us no idea of who will finally take that decision. That leaves a great deal of a power in a body or in bodies which may not have the interests of local people at heart. It is ironic that, at a time when we are discussing the celebrations of the anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne, the House is taking a decision to ruin a unique stretch of open space. Such a decision could have been avoided.

I attacked London Underground for the way in which it handled the problem of Tenison way and the shops. It has admitted that those problems were handled badly and that its intervention was late. On Jubilee gardens, I must say that London Underground has bent over backwards to help. It is not London Underground's fault that the LRB has been reactionary and had its head in the sand on this and other issues, because it is an unelected and undemocratic body. On Jubilee gardens in particular, the LRB has not tried to find a solution.

London Underground has said that, even at this stage, it does not need to sign the contract for the work site where the spoil will be placed until early June. Therefore, I hope that there will be a commitment from the next Labour Government to question whether we should ruin a unique site for the sake of a little give and take. I hope that we will have such a commitment if county hall is still in public hands by the time that a Labour Government are elected and if the contract has not been signed. I hope that the Labour Government will find a solution despite the protection clause that the House of Lords was unable to remove because of the precedent which means that the House of Lords cannot remove such protection clauses agreed by the House.

I know that the Minister will say that the London boroughs will benefit from the sale of county hall. I believe that even if the price were less, because the car park site could not be used for six years, the London boroughs would accept that price. They understand the uniqueness of Jubilee gardens. I saw the fuss and furore in the House about the fact that Westminster might be threatened in some way by the passage of the Bill. Every stop was pulled out to ensure that the green at Westminster was not affected. However, the House will allow a Bill to slip through that will lead to the complete disruption of people's lives in Waterloo.

Some people in Waterloo might accept a new underground, even if it were not the one that we would have preferred, because it might bring long-term benefit. It is possible to prevent disruption and the spoiling of Jubilee gardens. The next London marathon could be the last to finish in Jubilee gardens for probably six or seven years. I fear that, because of the way that the amendment is worded, there will be little chance of Jubilee gardens returning to its present state and being used as it is now.

7.15 pm

If the LRB gets away with selling county hall to a private developer, I do not believe that that developer will ever want to negotiate to ensure that Jubilee gardens remains as an open space, available for the people of London. It is unbelievable that we have been unable to sort out this matter. We have let down not just the people of London, but those who have worked so hard over the years to preserve Jubilee gardens as metropolitan open land and who see it as a unique riverside site. We are allowing that unique site to be ruined for at least seven years, if not for ever, just when London needs to make more use of such sites and river walkways.

London Underground has told me—it is important to put it on the record—that it will not sign the contract for the spoil site until June. It has said that it would be happy to move that site nearer to county hall if it were told that that was possible, which would thus save Jubilee gardens. It is extremely unfortunate that we, as legislators, cannot find a way to allow that to happen. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) will give a commitment that the next Labour Government will do everything that they can to resolve this problem.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): My hon. Friend has made a strong case for reconsidering this matter and I am sure that she will have been heard sympathetically. Given the proposed time scale, it is our expectation that we will form the next Government soon. I am delighted to assure my hon. Friend that we will consider the issue as she suggests to see whether a way can be found to ensure that Jubilee gardens is not spoilt as my hon. Friend anticipates that it will be as a result of the amendment.

Ms. Hoey: My hon. Friend speaks for many Londoners.

I am not trying to waste time because I feel that it is necessary to consider this important issue. The amendment has not helped in any way. I appreciate that the underground line may be needed, but I am sorry that it could not have been built without causing so much disruption and havoc to the lives of the people of Waterloo and without denying Londoners their use of a unique open space at Jubilee gardens.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): In common with the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey), I shall address my remarks to the amendments. The hon. Lady and I have a joint interest because, although she represents a large part of Waterloo, I, too, represent part of it.

Clause 33 relates primarily to Waterloo and Jubilee gardens. In an earlier round of this protracted debate, I said that I am a trustee of the London Charitable Trust, which was set up to ensure that county hall stays in public ownership. That is still the trust's view and wish. The current proposals for the land around county hall, within which London Underground is obliged to work because of the land arrangements of the London residuary body, are not the most acceptable for the people of London. They are not what the people of Lambeth and Southwark, let alone those who look across the river from this side and those who use Jubilee gardens—the largest riverside open space in central London—would wish.

I, too, look forward to the day—not many weeks from now—when a majority in the House will favour London regional government based in county hall, a continuation of public ownership of county hall and protection for Jubilee gardens. If people want to read runes or tealeaves or otherwise interpret matters, they can take it from me —I suppose the phrase is, "they can take it from us"—that if we get past phase 1 of the Liberal Democrat pre-conditions for negotiation, which is an agreement on proportional representation and a fair Parliament, the negotiations that will follow about the programme for government will include county hall for London government. As the hon. Member for Vauxhall rightly said, that will be with or without the London School of Economics, which is subject to current discussions.

Three further matters in clauses 4 and 25 relate entirely to Southwark. The proposal contained in the Lords amendments to clause 4 would delete the corporation's power to carry out works and connected "conveniences", as they are so delicately called, to make and maintain a bus station in the London borough of Southwark on any part of the land shown as number 283 in the deposited plans. Provision for a bus station is part of a package deal and is the largest controversial area of the line's route, which goes around and underneath the Canada estate, close to the entrance of the Rotherhithe tunnel.

I shall not rehearse the strong arguments put before the Committee in this place and the House of Lords. Suffice it to say that the Committee here saw fit to order that a survey of Canada estate be undertaken. A betting person would bet that the House of Lords Committee would have organised work to the advantage of the tenants, but I am afraid that bets, even on odds-on favourites, do not always succeed and their lordships did not make an order along the lines requested by the tenants and residents of the Canada estate, which I supported on that Committee.

It was none the less clear that the Canada estate's foundations needed to be examined before people would feel secure with an underground line being built under the estate. I have been given an assurance that the work to examine the foundations has commenced and will be paid for by London Underground, and that the result will be publicly available. I take it as read that, if the survey of the foundations produce evidence to suggest that the foundations could not withstand the work directly under the estate, the alternative route proposed by residents, and originally by the council and me, will be adopted even if work on that part of the line has to be delayed accordingly.

A bizarre element of the debate was that it was discovered that the plans for the Canada estate, which was built in Greater London council days and transferred to the London borough of Southwark, had gone missing. So nobody knew whether the estate had raft or piled foundations. It is still a mystery. For those who live on the 22nd floor of a tower block, it is not inconsequential to know what foundations the block has and nobody would blame the tenants for wanting to know the answer. I am prepared to accept what I have been told—that it is better to carry out a survey than look for plans that may be inaccurate. That needs to be sorted out and the people on the Canada estate will not be happy until they know that their homes will be safe and secure, irrespective of the works done under the estate. We have fought and lost many battles and we may yet fight battles about the location of bus stations and cycle routes. The crucial matter is that the estate must be safe.

Money needs to be spent on the Canada estate. If the Government wish to be generous in the run-up to the general election and if Southwark cannot afford to pay for the renovation of the estate, I should be grateful if the Minister of State would send a message to the Minister for Housing and Planning, who knows about the issue, to produce the money to prepare the Canada estate. People would be extremely pleased. There may even be some Conservative votes in it, but I doubt whether they would make enough difference to change the result in Southwark in the coming election.

Two further issues relate to other buildings and sites. The amendments are minimal and I can do little other than try to prevent those amendments from going ahead. Clauses 21, 22 and 25 relate to powers in respect of buildings and roads, and clause 22 contains a list of land in schedule 7. The works consequential on the Jubilee line —the first which is an odd consequence, because it started off as a consequence of the works done at London bridge as a result of the London Underground (Safety Measures) Act 1991—include the building of the new entrance to London Bridge tube station and the work in Tooley street. They are listed in the schedule to the Bill.

In relation to the Borough high street entrance to London Bridge tube station, which is where the new ticket hall will be located, London Underground knows the position. The local community groups, the Cathedral area residents association, the North Southwark development group, the local councillors and I have been unhappy that an undertaking to consult fully about the station in a terrace of listed and significant buildings in the old Borough high street has not been in the spirit that we wished. I said that I wanted to confirm, by making the point on record today, that the design and building of the new station entrance should be the result of consultation. I am grateful to Mr. Weavin, from whom I received a letter today after a meeting on Friday. He says that he wants to call a meeting to include representatives from London Transport Property, the design management engineers and the community to discuss the matter. I agree that that is the right way forward and that the community must be involved.

The list in the schedule includes a specific site and relates back to clause 22 and the amendments. One remaining property is the subject of negotiation—Nos. 26 to 28A, Tooley street. During the whole saga, there have been a number of properties for which I have appeared to be a broker in the negotiations. It was once asserted that I might receive a meal from the new Guy's restaurant, but it was boarded up before I had a chance to receive more than a cup of coffee.

There is a restaurant in Tooley street near London bridge station called Archie's restaurant. The proprietor is a gentleman called Mr. Malik. As the negotiations were left on Friday, the implication was that London Underground would accept what is called total extinguishment—the business would close, so compensation would be paid on that basis, not on the earlier idea, which was based on the assumption that the premises would be partly affected. That is the only acceptable basis, and as long as discussions proceed on it I am satisfied that London Underground is being reasonable to this remaining contested property.

In the past hour I have had further discussions with London Underground. Those discussions have confirmed what I said about how matters stood on Friday. Nothing less than that will be acceptable and, provided that future undertakings confirm that basis, I do not want to delay the House any more. Like the Minister and others, I want the Bill to become law by the end of this Session—it now looks as if it will—so that work on the Jubilee line can start and——

7.30 pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman has had a good run; he must not start to turn this into a Second Reading debate.

Mr. Hughes: I was on my last sentence, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What has long been a neglected area of inner London in terms of public transport will soon be linked into the tube system. I look forward to that day and to work starting soon.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I will not answer the detailed points raised in this brief debate, because my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), representing London Underground, will do that if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I should like to make one or two remarks on hon. Members' speeches.

Once again, I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South for the great determination and patience with which he has conducted himself throughout this and all other stages of the Bill's progress through the House. During this long saga he has exhibited patience and courtesy, and the House owes him a debt of gratitude.

Both sides of the House look forward to the conclusion of this issue towards which we are moving, and I am pleased about that. The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) said that she believed that London Underground had sought to be helpful about Jubilee gardens. I note the commitment made by the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) to making this issue one of her policy priorities if she joins a Labour Government. I was interested to hear her commitment to reconsidering what may or may not be possible on the Jubilee gardens site in the light of what may or may not be done about county hall.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall referred to the decision to move the work site for tunnel spoil to the north end of Jubilee gardens. I appreciate the impact that that decision will have on public access to that pleasant and open space by the riverside. It is always unfortunate when enjoyment of public amenities has to be curtailed for limited periods. It is incumbent on us to ensure that there are good reasons for doing so and that there are no feasible alternatives. I am afraid that this is the position in this case. It was only to protect the vital interests of local chargepayers of London that the London residuary body successfully petitioned to have the original form of the Bill changed to move the site from the south to the north end of Jubilee gardens.

As the House will appreciate, ownership of county hall is vested in the residuary body. Under the Local Government Act 1985, that body has a clear statutory duty to dispose of county hall in such a way as to achieve the best possible return for the chargepayers of London. Its decision to petition to have the site moved was certainly not taken lightly. On the contrary, the residuary body rightly felt that it would be failing in its duty to the citizens of London had it not taken that course.

Ms. Hoey: Given that the protection provision was included, does the Minister think that it was fair or reasonable that no discussion or detailed consideration of it was permitted in the House of Lords Select Committee? It would have been easy to assess whether the LRB was right about the amount of money that it said it would lose if it allowed the site to be developed, but no one was allowed to challenge the figures in the House of Lords because of the protection provision, so we never heard the intricate details of the continually mentioned costs to the ratepayers of London. No one came up with any figures.

Mr. Freeman: Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South will comment on that. Procedures in the House of Lords are a matter for their lordships. I understand that the hon. Lady felt disadvantaged by them, but I regret that the other place is not accountable to this House, and I cannot answer satisfactorily why such discussion was not possible. I have one or two things to say, however, about Jubilee gardens which may be of relevance.

If the site had remained at the south end of the gardens immediately next to county hall, the residuary body's plans for the development of county hall—the plans on the basis of which it had been negotiating with potential purchasers—would have been largely undermined. That is because the south end of the gardens is needed for an underground car park, which would form a key and essential element of the LRB's plans for the development of the county hall complex. The LRB has put a price on the loss which a decision to move the site back to the south end would entail, in the claim put forward for compensation. In the event of that decision being adopted, the cost is put at between £50 million and £100 million. That would be a very high price for Londoners to have to pay for avoiding the use of the north end of Jubilee gardens while tunnelling work is in progress. Indeed, it is too high a price to ask them to pay for that purpose.

The hon. Lady asked what action my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment may take. That is certainly a matter for the Government, not for London Underground. The Select Committee in another place recommended that the Secretary of State for the Environment should use the powers conferred on him by the Local Government Act 1985 to direct the residuary body to agree that the work site should be moved back to the south end of the gardens. It will be clear from what I have already said that my right hon. Friend would believe that it was quite wrong to take such action. We have very clear legal advice to the effect that he would not have the power to give such a direction even if he believed it right to do so, because the powers of my right hon. Friend to give directions to the residuary body under the 1985 Act are clearly limited to directions intended to fulfil the purposes of that Act.

We are clearly advised that there is no way in which the transfer of the works site to the south end of the gardens could be regarded as fulfilling the purposes of the Act. It is, therefore, not possible for my right hon. Friend to give a direction to the residuary body on this matter without exposing himself to challenge, by way of judicial review, on the grounds that he was interfering outside his powers in action taken by the residuary body in furtherance of its statutory duty to obtain the best possible return for the chargepayers of London.

I still understand the comments by the hon. Member for Deptford about what the Opposition may consider right as to the future use of the building. She is perfectly within her rights to make such a speculative claim. I note what she said about reconsidering the south end of Jubilee gardens as a work site.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) will agree that the Government have consistently honoured their commitment to ensure that London Underground was properly funded to construct the underground stations at Southwark and Bermondsey. I am also sure that he joins me in hoping that when those plans come to fruition the two stations will benefit the people of the inner suburbs of south-east London. I know that the hon. Gentleman would be the first to advance that point.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey spoke about the Canada estate. I will leave it to my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South to deal with that point on behalf of London Underground. I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware that in fulfilling its commitment London Underground ensured that a survey of the building's foundations was carried out.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I understand that it has been agreed that a survey shall be carried out. However, the works in connection with that have not been completed, although it is hoped that they will be completed in a few weeks.

Mr. Freeman: Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South can deal with that.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey asked me to refer to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment the state of public housing at Southwark. I am sure that my right hon. Friend and the Minister for Housing and Planning are aware of the issue.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who is not in his place, spoke in an earlier debate on the Bill about the issue of Canning Town. That issue has been resolved and is not therefore the subject of an amendment. The Canning Town interchange now provides for all three lines to have a single station interchange at north London. I am pleased that London Underground, British Rail and the docklands light railway came to such an agreement for the benefit of all Londoners and especially those who live in Newham.

This may be the last opportunity to pay tribute to Russell Black, the project director of the Jubilee line. He and his team have dealt with representations from the hon. Members for Vauxhall and for Southwark and Bermondsey and other hon. Members with courtesy, efficiency and dispatch. He and his colleagues will be pleased that Royal Assent is not too far away. The Government share the view that the Lords amendments should be accepted.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I am sure that I speak for the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) when I echo the Minister's thanks for the courtesy and co-operation that we have had from all the officials. We look forward to that continuing over what may be a long time.

Ms. Hoey: I should also like to thank Russell Black, especially for his commitment, which I reiterate, that, should county hall not be owned by a developer before June, he will still be able to change the work site in order to protect Jubilee gardens.

Mr. Freeman: Accord is breaking out on all sides of the House. It overwhelms me. This may not be the last time that I am asked to speak in this Parliament on the Bill because I have agreed to appear before the Select Committee which seeks certain undertakings from London Underground and the Government about the proposed new parliamentary building in Bridge street.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): Russell Black must be blushing because of the compliments paid to him, but they are well deserved.

The Lords amendments consist of adjustments agreed with petitioners, and improvements to the drafting and presentation of the Bill, including protective clauses for affected parties. No alterations of substance were included and no amendments were made which were not acceptable to the promoters.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) is rightly concerned about the effect that the Bill would have on her constituency. Her claim that there was gross deception and that the promoters were unreasonable was unfair, because it was not possible for them to deal with the matter as a whole until the results of the design investigation had been made available. Moreover, what was proposed was within the Bill's limits. Contrary to what the hon. Lady implied, they were carried out in ample time for petition to the House of Lords Committee. Petitioners did have time and, as far as I am aware, they certainly used it.

7.45 pm

Ms. Hoey: The point I was making was that there was no opportunity for the House to consider fundamental changes that affected many extra people.

Mr. Thorne: I thank the hon. Lady for clarifying the matter. People had an opportunity to petition the House of Lords. It should be made clear that in such operations where design work is proceeding, it is important for matters to be dealt with in the normal fashion. It is not possible to close the shop immediately proposals reach this House. Work has to continue and there was adequate opportunity for petitioners to be heard.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall spoke about the line passing under some houses. That was not mentioned when the Bill was last before the House. The matter was put to the Lords Committee, which accepted that it would have little effect. The petitioners have the right to come back should the interference be such as to give rise to compensation. On the information given so far, I understand that that is unlikely to happen.

The hon. Lady spoke about the future use of county hall. The promoters must deal with the case as it exists, taking things as they are and not as they could or might be. Planning consent was obtained for the redevelopment of county hall from the Secretary of State on 5 September 1991. The proposals include the conversion of the river side buildings into a hotel, apartments and business centre, the demolition of remaining buildings in the county hall complex and their replacement with two new office buildings totalling 1 million sq ft. The proposals for the underground car park beneath Jubilee gardens is an integral part of the scheme. The borough of Lambeth appealed against the Secretary of State's decision to the High Court in January and the appeal is expected to reach the Court of Appeal later this year.

As I have said, the promoters have to deal with the matter as it exists, and that is why they would not want to expose themselves to the possibility of a substantial extra payment. It was right for LRT to take the course that it did.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey spoke about the Canada estate. I think that he said that there were no plans for that estate, which was built by the GLC. There is some uncertainty about whether the buildings have raft or pile foundations. The GLC and the borough of Southwark should have plans, because they both have a responsibility in that context. Some of the GLC schemes about which I was aware left much to be desired. On one occasion more than 2,000 doors were ordered in excess of requirements and they were promptly burnt. That was in about 1960, and I am sure that there have been other similar happenings. Those brand new doors were destroyed because of mismanagement. With that in mind, I am not surprised that the authority lost a few plans.

The issue is being properly investigated and I am told that LRT is funding the investigation into the foundations. It has had the best advice on the matter, and I believe that that advice was obtained at a high level, so there should not be any risk. Professor Burland, for London Underground, has said that the blocks are structurally sound, and that there is no risk from the railway works. He is an expert in these matters and can be relied on for good advice. Nevertheless, further investigations are continuing, but if remedial works are to be carried out, they would be the responsibility of the owner of the property, the London borough of Southwark.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I do not think that the GLC lost the plans, because it handed them over before its demise. On the hon. Gentleman's last point, I said that if there were structural defects in the foundations, there will be an issue over the liability of London Underground and the advisability of having that part of the route in exactly that alignment. That cannot only be a matter for Southwark because it relates directly to the plans. I am not asking the hon. Gentleman to accept responsibility on behalf of London Underground. I ask him only to confirm that there is a potential London Underground responsibility if that is what the foundation survey reveals. I hope that it does not, but until we see the survey, we cannot know the answer.

Mr. Thorne: The point that I was trying to make is that the construction took place in the London borough of Southwark. Therefore, as far as I am aware, that authority would also have responsibility for supervision of the work and must have had copies of the plans. It would appear that two authorities have lost their copies of the plans.

Mr. Hughes: Perhaps I should clarify the matter. The estate was built by the GLC, as I am sure that the hon. Gentleman recalls. When the GLC was wound up, the plans would have gone into the archives and we would have thought that a copy would have gone to Southwark. The borough cannot find its copy and nobody knows whether the copy is alive or dead.

Mr. Thorne: I should have thought that the London building inspectors would also have had plans, because they would have had responsibilities as well. There must also have been foundation plans to show drainage works.

[Mr. Thorne]

It is surprising that all the plans that these bodies would have had have disappeared. That is unfortunate, and shows how careless some people can be. Clearly, LRT is doing the right thing in carrying out the investigation. The question of who is responsible will be a legal matter and I am sure that that will be pursued by the appropriate legal authorities of both the London borough of Southwark and the LRB. On the basis of what they find, they will decide whose the responsibility is, and that must be the right and proper way to do it.

The hon. Gentleman said that if a certain property were acquired, it should be subject to total extinguishment compensation. I am afraid that I have no knowledge of that. I have been trying to find out the details, but have not managed to do so. If the hon. Gentleman can find addresses, I will make sure that that is investigated and that a letter is written to him on that issue. It is clear that that should be properly looked after. We cannot have people suffering unduly because they are held in limbo.

The promoters respectfully request that the Lords amendments to the Bill be agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I understand that the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) wishes to divide the House on the amendment to clause 33.

Ms. Hoey: There is probably no point, at this stage. I have made my views clear and, as the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) said, London Underground is dealing with the matter. I hope that, in about four weeks' time, the situation will be different, so I will not push the amendment to a vote.

Question put and agreed to.

Remaining Lords amendments agreed to.

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (LEWISHAM, etc.) (No. 2) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Bill read a Second time and committed.

Pensions

Postponed proceeding resumed.

7.55 pm

Miss Widdecombe: As I was saying before seven o'clock, our aim is to maintain the momentum of our personal pensions policy and we expect to see a continuing take-up among young people. However, it is important that the structure of the rebate should not act as a disincentive to those who wish to retain their personal pension throughout their working life. Perhaps it is worth pointing out that if the Labour party were ever in a position to do so, and were able to carry out its oft-stated threat that it would abolish the incentives for personal pensions, some 4·7 million putative pensioners, most of them of modest salaries up to about £9,700, and their families would undoubtedly find their pensions much reduced. That should be clearly understood.

We have announced that we would be consulting the pensions industry and other interested parties on the implications of equal treatment for the current arrangements for contracting out following the Barber judgment. Hon. and right hon. Members will recall that this judgment was given by the European Court of Justice in May 1990. The judgment held that occupational pensions are pay. In consequence, benefits from occupational schemes have to be equal as between men and women.

Consultations are under way, and it is clear that changes will be needed to the basis on which pension schemes can be contracted out of SERPS. In considering what those changes should be, we intend now to give particular consideration to the scope for moving from flat-rate rebates to rebates related to age, at least for personal pensions and possibly also for other contracted-out schemes. Decisions on how to achieve equality in state pension age, on which we issued a discussion paper in December, will also have an important bearing on the many complex and detailed issues which will need to be resolved.

The new age-related addition of 1 per cent. that will be payable from April 1993 will mean that the vast majority of current personal pension holders are likely to find that it is in their interests to maintain their personal pensions. We intend to bring forward the necessary legislation in the new Parliament.

I hope that I have demonstrated to the House how we have continued to safeguard the interests of those people who are contracted out through the rebate and the buy-back terms. Hon. Members will see, I think, not only how complex is this subject, but how these two statutory instruments fit in to the Government's overall pension policy, and I commend them to the House.

7.58 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I apologise to the Minister for my delayed appearance.

Miss Widdecombe: It is nice to see the hon. Gentleman now.

Mr. Allen: The business took me by surprise. I thought that the debate would resume at 10 o'clock. It has, of course, started rather earlier.

It is appropriate that Conservative control of social security is ending as it began, with a small, sly and squalid act of redistribution from the have nots to the haves. Over the past 13 years we have experienced one of the most massive redistribution exercises undertaken by any Government. I am sad to say that redistribution has all been in the wrong direction—to those who have relatively high incomes and, often, away from those who have quite small incomes.

The average family now has a higher tax burden than it had in 1979. Somebody earning £70,000 per year is now benefiting from income tax cuts to the tune of about £700 a week. Those on the highest incomes are enjoying enormous benefits.

We are dealing with a transparent and perhaps pitiful little bribe. From those who quibble about the little extra money that is required to assist the disabled, the unemployed, the poverty-stricken and the state pensioner, we see their final act of hypocrisy: the Government are using £175 million to sweeten personal pension holders.

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman is talking about personal pension holders in the same breath as he talks about the haves. Will he confirm that most personal pension holders are on modest incomes of, on average, about £9,700?

Mr. Allen: I am sure that that is so. I shall have to ask the Department's private office to write to the hon. Lady in four of five weeks time to confirm that.

The bribe will not work because many of those who were lured into private pension schemes are now faced with the other fruits of the economic miracle, which was trumpeted so loudly only a few weeks ago. Many of these people are now behind with their mortgage repayments. They face the possibility of their homes being repossessed. These people live perhaps in daily fear that their job may not continue to be available to them. The insecurity that is brought about by the possibility of redundancy looms over many. Perhaps they work in recession-hit businesses that stare closure in the face.

Such people may have learnt the bitter lesson of experience. There was no such thing as a free lunch and there was and is no such thing as a freebie pension. Somebody somewhere has to pay the price for these give-aways. No one on the Opposition Benches and no one in the next Labour Government is or will be opposed to private pensions. Those who wish to take out a private pension will always be free to do so. Our objection is that the state pensioner and the ordinary taxpayer subsidise private pensions from their and our pension funds. They are standing on our two feet and not their own. This measure is another straightforward transfusion from our national insurance fund to the private pension companies.

Pensioners of the future are being bled of their funds, often without their knowledge. This is largely because pensions, pension funds and the national insurance fund are extremely technical and people do not realise what will happen to their pension until the time comes when they wish to claim it.

We have heard much today elsewhere in this place about occupational pension funds and the need to close loopholes so that we can prevent another Maxwell. Compared with the £6 billion rip-off of our state pension funds by the Conservatives, Robert Maxwell was a poor, dabbling amateur. I advise the Secretary of State for Social Security not to take too many boat trips in the near future. Were he to have neglected his fiduciary duty as a councillor in this way, he would be looking at the world now from behind bars. Looser rules apply to central Government than to local government. There can be fewer clearer cases of Conservative double standards. At the same time as that £600 million is being put into private pensions, the ordinary single state pensioner finds that his or her pension is worth £17 a week less because Conservatives decided to break the link between pensions and the rise in earnings. The pension of a married couple is worth £28 a week less.

Miss Widdecombe: That does not have much to do with the rebate.

Mr. Allen: It is sad that the Minister says that from a sedentary position. She suggests that there is no great connection. It is clear from my examples that the hon. Lady and her fading Government support certain features of the pension industry but disregard the increases that state pensioners would have enjoyed had there been a Labour Government for the past 13 years instead of a Conservative Administration. As I have said, the married pensioner couple are £28 a week worse off while the loss to the single pensioner is £17 a week.

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman appears to be misleading the House. He is saying that there is a direct link between the level of the state pension and the rebate that we are giving on personal pensions. Will he confirm that the £6 billion which he quotes includes the ordinary contracted-out rebate for occupational schemes, which I take it the Labour party is not opposed to and has no plans to repeal? Does he understand that there will be a saving for the national insurance fund of about £0·2 billion a year as a result of our measures to encourage people into taking up personal pensions? If that is so and there is a saving to the fund, how can there be a direct link between the rebate and the level of the state pension?

As the hon. Gentleman is talking about levels of state pensions—this appears not to have been ruled out of order —surely the overall level of pensioners' incomes is what really matters. Those incomes have increased by 33 per cent. under this Conservative Government while under the Labour Government they increased by a miserable 3 per cent.

Mr. Allen: I am pleased that the Minister is paying due credit to the state earnings-related pension scheme, which was introduced by the Labour Government and which has done so much for pensioners' incomes. It would have done so much more had it not been tampered with by the Government. The concept of incomes for pensioners has been undermined by the way in which the Government have abused SERPS. At the same time £6 billion has been found to assist private pensions. As a member of the Public Accounts Committee, I am well aware that the National Audit Office produced a superb report that outlined the way in which the fund had been abused. The Minister will know all too well that the saving that has resulted from the failure to link pensions to the rise in earnings is now £21 billion. It is——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I have allowed the hon. Gentleman a lot of leeway, but he has gone too far now. We must return to the question of rebates.

Mr. Allen: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was merely seeking to answer the Minister's questions as posed. They were, as you say, a little wide of the mark.

[Mr. Allen]

Pensioners have been sacrificed on the altar of the free market. The free pensions market is incapable of competing with the public sector without the prop or crutch of massive subsidies. Pension holders would have deserted private pensions in droves and returned to SERPS had the Conservatives not offered this pathetic bribe. It would have been a humiliation for the Government, they having already spent billions on trying falsely to inflate the private pension sector.

In a few weeks, the dirty, derelict, partial and unequal mess which masquerades as the Conservatives' pension policy will have to be hosed down. Then we can set about rebuilding SERPS, strengthening the state pensioners' basic income, protecting occupational pensioners and ensuring a bracing draught of equal treatment for private pensions. In each area of reform the pensioner and the prospective pensioner will be the beneficiary. That is what we shall do in four or five weeks' time.

8.9 pm

Miss Widdecombe: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps I could reply to one or two points that have been spuriously raised by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen). I should like to start with a challenge, as challenges are all the fashion. Will the hon. Gentleman make it clear whether the Labour party is saying that, in the unlikely event that it forms the next Government, it will remove the 2 per cent. incentive? If so, does he accept that there is no way that it can do that other than retrospectively over the course of the year? Is he saying that it will retrospectively remove the 2 per cent. incentive? Is he also saying that it will not implement the 1 per cent. incentive? That information is very necessary so that we know exactly what to tell the 4·7 million people in those schemes whose pensions, and the size of them, will depend on these policies.

Mr. Allen: The 1 per cent. proposal is not even before the House tonight, so we can only suspect that until the primary legislation is brought in all this is merely electioneering. It is hard to abolish something that is just a pre-election promise. If there is another Conservative Government, we shall see what they introduce. On the queston of the 2 per cent., I am pleased to refer the hon. Lady to what the future Secretary of State for Social Security, my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), said in the debate two weeks ago.

Miss Widdecombe: We can take that as confirmation that the Labour party would abolish the 2 per cent. retrospectively and not implement the 1 per cent. That message should go out to 4·7 million putative pensioners on modest incomes and to their families. We shall see exactly what credence the Labour party's pensions policy has with those who matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Social Security (Class 1 Contributions—Contracted-out Percentages) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 27th February, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft State Scheme Premiums (Actuarial Tables) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 27th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

COMMONWEALTH DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

That the draft Commonwealth Development Corporation (Raising of Limits on Borrowing and Advances) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 12th February, be approved—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

That the Birmingham Heartlands Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order 1992, dated 12th February 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With the leave of the House, I shall put together the four motions on Representation of the People.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE

That the draft Representation of the People (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.

That the draft Representation of the People (Amendment) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 14th February, be approved.

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 14th February, be approved.

That the draft Representation of the People (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 21st February, be approved. —*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

SOCIAL SECURITY

That the draft Social Security (Contributions) Amendment (No. 4) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 12th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

That the draft Statutory Sick Pay (Small Employer's Relief) Amendment Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 19th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Kirklees Council

8.12 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): I wish to present a petition to the House that calls for Kirklees council to be split and a new council, based on the Huddersfield area, to be created. The petition has 8,053 signatures by people both from within my constituency and from the remainder of Huddersfield. They no longer want councillors from Batley and Dewsbury to have a say in the affairs of their area. They do not identify with Kirklees, which many of them feel is too big, too bureaucratic and too unaccountable.

The petition follows a phone-in organised last year by the local newspaper, the *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, when more than 14,000 people called for Kirklees to be split and only 400 supported the status quo.

I support the campaign to split Kirklees and I hope and believe that it will be successful. The petition states:

> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House, following consultation with the Local Government Boundary Commissioners, legislates to disband Kirklees council and create a local authority named Greater Huddersfield to incorporate Huddersfield, the Colne and Holme Valleys, Denby Dale, Kirkburton and parts of Mirfield.

To lie upon the Table.

Magistrates Courts

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

8.14 pm

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State is here to respond to what I think is an important debate about the proposed closure of magistrates courts. I am delighted also that the anxiety of the House to reach this important item of business had brought its affairs to a conclusion rather earlier than expected. I hope that that is some compensation for any inconvenience that this early debate might cause.

There is a proposal to close the Faversham magistrates court. It has a history dating back to a Royal Charter of 1361. It is a local institution, much valued by the local community, local solicitors and local justices. It is almost certainly the best value courthouse in Kent. The saving from closure would be £17,000 per annum plus, perhaps, some of the clerks' time and other incidental costs. There are no capital or repair costs as the court is in accommodation rented from the borough council. It is very fine accommodation. The court room was modernised 10 years ago and there is a holding room, a retiring room, private facilities for justices, interview rooms for solicitors and waiting rooms. The court sits most days of most weeks. It is the very embodiment of what we in England think of as local justice, coupled with occasional visits not from local people, but from well-known outsiders such as Terry Wogan, who appeared on one occasion with great publicity. It is outstandingly good value for money.

As I will explain, we have gained a six-months reprieve, and I and others intend to use that time to get the Faversham decision reversed. If we are accused of being parochial, I plead guilty, but I think that we will have co-defendants throughout the land because hundreds of local courthouses are at risk. I have the document from the Kent magistrates courts committee outlining the scale of the threat to Kent. The same threat exists for other counties and districts throughout England—all arising from the need to meet the new funding formula introduced by the Home Office.

The Kent proposals are described as measures for consideration and are designed to meet a possible deficit of £682,000 by the end of a five-year transitional period. The proposal is to close Margate and Ramsgate courts or to amalgamate them, closing one courthouse. Either Ashford or Folkestone would be closed. In Medway, Dartford and Gravesham, the benches would be amalgamated and one courthouse closed. In Canterbury, Faversham and Sittingbourne, the closure of Faversham is assumed and there is consideration of the closure of Sheerness. In Maidstone, there is consideration of the amalgamation of the benches and the closure of West Malling and Tonbridge. In west Kent, there is consideration of the closure of the Tunbridge Wells office and courthouse and the amalgamation of both benches.

Those are proposals and options and there will, of course, be much resistance. Some will undoubtedly be saved, but we should be quite clear that many will be lost and there will be a question mark against the future of all

[Mr. Roger Moate]

of them for many years to come. That is the picture in Kent, where under the formula it is a losing county by a forecast amount of £682,000.

Other counties and districts are similarly at risk. The list shows more than 30 losing areas. East Sussex loses 20 per cent. of its budget—£860,000; Bedfordshire loses £405,000; Cheshire £809,000; Cornwall £318,000; Hereford and Worcester £722,000—and I could continue. Hundreds of local courts will close unless the formula is modified. I hope that other right hon. and hon. Members will note the prospective losses in income to their counties and districts, translate them into the effect that they will have on local court houses, and make their concerns known to my right hon. Friend the Minister.

I appreciate the helpful and courteous way in which my right hon. Friend the Minister responded to the representations that I and a number of my hon. Friends representing Kent constituencies made, once the scale of the threat became clear. My right hon. Friend also set out in a written answer on 6 February the policy guidelines for the closure of magistrates courts and said that he would, within those guidelines, take a robust but sympathetic view of any closure proposals that came before him.

That answer was, as one would expect of the Home Office, skilfully worded, but I take comfort from my right hon. Friend's commitment to the principle of a quality local service for communities. I also infer a commitment even to smaller local courthouses—except where buildings are old and unsuitable, lacking facilities, and are costly to maintain or repair. I deduce also from my right hon. Friend's reply that court committees should not assume that arguments of so-called efficiency should inevitably lead to the closure of small courthouses.

A significant problem is that a proposal to close a court house will not be referred to the Minister responsible unless the local paying authority—in our case, Kent county council—decides to appeal against the decision. In the case of Faversham, I was shocked when, after a series of discussions and representations, the county council felt that it could not enter an objection.

For some historic reason that is not clear to me, the local paying authority contributes 20 per cent. to the cost of running magistrates courts. I hope that the Home Office or the Lord Chancellor's Department will seriously consider abandoning that system, particularly in the light of the reorganisation of court administration, and that which is certain to take place in local government.

I see no logical reason why we should persist with a system whereby local authorities pay 20 per cent. towards the maintenance and running of magistrates courts. If it were discontinued, we might enter into a simpler and more efficient arrangement. Meanwhile, it is even more indefensible that county councils and other paying authorities should have the right to determine whether or not there is to be an appeal.

On 1 April, responsibility for magistrates courts will be transferred from the Home Office to the Lord Chancellor's Department, when a new junior Minister will be appointed. We do not know who he or she will be. I do not wish that post upon my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, but we know for certain that the person appointed will be a Conservative Member of Parliament.

Incidentally, my remarks are addressed as much to my right hon. Friend as to the Lord Chancellor, their successors, and those working in Departments who interpret the policy and wishes of our Ministers and of the legislation.

I request that all closures should henceforth be referred to the Lord Chancellor, and that the necesary amendments to legislation should be promptly introduced after the general election. Only in that way can local views be heard. Under the present system, the question whether an appeal will be made is arbitrarily determined by the county council. If it does not choose that course—perhaps for reasonable, internal, and possibly financial reasons—local opinion, local councillors, and local justices have no right to be heard. That cannot be fair and proper.

On this occasion, I am supported only by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed), who is in his place, though I suspect that I have the support also of others of my hon. Friends who represent Kent constituencies. I do not doubt that in the coming months, as the proposal's true implications begin to be understood, we will be joined by right hon. and hon. Members representing constituencies throughout England.

The only way that we can achieve a fair hearing is if the system is changed. I am convinced that we need to re-examine the way that the new, cash-limit funding formula operates. I suspect that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends will press for that to happen. As soon as the new Ministers are known, I and my hon. Friends will seek a meeting with the Lord Chancellor to discuss the issue. Any help that my right hon. Friend the Minister can give now or then will be greatly valued.

There is no objection to cash limits. Even those who are responsible for administration reacted constructively to that concept. There has already been a healthy response to the financing arrangements, but there are objections to the use of a formula that produces wide swings in funding. What is the logic of a system that, for example, takes £680,000 from Kent and gives nearly £1 million to Avon? Is it suggested that Avon is not bringing enough prosecutions because it does not have the court facilities? I think not. Why take money from another county? It could be argued that it is inefficient, but why bestow a gift on another part of the United Kingdom simply because it is not performing its proper duties? The whole system is fundamentally flawed and ought to be reviewed.

One of the formula's main components is the number of prosecutions, but that is not something that courts can control. Magistrates cannot determine the number of prosecutions that are brought. Kent crime figures, I am sad to say, are on the increase—but for some reason the number of prosecutions brought in the county is significantly below that of our neighbours. If Kent's ratio of defendants per 1,000 population rose over the next year to equal the average for the south-east, under the formula its funding would increase significantly—but by then many of Kent's courthouses might have closed.

The Home Office accepts that the accuracy of all such data should be verified by external auditors, but surely that work should be undertaken before courthouses are closed and staff are made redundant. We want the formula examined now, before it is too late.

The argument is about the distribution of resources, not cuts. Kent's figure for 1992-93 will be nearly £7 million, or 19 per cent. higher than 1990-91. The argument is not against building modern courthouses and closing inefficient courthouses. It is a powerful argument for a more sensitive and more intelligent application of funding that helps to maintain local justice and the local magistracy wherever we possibly and sensibly can.

That judgment must take into account all costs to public funds, as was mentioned in my right hon. Friend's written answer. It must take into account also the time and expenses incurred by the general public in travelling to courthouses that might be a great distance away, and the cost to the legal aid fund of solicitors who will be required to travel to distant courts because a local facility has been lost. In Faversham's case, it is estimated that additional legal aid costs alone would probably outweigh the supposed saving achieved by closing that court.

We have gained a six-month reprieve for Faversham, thanks to the open-mindedness of the magistrates committee in responding to the many representations it has received, and to the work done by Mr. John Gorham —an ex-political opponent of mine, who is chairman of the local bench. That demonstrates that ours is an all-party effort that has no political angle. It is due also to the work of many others—but no thanks to Kent county council, whose response greatly disappointed me.

I make no bones about it. I want to use this reprieve, and the Faversham proposal, as a lever to protect our Kent network of local courts, and to change the cash-limits formula. I ask my right hon. Friend the Minister to ensure that the Lord Chancellor receives that message, and that there is a general understanding in Whitehall of the need to respond to all the Members of Parliament who are defending our system of local justice, and who will continue to do so in the coming months.

8.29 pm

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) on the temperate and moderate way in which he has raised an important subject. He has talked about Kent, but, as he has pointed out, the problem extends to other parts of the country. I also thank my right hon. Friend the Minister for the courtesy and helpfulness with which he received us on 22 January to discuss these matters.

I shall not repeat the arguments that have already been advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham. Let me simply say that I largely agree not only with his general comments, but with the specific proposals that he has put to our right hon. Friend. For instance, he mentioned the courthouse in my constituency.

The debate is timely; only this afternoon, I heard from my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport that the new international station was to be built in the centre of Ashford, serving both Network SouthEast and the channel tunnel trains. It will bring many benefits not only to the community of Ashford, but to east Kent, east Sussex and that part of England generally. I am delighted, because I have been fighting for such a development for a long time; inevitably, however, it will mean more criminals trying to smuggle in drugs or people, or simply involving themselves in general criminal activities.

That, coupled with the opening of the channel tunnel next autumn, will place a heavy burden on the law enforcement agencies in my constituency, my hon. Friend's constituency and the constituency of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), where the tunnel is situated. It is therefore important that facilities are provided locally for cases to be tried.

Let me now strike a positive note, which I hope will appeal to my right hon. Friend the Minister. When the proposals were mooted, a committee was set up in Ashford, under the chairmanship of Mr. Barnes: he has done extremely well, concentrating on the greater utilisation of the Ashford court and the need to improve its cash flow, and to ensure that it is properly used and housed in a modern, purpose-built courthouse sited alongside the police station. That is a good way of ensuring that the courthouse will stay open and will, as it were, pay its way.

I thoroughly applaud all the efforts that are being made. We want to see the maximum utilisation of space, and those in charge of courthouses with surplus space that is not being used properly should bear that in mind. I also hope that we can remove the swords of Damocles that are hanging over courthouses not only in Kent but elsewhere. I mention Kent particularly because it is a fast-growing region which contains the channel tunnel and involves a number of other activities that will inevitably increase the load.

Some people—not many—have said that this is part of the Government's cuts. I have tried to disabuse them, but even law firms in my constituency have been trying to make political points on the subject. I consider that attitude to be thoroughly unjustified, but it exists, and I have a slight feeling that it is tied up with the way in which we are funding legal aid. Perhaps I have a nasty suspicious mind.

I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister will give careful consideration to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and me. Certainly, none of us wants inefficient, under-utilised courthouses, with no consideration given to ways in which staff and buildings could be better used. Equally, none of us wants local justice to become no longer local: we do not want defendants, witnesses, solicitors and clerks to have to travel long distances for the sake of some formula that may or may not be working properly.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to give us some assurances, and will join me in paying tribute to the very good work that is being done by most of our courts, particularly those in Kent.

8.34 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): This debate is important for justice in Kent. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) both on his good fortune in securing it, and on the powerful way in which he set out his case. He did the same when, in January, he discussed the issue with me, along with our hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed), whom I am pleased to see in the Chamber.

I was extremely pleased to hear both my hon. Friends comment on the fact that overall expenditure on the magistrates courts is currently being expanded. Figures show that, in real terms—taking inflation into account —we are spending half as much again as we were spending in 1979. The service is in extremely good condition, and is growing—as was demonstrated by the published public expenditure programme announced in the autumn by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

[Mr. John Patten]

Having said that, I must make one thing clear: I am as wedded to the concept of local justice as are my hon. Friends. My constituency is, in some respects, not dissimilar to theirs, and I too want the provision of good access to local justice. That is not to say that every courthouse in the country is in a state of grace—some are pretty run-down—or that every courthouse is necessarily particularly well utilised or well run. In such a large service, it would be amazing if that were the case. I stress, however, that we seek to introduce efficiencies within increasing public expenditure, while at the same time taking into account the pressing need for local justice and the traditions of such justice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham would like to turn the present system inside out and start again. Perhaps he is right—and I shall make sure that tomorrow my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor receives a copy of the report of our debate. My hon. Friend is saying that the present system is inadequate because it does not provide sufficient access for local people who wish to make known their views about proposed courthouse closures—unless the paying authority, in this case Kent county council, chooses to apply to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary for a review of the decision.

That is the position under the current law. My hon. Friend, in effect, wants new legislation, because considerable changes in statute law would be needed to bring about the circumstances that he considers desirable. I shall bring that to the attention of the Lord Chancellor, as he will assume responsibility for the magistrates courts from 1 April. Only tonight, I attended the farewell party —or wake—of the Home Office division that is to be transferred, with no fee, to administer the service in the Lord Chancellor's Department from 1 April. It has given very good public service.

Mr. Moate: I am sorry to interrupt my right hon. Friend. I wish merely to say that even I could draft a very simple amendment to the present legislation to ensure that others had the right to generate an appeal.

Mr. Patten: Certainly, C2 division—that is what it is called; that is my contribution to open government tonight —could do it just like that, but a Bill would be needed. Indeed, such a Bill will have to be presented to the House in due course to make other changes to the service, consistent with the proposals in the White Paper published a few days ago by the Lord Chancellor and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. That cannot be too far away; the Bill must come down the track fairly quickly after the next general election. Such a development will certainly give my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham an opportunity to make his points in the next year or two —I cannot anticipate future Gracious Speeches.

At present, decisions about whether courthouses should remain open—like most other decisions affecting the courts service—are primarily local decisions made by magistrates courts committees, in conjunction with their paying authorities. In our view, it is right for such decisions to continue to be made locally: only in that way can proper attention be paid to the full range of issues.

That, I think, is where my hon. Friend sees a fault. He envisages full consideration of issues locally, but notes that, if local people's views are not taken into account and no appeal is made to the Home Secretary, they will have no right of appeal. I sense that he feels that there is an injustice in the way in which local justice is administered, and I understand what he has said. At the moment, only as a matter of last resort, if agreement cannot be reached between a court committee and its paying authority, would the matter be passed to the Home Secretary or, after 1 April, to my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor.

Those procedures are part of a separate process for determining court accommodation under the Justices of the Peace Act 1979—not such an ancient statute. Under the provisions of that Act, magistrates courts' accommodation is a matter for the committee to determine, in consultation with the paying authority which meets 20 per cent. of the overall costs, the balance being met by Government grant.

The paying authority's input—both the 20 per cent. contribution towards the running costs and the consultative role that it carries out with the court committee to take account of local interests—is very much part of the system. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham, in his radical and reforming speech, said that that should also be done away with and that, as I understand it, there should be 100 per cent. Government funding.

I will have to draw those two substantial matters to the attention of my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor—first, the unfettered right of appeal to a Secretary of State by people who do not like the local decision, and, secondly, that, not satisfied with cash limits, we should move to 100 per cent. funding of magistrates courts. However, I might have misunderstood my hon. Friend.

Mr. Moate: I do not think that my right hon. Friend has misunderstood, but I do not wish to appear as radical as he suggests. If, as seems likely from the Welsh precedent, we are to move to unitary authorities within a local government structure, we will have to rethink the paying authority and who will determine such matters. During that rethink, it seems logical that we should reconsider the sort of matter that we are discussing.

Mr. Patten: I hope that my hon. Friend realised that I was speaking in tease marks when I used the word "radical".

The third matter that I must draw to the attention of my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor is the subject that my hon. Friend has just brought to the attention of the House—the local government reorganisations, which will be introduced on a rolling basis, should local communities so decide. I do not know what the situation is in Kent, but already in that part of my constituency which used to be in Berkshire people are looking forward to the reintroduction of Berkshire. Many of my constituents write to me from Abingdon on Thames, Berkshire, rather than Oxfordshire.

During the next few years, there will be all sorts of fundamental changes. There may well be unitary authorities. I cannot pre-empt the decision of the Local Government Commission, which will look into applications from local people perhaps to introduce different tiers or single-tier authorities. However, my hon. Friend is right as that will have considerable implications for the administration of local justice. Also, it will have considerable implications for the administation of the police service, which we will also have to consider. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham has the assent of my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford, and he is right to draw the attention of the House to the fact that we must consider the matter in the round.

Tonight, the plate is full with three separate ingredients for possible future reforms in the way in which we look after the magistrates courts service. The speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham was extremely valuable in drawing attention to some of the problems which may come before it during the next few years, especially if there is legislation.

While there may be amalgamations and a few closures—there have been only a few recently—in the five-year period from 1991-92 to 1995-96, 28 new courthouses have been opened or are being built, providing 185 new court rooms. Perhaps that is the other side of the coin which I need to put before the House. Many of those new courthouses and court rooms will have the most up-to-date facilities. While a period of change and of challenge is before us, there will also be a period of considerable growth.

I look forward to hearing from my hon. Friend in the House on such issues, when they will undoubtedly be handled from the Dispatch Box by that entirely new being to whom he referred, a junior Minister representing the Lord Chancellor's Department in this place.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes to Nine o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 10 March 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

AIRE AND CALDER NAVIGATION BILL
Lords amendments agreed to.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment, Leicester

1. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much and by what percentage unemployment in the city of Leicester rose between January 1991 and January 1992.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Robert Jackson): In the Leicester local authority district, unadjusted unemployment increased by 4,877 or 40 per cent. in the 12 months to January 1992.

Mr. Janner: Is not the increase of 40 per cent. absolutely disgraceful? It is due to the inefficiency of the Government which no amount of Budget bribery can possibly erase. Does the Minister know that while the number of jobs went down and unemployment went up, crime in the county of Leicestershire rose by more than one third over the past 12 months, nearly double the national rate, but the chief constable has said that in the next year the force can spend £1 million less? From the start of the day to its finish, the Government have got their priorities wrong.

Mr. Jackson: The key question is whether the Government's policy will lead to an increase in unemployment or tend to reduce it. The hon. and learned Gentleman, who is an authority on this subject and a distinguished member of the Select Committee on Employment, must ask himself in all seriousness about the consequences for the supply of job opportunities of Labour's policies on the minimum wage and increased social charges. Those policies would have serious consequences for job opportunities.

Mr. Latham: Are not the best chances for employment in the city of Leicester and the county of Leicestershire today's Budget and the re-election of the Conservative Government?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We must remember that 300,000 people who go into jobcentres find a job within a month.

Value Added Tax

2. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many firms were registered for VAT in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1991.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Michael Howard): At the end of 1990, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of businesses registered for VAT in the United Kingdom was 1·7 million, compared with 1·3 million at the end of 1979—an increase of almost a third.

Mr. Page: Although the figures show a dramatic increase, is not my right hon. and learned Friend being characteristically modest? Does he forget the increase to £35,000 in the exemption limit for VAT? Surely, were not many more businesses created last year?

Mr. Howard: I was being characteristically direct in answering my hon. Friend's question. Of course, the increase in the total number of firms over the period was not one third, but two thirds—to nearly 3 million, or an average increase of almost 500 every working day.

Pay Statements

3. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce legislation to ensure that all employees have a right to an itemised pay statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Eric Forth): Most employees already have the right to receive an itemised pay statement. We have no plans to extend the current legislative provisions.

Mr. McFall: The Minister is aware that those who work for 16 hours or less do not have the right to itemised pay statements unless they have worked for five years and that those who work less than eight hours have no right to them at all. Employees are scared to enforce their rights because if they did they would be unfairly dismissed. Should not every employee have that right and should not the Government therefore scrap the two-year rule, or are the Government determined to keep up their sweat-shop policies, contrary to what is happening in the rest of Europe?

Mr. Forth: I have received no representations on that matter and I am not aware of any disquiet among the groups that the hon. Gentleman described. As ever, we must balance the temptation to introduce such rights willy-nilly against the unreasonable cost burden that might rest increasingly on employers, especially those with only a few employees. I believe that we have the balance about right. If there is any question of unfair dismissal, those concerned always have the right to go to a tribunal, if they are protected in the way that the hon. Gentleman described. I remain to be convinced that there is a problem and that therefore we should necessarily consider the solution that the hon. Gentleman suggested.

Mr. Tim Smith: Is not this one of several proposals that would add to the costs of employing part-time workers? Will my hon. Friend confirm that the directive on part-time working would mean that 1·75 million part-time workers, and their employers, would have to pay national insurance contributions?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend is correct. The Labour party has said that it would sign the directive on part-time working and many others, which would place an intolerable cost burden on British industry. That suggests that the Labour party does not care about employment. On the contrary, Labour Members are prepared to place ever more burdens on British business, which would only destroy jobs. That must be utterly reprehensible.

Child Care

4. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had with employers regarding child care.

Mr. Jackson: The Advisory Committee on Women's Employment, which I chair and which includes employer representatives, has discussed child care on a number of occasions.

The tax concession in the 1990 Budget, which allowed tax relief for employees on the benefit of nursery facilities provided by an employer, has been instrumental in promoting child care arrangements.

Ms. Armstrong: I am sure that the Minister is aware that the Midland bank, which has done much to develop child care, has said of the Government recently that they keep calling its representatives to conferences at which they urge the importance of child care, but they do nothing. Is it about time that the Government took the opportunities of our youngest children seriously, gave their parents the opportunities that they are looking for and made sure that children receive the very best start, which is something that is taken for granted in other European countries?

Mr. Jackson: I have already referred to the tax concession in the 1990 Budget. That has shown that the Government are concerned. In the European Community, the United Kingdom has the highest proportion of women in work, with the exception of Denmark. About 63 per cent. of women of working age with children are economically active. That suggests that we are doing quite well by working women.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Does my hon. Friend agree that the United Kingdom has many more women in work than any other European nation and that tax relief on workplace nurseries, which was introduced in the 1990 Budget by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, has greatly assisted many working women?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend is right. It is too often forgotten—this is another dimension—that in Britain the age at which children start school is comparatively young. Children in Britain start school at five, whereas the starting ages are six in France, Germany and Italy and seven in Denmark.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: When the Equal Opportunities Commission, in its equality agenda, describes child care facilities as meagre in the extreme compared with the facilities that are available in the rest of Europe, when we know that the women in work to whom the Minister has referred are often forced into part-time work because of inadequate child care arrangements and when we bear in mind his entirely complacent answer, is not it a good thing that a Labour Government are coming who will ensure that child care provision is expanded?

Mr. Jackson: In a recent survey of women who work part time, only 6 per cent. said that they would prefer to work full time.

Employment Action

5. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many trade unions are taking part in the employment action programme.

Mr. Howard: So far as I am aware, none.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply, which is a great disappointment to all my right and hon. Friends. Does he agree with me that proposals to pay more to those taking part in the programme will mean inevitably that fewer places will be available?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is typical of the Labour party's attitude that it would fritter away additional resources by spending more money not on increasing the number of training places but on paying more to those already in training places. There would be no net benefit to training.

Mr. Blair: Instead of attacking trade unions, why does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman attack unemployment? Why does not he admit that since last year's Budget more than 500,000 people have been added to the dole queue? At the same time, there are 1 million fewer jobs in the economy. If present policies continue, hundreds of thousands of people will stand in fear for their jobs. Is not it the truth that the right hon. and learned Gentleman's Government, having created recession and unemployment, do not care about the casualties of their policies?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman's synthetic protestations about unemployment would carry a little more conviction if he were not so determined to advance policies which, by introducing a national statutory minimum wage, by embracing the European Commission's social action programme and by imposing a jobs tax on employers, would make unemployment far, far higher than it otherwise would be. Even the proprietor of the aptly named Walworth Castle hotel in the hon. Gentleman's constituency near Darlington has said:

> "Labour's plan would be nothing short of disastrous."

Payroll Levy

6. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations he has received on the subject of the introduction of a statutory payroll levy.

Mr. Howard: I have received representations from various sources on the subject of a statutory payroll levy related to employers' training expenditure. The most recent, from the Institute of Directors, firmly opposed

> "any system of levy or tax that discriminates between employers on the basis of assumptions about what a firm spends on training".

Mr. French: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, among the many business men who have condemned the payroll tax as likely to cost companies money and, therefore, jobs, is the president of the chamber of trade in Teesside? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that if the Labour spokesman is unable to convert to Labour policies those business men in his immediate area, he is also unlikely to convince the country?

Mr. Howard: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Increasingly, we find protests from employers in the area represented by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) about the effect of his policies and those of the Labour party. The truth is now out—Labour's policies would be disastrous for jobs.

Mr. McLeish: Is the Secretary of State aware that the labour force survey was published today? Will he take time to explain to the House why, in the past year, 177,000 fewer people were in training in Britain—a reduction of 5·4 per cent? Whatever happened to all the talk about a world-class skills revolution? What about the fact that £20 billion is supposed to be spent by industrialists? Is not it really the case that the Government do not care about training, that we have a disastrous training record and that it is high time that we had a Labour Government to tackle the problems?

Mr. Howard: The same survey showed an increase of more than 100 per cent. between 1984 and 1991 in the number of people receiving training paid for by their employers and seven times as many people receiving training now as in 1979. That is the reply to the Opposition's synthetic protestations. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to settle down and listen to the questions.

Self-employment

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the rate of growth of self-employment from 1979 to the present time among *(a)* men and *(b)* women.

Mr. Forth: The number of male and female self-employed in the United Kingdom grew by 55 and 109 per cent. respectively between 1979 and 1991.

Mrs. Currie: Is my hon. Friend aware that Britain now has more than 3 million self-employed people, of whom 750,000 are women, many of them in south Derbyshire? Does he share their view that they work hard for their money, that they pay quite enough tax and national insurance and that they do not want to see what would be the worst disaster for such businesses in future—an increase in income tax and national insurance, as proposed by the Labour party?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend makes an important point. We are entitled to take great pride in the fact that so many more women have now chosen self-employment to promote their standard of living and that of their families. It is also true to say that if the Opposition parties were ever in a position to put their policies into effect, that self-employment record would inevitably be gravely harmed and the cause of women in particular would suffer much more.

Dr. Kim Howells: The Minister knows that many self-employed are concentrated in the construction industry. Does he know that thousands of construction workers in Wales are out of work, yet Shelter Cymru tells us that 63,000 families in the Principality have experienced homelessness in the past year? Why cannot this incompetent Government get their act together and put those building workers to build houses for those families?

Mr. Forth: That must be a matter for the local authorities. I am often at a loss to understand the sense of priorities or the lack of priority among Labour-controlled local authorities in particular. They seem determined to spend their community charge payers' money on the most irrelevant and frivolous projects rather than concentrating on the real problems that the hon. Gentleman described.

British Companies

8. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many British companies have 1,000 employees or more.

Mr. Forth: Recent research by the university of Warwick indicates that there are 3,024 undertakings in the United Kingdom with 1,000 employees or more.

Mr. Gill: Given that the United Kingdom has so many undertakings with more than 1,000 employees, does my hon. Friend agree that we would be disproportionately affected by the draft European directive on works councils? Will he assure the House that he will vigorously resist that further instance of discrimination against British industry?

Mr. Forth: Indeed. My hon. Friend has accurately described the position. The figure of more than 3,000 which I just quoted, when compared with 873 similar undertakings in France and 479 in Italy, shows that the United Kingdom has far and away more undertakings with more than 1,000 employees than either of our major European partners. That means that the irrelevant suggestions being made by the European Commission for mandatory information for and consultation with employees would bear much more heavily on British business than it would on our major competitors. That is why British industry is so adamantly opposed to that ridiculous directive. I give my hon. Friend the absolute assurance that the Government will continue to oppose it root and branch.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Why does the Minister have a graph on his tie of the economy in decline under the Conservatives?

Mr. Forth: I have been waiting for some time for hon. Members to refer to my apparel and I am duly flattered. If it helps the hon. Gentleman, I shall try to wear my tie upside down the next time I am at the Dispatch Box.

Mrs. Peacock: Is my hon. Friend aware that many of the companies that employ more than 1,000 people employ many women part time? Those women choose to work part time because it fits in with looking after their families. Please, please, please can we not destroy those part-time jobs?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend illustrates yet again that Conservative Members regard part-time employment as something which is productive and honourable, and not as something which is shameful or sordid. I believe that the millions of women and men who choose to work part time will understand very well that the Labour party seeks to destroy their jobs whereas the Government are in the business of protecting them.

Mr. Trimble: The Minister will know that we appreciate and share his concern about the handicap that might be placed on British industry by the European social charter. Before the Minister takes the mote out of Europe's eye, should not he take the beam out of his own? Are not many British firms unduly handicapped by the harassment they get from regulatory bodies such as the Fair Employment Commission?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman has made an important point. I must tell him that I have recently written to all the representative small business organisations in the United Kingdom asking them to give me examples of where excessive regulation is impeding their business. I am looking forward very much to their responses. I give the commitment that, when the Government are re-elected, we shall continue to fight to reduce the burden of regulation on British industry in order to make us even more competitive than we are already.

Unemployment, Holloway

9. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest unemployment rate for the Holloway travel-to-work area; and what were the comparable figures for June 1987 and May 1979.

Mr. Jackson: Holloway falls within the London travel-to-work area. In January 1992, the latest available date, the unemployment rate for the London travel-to-work, area was 9·5 per cent., compared with 8·7 per cent. in June 1987. There is no rate available for this travel-to-work area for May 1979.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Minister aware that within the borough of Islington, which includes the Holloway travel-to-work area, fewer than 100 school leavers last year were able to find jobs and that, at the Holloway unemployment office, there is a gap between the 32 registered vacancies and the 11,600 people who are registered as unemployed? Does the hon. Gentleman recognise the terrible toll that that places on the community and, in particular, on the young people who cannot get work and see the possibilities of career development and a decent standard of living slipping away from them? When will he do something to bring jobs to inner-city areas?

Mr. Jackson: During the last Employment Question Time, the hon. Gentleman asked me about job clubs in his constituency, and I have written to him about the matter. He and the House will be pleased to know that, in the 10 months to January, 1,607 people were placed in work as a result of their experience in a job club in his constituency.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the reasons for the unemployment that exists in that part of Islington is the way in which the political friends of the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) run Islington council? They specialise in squalor; they do nothing to help business; they cannot collect their rents; they did not collect the rates; they do not collect the community charge; and they keep homes empty. Is that the reason why the hon. Member for Islington, North will be swept away by the excellent Tory candidate in his constituency?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend has made a good point. Over the past 10 months, Holloway jobcentre has placed 2,006 people in jobs.

Disabled People (Unemployment)

10. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current rate of unemployment for *(a)* registered disabled people and *(b)* disabled people generally.

Mr. Jackson: The 1991 labour force survey reported 18·2 per cent. unemployment among people in the labour market who had a health problem or disability which limited the kind of work that they could do. I am afraid that we do not have later figures, figures for registered disabled people or figures comparable with the monthly claimant count.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Minister aware that an unemployment rate among disabled people nearly four times as high as that among able-bodied people cannot be justified? As this is the Government's 13th hour and it is now too late for them to help, will the Minister explain to disabled people why the Secretary of State for Employment spends so much of his time rubbishing trade unions, rather than finding jobs for those people?

Mr. Jackson: I think that, regrettably, there has always been a higher unemployment rate among people with disabilities than among the rest of the population. We attempt to assist, however, and the total number of people who have been helped through our sheltered employment programme has increased substantially during the past 10 years. Expenditure has risen substantially, from £88·2 million to £112 million. The number of people who have been helped through assessment and rehabilitation centres has also risen and expenditure on special assistance schemes has increased substantially. All those measures were designed to assist people with disabilities.

Mr. Rowe: Will my hon. Friend confirm that many companies find that the loyalty given to them by disabled people more than makes up for any days that they may have to take off work to undergo treatment? Will he tell the House just how much effort he and his colleagues in the Department have devoted in recent years to bringing that message home to employers?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The best way—indeed, the only way—in which we can make progress in that regard is by affecting attitudes and the culture that exists within companies. The Government have put a great deal of effort into persuading employers to take seriously the issues involving minorities in employment, including people with disabilities.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Minister agree that discrimination against people with disabilities clearly exists in employment and that it was therefore a great pity that the very modest Bill presented by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) was talked out by supporters of the Government?

Mr. Jackson: I think that the hon. Gentleman is referring to a Bill relating to advertisements——

Mr. Clarke: No. Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the Minister has not got the message, perhaps he had better be given it.

Mr. Clarke: The Bill presented by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe dealt with discrimination against people with disabilities, particularly in regard to employment and jobs.

Mr. Jackson: I do not believe, and the Government do not believe, that such a legislative approach is the right way to deal with the problem. Since 1944, for example, we have had a quota system which has never been effectively operated under Governments of either party. Rather than adopting an inappropriate legislative approach, we must persuade people and affect attitudes.

Mr. Couchman: What would be the impact of the imposition of a minimum hourly wage of £3·40 on the disabled, to whom employment is so important in terms of dignity of life?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend makes a very important point. Many disabled people, often on income support, may earn relatively low wages, and the consequences of a minimum wage would be a withdrawal of job opportunities which would probably affect them in particular.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister accept that an example would be a great deal of help to employers in the private sector? Will he acknowledge that Government Departments have not even come near their own target of 3 per cent. disabled workers?

Mr. Jackson: We take very seriously our attempts to secure employment for disabled people in the Government. It is very difficult to meet the 3 per cent. target, but we are doing well in aiming towards it.

Industrial Action

11. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many working days were lost through industrial action in North Yorkshire during 1979; what is the most recent comparable figure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Information is available only for the Yorkshire and Humberside region, where 55,000 working days were lost during 1991, the lowest for more than 25 years. The 1991 total is nearly 60 times lower than the 3·1 million working days lost in the same region in 1979.

These figures illustrate the achievements of this Government's step-by-step industrial relations legislation. The fact that the number of working days lost in the United Kingdom as a whole in 1991 was the lowest since records began 100 years ago is testimony to our success.

Mr. Gregory: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that those dramatic figures are eloquent testimony to the fact that under Labour the number of days lost was so dramatic that it resulted in near anarchy and that, as a result of our legislation, there are now proper secret ballots and democracy in the workplace? In the unlikely event of our ever having a socialist Government again could not we expect to return to those appalling figures of industrial anarchy?

Mr. Howard: I agree with my hon. Friend. One of the first things that the Labour party would do would be to change the law to make it easier for trade unions to strike. They would be aided and abetted in so doing by the Liberal Democrats. Their recipe for recovery is more strikes, more frequent strikes and more damaging strikes. That is the way in which they think that they can make the economy grow.

Mr. Barron: Can the Secretary of State say how many working days have been lost through unemployment in the north-east?

Mr. Howard: I can also tell the hon. Gentleman how many days would be lost as a result of the extra unemployment that would be caused by his party's policies.

Unemployment, Sheffield

12. **Sir Patrick Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest unemployment figures for the Sheffield travel-to-work area expressed as a percentage.

Mr. Jackson: In January 1992, the unadjusted rate of unemployment for the Sheffield travel-to-work area was 11·4 per cent.

Sir Patrick Duffy: Is the Minister aware that Sheffield is plunging into its deepest recession since the war, that according to new research by the city council's department of employment the true figure for unemployment is 17 per cent. compared with the Minister's adjusted figure, and that even the Association of Yorkshire and Humberside Chambers of Commerce is now calling on the Government to do something about a sinking economy? In the words of the regional secretary, sitting there and doing nothing is no longer an option.

Mr. Jackson: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not want to talk down his home city. I cannot give credence to the 17 per cent. figure. In spite of the recent very regrettable rises in unemployment, in his constituency and in Sheffield as a whole unemployment remains a quarter lower than it was at the last election and a third below its peak in 1986.

Mr. John Greenway: Does the Minister agree that whether in Sheffield or throughout Yorkshire as a whole the history of a great industry and of a great industrial heritage was based on innovation and entrepreneurism? Does he also agree that what Yorkshire as a whole needs to restart the economy is low tax, low inflation and another Conservative Government?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend's question speaks for itself, and no doubt we shall hear more about such matters in a few minutes.

Merseyside Training and Enterprise Council

13. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he next plans to meet the Merseyside TEC to discuss funding.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. and learned Friend and I meet TEC chairmen on a regular basis to discuss a range of issues, including questions of funding.

Mr. O'Hara: What advice or comfort can the Under-Secretary of State offer to those providers of training on Merseyside who have been driven out of business because insufficient resources have been allocated to the Merseyside TEC to provide contracts to them? What succour or comfort can he offer to the unemployed in my constituency of Knowsley, South, where 65 jobless now chase every vacancy advertised in the jobcentres? How can he possibly justify cutting training which is so desperately needed by a work force without jobs such as that in Knowsley, South?

Mr. Jackson: There has been an increase in the overall budget made available by the Government for training. Negotiations between particular TECs and providers must be a matter for those TECs and providers. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I ask the House not to indulge in private conversations. It is difficult to hear even at this end.

Mr. Alton: If the protests that have been made about cuts in training places on Merseyside are simply synthetic protestations, as the Minister said earlier, can he explain why projects such as the Hexagon project on Merseyside face closure? How can he explain that when 71,000 people in the city of Liverpool alone are currently unemployed? Surely that is an area where more training, not less, is needed.

Mr. Jackson: I know that the hon. Gentleman is sympathetic to the idea of localism that lay behind the creation of the training and enterprise councils. The TECs are in the best position to make informed judgments about the qualities of particular providers. I will not second-guess the judgments made by Merseyside TEC in respect of any provider, including Hexagon.

North London Training and Enterprise Council

14. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had with the chairman of the North London TEC to discuss the contributions of trade unions to training.

Mr. Howard: None, Sir.

Mr. Marshall: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the day after the Transport and General Workers Union's disgraceful decision to boycott Government training schemes, the union was described as "the Labour party in so many ways"? Is he aware that the right hon. Gentleman who so described it was none other than the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Howard: I am. The Transport and General Workers Union voted to boycott youth training, to boycott employment training and to boycott the training and enterprise councils. Not a word of condemnation of that disgraceful position has come from the Leader of the Opposition, who is sponsored by that union, or from the shadow spokesman on employment, who is also sponsored by that union, or by any of the renegade crew who man the Labour Front Bench.

Unemployment, North-west England

15. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new policies he has to reduce unemployment in the north-west region.

Mr. Howard: The Government's main role is to ensure a sound and stable economic framework within which enterprise can flourish and the battle against inflation can be won. In addition, since 1979 regional selective assistance worth £326 million has been committed to the north-west, creating more than 60,000 new jobs and safeguarding more than 60,000 existing jobs.

Mr. Loyden: Is not it patently clear that the Conservative party and the Minister have no understanding whatever of what unemployment means to the unemployed, their families and communities? After 13 years, it is an absolute disgrace that no input has been made to tackling unemployment. The Government have failed absolutely to tackle unemployment except for some cosmetic surgery. Is not it about time that the Government recognised that the only cure for unemployment is to get rid of the Conservative Government as soon as possible?

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman really cares about unemployed people, will he join me today in calling on his Front-Bench colleagues to abandon their policy of a national statutory minimum wage, to abandon their jobs tax and to abandon their embrace of the European Community social action programme so that we can avoid the disastrous consequences for employment that would follow from such policies?

Mr. Dickens: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the north-west of England is coming out of recession faster than the rest of the country? Will he also confirm that we are leading the way in many training schemes and that there is no doubt that housing—*[Interruption.]* Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that there is no doubt that, in housing and in many other matters, the north-west of England is showing the way and will continue to show the way?

Mr. Howard: I agree with my hon. Friend, who will continue to champion the cause of the north-west in the next Parliament. The only things that could put a stop to the recovery from recession in the north-west of England and elsewhere are the policies of the Labour party—for example, the sharpest ever peacetime tax increase, the national statutory minimum wage, and changes in the law to encourage strikes. Those would be the policies to put a stop to recovery. *[Interruption.]* We shall ensure—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Howard: We shall ensure that—*[Interruption.]*

Training Schemes

16. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed people are currently engaged in training schemes.

Mr. Howard: There are currently some 300,000 young people on youth training, and around 150,000 people on employment training in Great Britain. Last financial year, some 740,000 people entered Government training programmes, compared with 110,000 in 1978-79—a sevenfold increase.

Mr. Flannery: Is not it a fact that during the 13 years of this Government, 25 methods have been found to try to prove that unemployment is massively smaller than it is? Is not it also a fact that the unemployed are generally on useless training schemes and that, therefore, unemployment and the slump are far more massive than the Government care to admit?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman is talking characteristic nonsense. More than 80 per cent. of those on youth training gain a qualification or a job, or enter a further education course. We are the only country in Europe to guarantee a two-year training course leading to a qualification for 16 and 17-year-old unemployed young people. That is what the hon. Gentleman should recognise.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that since 1979 the Government have introduced more training places and a wider range of training courses both in width and in depth, in a way that has never been attempted before? We have spent far more money. Therefore it is nonsense for the Opposition to claim that we have done nothing at all about the problems of retraining.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right. We are spending two and a half times as much, after taking account of inflation, as was spent by the last Labour Government on training. That is because this is the only Government who understand training and care about training, and are determined to make sure that our people have high-quality training.

EC Working Time Directive

17. **Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from the CBI regarding the draft EC working time directive.

Mr. Forth: The CBI responded fully to my Department's consultative document on the proposed working time directive. It firmly opposed the Commission's proposals. I fully agree with the CBI that the directive would be a needless strain on United Kingdom competitiveness, and a threat to jobs and earnings.

Sir Anthony Durant: Does my hon. Friend agree that the proposals, as attacked by civil engineers, would be a restrictive practice and would restrict the flexibility of the construction industry? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Sir Anthony Durant: I did not know that my question was so good. Would not the proposals restrict jobs, cause inefficiency and, with the minimum wage proposals, be very damaging to industry?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend is correct. No significant employer representative body in the United Kingdom has done anything other than condemn those irrelevant and damaging proposals very roundly. Her Majesty's Government will continue to fight to persuade our colleagues in the European Community that the proposals are not only unnecessary and unjustifiable, but would be extremely damaging to employment throughout the Community, particularly in the United Kingdom. I thank my hon. Friend for drawing my attention to the representations that he has made.

Mrs. Wise: Will the Minister explain why European companies can apparently provide their workers with better conditions in terms of hours and minimum wages than this country's employers? Why is it that European companies do not regard looking after their workers well in terms of hours and wages as destroying competitiveness, but instead see it as a way to obtain good work from their workers? Why is that?

Mr. Forth: There are two good reasons. First, for many of our European partners, the rules apply on paper but not in practice. They simply do not put into effect the rules that the Community agrees. Secondly, investors from outside the Community, from places such as Japan, the United States and many others, look at the European Community and decide that the United Kingdom is by far the best place in which to invest due to the stability, skills and reliability of our work force. That explanation speaks volumes and answers the hon. Lady's question.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 10 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall have further meetings later today.

Mr. Hughes: Is it not an appalling indictment of 13 years of this Government's economic policy that yesterday one of Her Majesty's coroners described the shortage of beds in one of Britain's principal hospitals—a shortage that has led to the death of a pensioner from Southwark—as appalling due to a 2 per cent. insufficiency in gross domestic funding of the national health service? As a result of the Government's policy, the pensioner's widow is more than £17 per week less well off in real terms than she was when the Government came to power. Is that not an example of private wealth at the expense of public underfunding? Are the Government to continue with the same policy or enact a U-turn at the last moment?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman well knows that there has been a dramatic increase in national health service spending on any measure one cares to take, far and above the amount necessary either to keep pace with the general level of inflation or to keep pace with the level of inflation in medical costs. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is the case, and he also knows that there has been an increase in net spending at all levels of income in this country.

Mr. Onslow: Has my right hon. Friend had time to study the important report on occupational pensions by the Select Committee on Social Services? Does he agree that it contains a great many lessons for many people, particularly on the Maxwell scandal? Will he give the

House an undertaking that, when the report calls for action from the Government, we can rely on my right hon. Friend to take action without delay?

The Prime Minister: I have seen the report. Our first step must be to examine it thoroughly and look at all the recommendations made by the Select Committee. It raises a number of complex and inter-related matters, some of which are for the pensions industry, some for the banks, some for actuaries, auditors and regulators. Some relate to the present legal framework. We need time to examine fully the findings of the Select Committee and to give our response. It is necessary to bear it in mind that the vast majority of occupational pensions schemes operate successfully in the United Kingdom—some 100,000 of them. The cause of the problem with Mirror Group pensioners is all too clear; There appears to have been a massive fraud, perpetuated under the very eyes of the trustees.

Mr. Kinnock: May I strongly recommend the report in question to the Prime Minister? I hope, it will lead, after the election, to his supporting us in putting its main recommendations into effect. Does the right hon. Gentleman recall giving the House, from that Dispatch Box, the assurance that the Government would not achieve the objective of tax reductions

"on the back of a burgeoning Government borrowing requirement now or in future"?—[*Official Report* 14 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 588.]

Does he still stand by that assurance?

The Prime Minister: Nothing that my right hon. Friend does or announces later this afternoon will change our objective, or our intention of maintaining medium-term balance in the fiscal situation.

Mr. Kinnock: I asked whether the Prime Minister stood by the assurance that borrowing requirement would not increase to pay for tax cuts, now or in future, under any Government of which the right hon. Gentleman was leader. Does the Prime Minister still stand by that opinion—yes or no?

The Prime Minister: I did answer that question. Before asking his second question, the right hon. Gentleman might have consulted the shadow Chancellor, who said last week that—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is very unseemly behaviour.

The Prime Minister: I am sorry that Labour Members do not like to hear what they themselves said, but I intend to repeat it. As the shadow Chancellor said last week, "I"—that is, the shadow Chancellor—

"am prepared to go on the basis of accepting the PSBR which emerges from the Budget."

Clearly the Opposition have no independent judgment whatsoever.

Mr. Sumberg: Will my right hon. Friend take time this afternoon to watch the recent interview by Mr. David Frost, which revealed the success of the Government's health service provisions, and also that the Opposition's figures are totally bogus? That interview revealed also that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) does not know his NHS from his NUPE.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes his point extremely clearly. The bogus statistics of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) have been finally revealed. Without the steady drip-feed of leaked documents, clearly the hon. Gentleman is in some difficulty with his figures. As was pointed out to him in that interview, this year there has been a 7·1 per cent. increase in the number of patients treated compared with last year, which is higher even than the Government's forecast increase in patient care. I remind the House of the so-called Cook test. The hon. Gentleman said that the success of the trusts must be measured

"by the simple test of whether they do more or less work for the national health service patients."

The trusts have clearly passed that test, and I look to the hon. Gentleman to admit that.

Q2. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 10 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Patchett: Given the proposed increase in pensions, does the Prime Minister honestly feel that it is sufficient—yes or no?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows what is the pensions increase. It has been announced, it is Government policy, and I stand by that policy.

Sir Donald Thompson: My right hon. Friend will have heard in recent Question Times much about medicine in London. Will he turn his eyes to the country as a whole and to the north—to the West Riding and my own constituency, where the health service is thought to be one of the best in Europe?

The Prime Minister: It is not only thought to be so but it undoubtedly is so, and getting better in each and every part of the United Kingdom. That is largely because of the dedication of the staff and the increased resources provided by this Government.

Q3. **Sir Patrick Duffy:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 10 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Patrick Duffy: I refer the Prime Minister to the barrage of criticism from the Select Committee on Defence over the Government's handling of Army cuts, and its implied call for a defence review. Is the Prime Minister aware that among right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House who understand the Government's overall objectives, there is still a genuine fear that the outcome will be overstretch in peacetime and a dangerous shortage in times of tension? Does not the right hon. Gentleman agree that that is one risk—one national lottery—which we can well do without?

The Prime Minister: The Army of the 1990s will be structured to meet our needs in the face of a changed threat, in particular the end of the Warsaw pact and the millions of Warsaw troops who previously were geared immediately to face us. Our forward planning is designed to enable us to take stock precisely as the Select Committee advocated. I stress that we believe our proposals are right, and we set them out clearly in "Options for Change."

The hon. Gentleman says that all parts of the House take that view. Although I know that he does, I do not believe that all parts of the House do share that view. The occupants of the Opposition Front Bench appear to advocate 25 per cent. cuts in defence expenditure while the occupants of the Liberal Benches advocate 50 per cent. cuts in defence expenditure, both of which are irresponsible and both of which would have a devastating effect on our capacity to defend ourselves.

Q4. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 10 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evennett: Does my right hon. Friend agree that proportional representation reduces democracy and effective government? Will he confirm that after he has won the general election and is back in No. 10, he will have no intention of changing our voting system? Will he condemn the occupants of the Opposition Front Bench for using the issue in a squalid attempt to lure Liberal voters into their camp and for indulging in two-faced opportunism?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure that Liberals generally need much luring into Labour policies; they are very similar. My views on proportional representation are well known. PR does not lead to effective government and I do not support it. Indeed, I agree entirely with what the Leader of the Opposition said a few years ago, that

> "proportional representation . . . is fundamentally counter-democratic in any case."

I am not sure that the right hon. Gentleman has told the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) that, but perhaps the hon. Gentleman is putting down an early marker for after the next election.

Q5. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 10 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thompson: Will the Prime Minister explain what compensation is available under his supposed citizens charter for the late arrival of economic recovery? Does he realise that it is not just an hour but a year and a half late?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his ingenuity. I can tell him precisely what will be there. It will be a very low level of inflation, lower than we have known at any time in recent years, and steady sustainable growth leading to secure jobs, sustaining the Conservative party in government for many years.

Mr. Burns: Will my right hon. Friend tell me how best to reply to a constituent of mine who has recently completed a course of treatment at Broomfield hospital in Chelmsford and who tells me that the nurses and doctors were fantastic, that the treatment was magnificent and that he is fed up to the back teeth with the constant efforts of the Labour party to undermine and talk down the achievements of the health service?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend's constituent speaks for many people who have enjoyed the splendid services of the national health service in the last year or so. I advise my hon. Friend to tell his constituent that his experience is not unusual and that it is a tribute to the service that is available from the national health service. He might add that the reforms that are bringing that about are in danger under the plans proposed by the Labour party and that nobody could guarantee the increasing support and assistance from the NHS if those reforms were turned back.

Q6. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 10 march.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bidwell: Is the Prime Minister aware that the Home Office is withdrawing section 11 funding from all the colleges in the London borough of Ealing and that that adversely affects the Pathway further education centre in my constituency, where we have the largest concentration of people from the new Commonwealth? I find that totally objectionable from a Government who are shaping up to borrow and spend to save their necks.

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of the point that the hon. Gentleman raises but, as he knows, a tremendous amount of support has been made available through the Home Office and other sources to assist members of the ethnic minorities in this country. That continues to be the case.

Mr. Thornton: With not a red rose in sight on the Opposition Benches, does my right hon. Friend realise that the traditional red rose of Lancashire is alive and well on the Government Benches? What message would my right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancashire give us to take back to our constituents in the light of recent research showing that nearly 200 of the top British firms believe that the best way to increase unemployment and inflation and decrease investment would be the calamity of a Labour Government?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right. I share his remarks about the red rose belonging to Lancashire. It also belongs to the Rugby Football Union, which shows the red flag on its grand slam tie that it was generous enough to send me this morning. My hon. Friend is also right about the calamity of a Labour Government, because 86 per cent. of companies in that survey thought that Labour would be bad for the economy. I am concerned about what on earth is wrong with the other 14 per cent.

BILL PRESENTED

GENERAL ELECTIONS

Mr. Tony Banks, supported by Mr. Tom Clarke, Ms. Diane Abbott and Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, presented a Bill to make statutory provision for fixed term parliaments, compulsory attendance at polling stations, a public holiday on days set for general elections; and for connected purposes; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Thursday 9 April and to be printed. [Bill 112.]

WAYS AND MEANS

Budget Statement

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Before I call the Chancellor of the Exchequer, it may be for the convenience of hon. Members if I remind them that, at the end of the Chancellor's speech, copies of the Budget resolutions will be available to hon. Members in the Vote Office.

3.31 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): I want to begin by announcing a far-reaching reform that will affect our entire system of public finance. Each year, the Budget for this country is presented in two parts. In the autumn, the Chancellor announces the Government's spending plans for the coming financial year; and in March, he sets out the revenue measures necessary to pay for them. Many criticised this uniquely British institution. Elsewhere in the world, and indeed everywhere in the private sector, the meaning of the word "budget" is crystal clear: it is a schedule showing where the money is coming from, and where it is going to.

In my view, the current system is not only illogical, it has also had a number of highly undesirable consequences. Over the years, the separation of public expenditure from taxation and the announcement of tax proposals in isolation has intensified the pressure for special reliefs and contributed to the excessively complex tax system that we have now. The time has come for reform.

I therefore intend that next year's Budget will be the last spring Budget. From then on the annual Budget will be in December, and it will cover not just taxation but also public expenditure. The Budget in December 1993 will contain the Government's proposals for both revenues and expenditure in 1994-95. It will also include spending plans for the subsequent two years. The 1994 Finance Bill will be presented to the House in January rather than April.

I am publishing today a White Paper on the mechanics of this change. I believe that it will lead to better decisions about both taxation and spending. It will enable spending plans to be considered alongside the tax plans needed to pay for them. Above all, it will enable Government and Parliament to make more informed and rational choices between spending measures and tax changes. I hope that it will be warmly welcomed by the House.

ECONOMIC SITUATION AND PROSPECTS

This year's Budget is a Budget for the recovery. As usual, I shall begin with the current economic situation and prospects. I shall then deal with monetary policy and public finances. Finally, I will present my tax proposals. The Financial Statement and Budget Report, together with a number of press releases filling out the details of my proposals, will be available from the Vote Office as soon as I have sat down.

WORLD DEVELOPMENTS AND PROSPECTS

I turn first to international developments. Nineteen ninety one saw the weakest growth in the major seven economies in a decade, while industrial production in the G7 actually fell. This brought a sharp slowdown in the growth of world trade, which was exacerbated by the dramatic events in the former Soviet Union.

In the United States recovery was generally expected in the second half of last year. But, despite low interest rates, the upturn failed to appear towards the end of 1991. High levels of debt have made firms and households very cautious about spending, while banks have been reluctant to increase their lending.

In Japan there have been similar problems, and growth has slowed sharply. In the year to January, industrial production actually fell by 4 per cent.

The slowdown in world growth has been accompanied by lower inflation in nearly all the major economies. G7 inflation fell from over 5 per cent. at the beginning of last year to about 3 per cent. now.

But economic developments in continental Europe have been dominated by events in Germany. Over-rapid expansion of domestic demand, following reunification, led to a rise in German inflation. The German authorities responded by increasing interest rates and Germany has now moved into recession. As a consequence, other European economies are experiencing high real interest rates and weak domestic demand.

But falling inflation, and the cuts in interest rates that have already taken place in north America and Japan, will in time lead to a pick-up in confidence and demand. And as the underlying level of German inflation abates, I expect to see reductions in European interest rates.

Gross domestic product in the seven major economies is projected to grow by about 1½ per cent. in 1992, and world trade by about 4 per cent. We can expect more rapid growth in later years as the recovery gains momentum.

Some have argued that delayed recovery in the United States, and the slowdowns in Japan and Europe, are not just a cyclical phenomenon of the kind we have seen before, but herald something much more serious. It would be irresponsible for anyone in my position simply to ignore such claims. But I do not believe that they are well founded. I believe that Governments have learned the lessons of the past. Above all, they recognise that nothing could be more damaging to the world economy than a relapse into protectionism of the sort that we saw in the 1930s.

Indeed, a crucial challenge for Governments is not merely to preserve the world trading order, but to extend it. Unfortunately, not all our Community partners see this as clearly as we in Britain do. But narrow sectional interests must not be allowed to prevent the current GATT negotiations from reaching a rapid and successful conclusion. The prosperity of the world in the decades ahead rests squarely on the freedom to trade.

UNITED KINGDOM: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The most significant development in the British economy over the past year has been the sharp and sustained reduction in inflation. Retail price inflation has fallen to around 4 per cent., close to the German level, while underlying producer price inflation is at its lowest level for a generation.

Average earnings, too, are rising at the lowest rate for 25 years, suggesting that, after a decade of supply-side reform, the British labour market is operating far more effectively than before. This augurs well for employment prospects in the longer term. But, as elsewhere in the world, activity and demand in Britain have been weak. The rapid increase in demand in the late 1980s, fuelled by a sharp fall in saving and large increases in indebtedness, made a period of adjustment inevitable. Companies and households that borrowed extensively have reined in spending and repaid debt in response to higher interest rates.

Following a substantial reduction in interest rates, there were clear signs of renewed growth in the late summer and early autumn of last year—not just in confidence surveys, but also in the figures for retail sales and economic activity more generally. But, as in the United States, the recovery here was not sustained.

The effect on the British economy of recent world developments, and particularly those in the United States, cannot simply be measured by the adverse consequences for British exports. British firms have factories and offices abroad—indeed, our investment in the United States is higher than that of any other country. Conditions in one country can and do affect business confidence elsewhere. So unexpected weakness in the rest of the world has taken its toll on confidence in Britain, discouraging investment and stockbuilding. Over the year as a whole, GDP fell by nearly 2½ per cent., ½ per cent. more than my forecast of a year ago.

THE OUTLOOK FOR 1992 AND 1993

Most independent forecasters agree that 1992 will see the resumption of economic growth. The recovery is expected to start slowly, but to gather pace. I expect growth in the year to the second half of 1992 to be almost 2 per cent. The level of GDP for this year as a whole should be about 1 per cent. higher than last.

As inflation in Britain has fallen, so too have interest rates; and that has put money in the pockets of mortgage payers. Indeed, a typical family with a £30,000 mortgage is now more than 15 per cent. better off in real terms than in October 1990—nearly £30 a week. That represents a considerable stock of pent-up spending power, which will in time feed through to stronger consumer spending.

Output will also be boosted by stronger export growth as the world economy recovers. Our share of world trade in manufactures rose in 1991 for the third successive year, despite the world slowdown, and I expect further gains in the future as lower inflation leads to improved competitiveness.

The current account deficit for last year was about £4½ billion, ¾ per cent. of GDP. As domestic demand recovers, the deficit is likely to widen a little this year. At 1 per cent. of GDP for the year as a whole, it will be easily financeable.

Even with a resumption of growth, unemployment is likely to go on rising for some time. But while the increase will moderate over the months ahead, a sustained reduction in unemployment over the longer term will depend crucially on our success in keeping inflation down, and the prospects for that are better than at any time in recent economic history.

I expect retail price inflation to fall decisively below 4 per cent. by the end of the year and to be close to 3 per cent. by the middle of 1993. Producer price inflation will be even lower, down to 2 per cent. by the end of this year and to 1½ per cent. by the middle of 1993.

THE LONGER TERM PROSPECT

A whole generation has grown up to accept inflation as an unalterable fact of life. But we are now making steady progress towards price stability—an environment in which the decisions of businesses and consumers are no longer distorted by the expectation of a general upward movement in prices. Inflation has been the scourge of our economy for decades, and its defeat, not just here but elsewhere in Europe, will represent a tremendous achievement, bringing enormous benefits to British businesses and families. There are those who would put this at risk by seeking to pump up demand, but I am not prepared to take steps which would call into question the Government's determination to match or better the inflation performance of our Community partners.

And even if it were thought desirable, it is not remotely feasible for Governments to try to target the level of demand month by month or quarter by quarter. Having made such progress in getting inflation down, it would be tragic now to throw it all away with an ill-judged or ill-timed attempt to kick-start demand.

The challenge before us is not to provide some artificial short-term stimulus to the economy. It is to continue the supply-side reforms of the 1980s. Low tax and light government have produced an economic environment which spurs competition and rewards enterprise. Our job now is to build on them to help people and businesses make the most of recovery. And that will be the theme of my Budget today.

Between 1979 and the end of 1990, the number of businesses rose by almost a third. Even during the recession capital spending on plant and machinery has remained higher as a proportion of GDP than at any point in the 1970s. As a result we have seen exceptional growth in manufacturing productivity—faster than in any other G7 country in the 1980s. Industrial relations have been transformed. Fewer days were lost to industrial action in 1991 than in any year since records began a century ago.

The confidence of foreign investors in Britain's renewed economic strength is demonstrated by our continued high share of inward investment. Almost half of the direct investment in the European Community from the United States and Japan comes to the United Kingdom. Those investors recognise that Britain, with its low taxes, good industrial relations and stable currency, is the right place to come to exploit the opportunities of the single European market.

MONETARY AND EXCHANGE RATE POLICY

Whether or not the United Kingdom decides to participate in a move to a single European currency, we will be among those who meet the strict conditions required for entry. The Government believe that these conditions provide a valuable framework for setting policy in the medium term.

And that means that monetary policy is primarily directed at the maintenance of sterling's parity within the exchange rate mechanism. In due course we shall move to the narrow band of the ERM, at the current central rate of 2.95 DM.

Since ERM entry was announced in October 1990, sterling has remained within its permitted ERM bands, while interest rates have been reduced by 4½ per cent. The differential between United Kingdom and German interest rates is now at its lowest for a decade.

In common with all the major countries within the ERM, I shall set a domestic monetary target. M0, the narrow measure of money, has stayed comfortably within the range I set in the last Budget. For the year ahead I propose to continue the target range for narrow money of 0 to 4 per cent. This is consistent with a further fall in inflation combined with a recovery in output. I shall continue to watch closely other indicators of monetary conditions, including broad money and asset prices.

PUBLIC FINANCE AND FISCAL POLICY

I turn now to the public sector finances. The slowdown in the world economy over the last year has led to larger budget deficits in most industrial countries. Tax revenues and spending on some social security programmes largely depend upon the level of economic activity. So, in a recession, tax receipts are lower while social security spending rises.

But, thanks to my predecessors, we in Britain have the great advantage of having a ratio of Government debt to GDP that is very low by both historical and international standards. Indeed, the general Government debt burden is lower in the United Kingdom than in any other European Community country bar Luxembourg. That means that a rise in borrowing in response to cyclical pressures will not jeopardise the Government's firm commitment to sound finance.

The objective of fiscal policy remains to balance the budget over the medium term. In a recession borrowing will tend to rise. But there is nothing wrong with that, providing that the underlying position is sound and the budget moves back towards balance as the economy recovers. Indeed, it makes good economic sense to allow the level of Government borrowing to vary in this way over the business cycle.

For the year ending on 1 April, I expect a PSBR of a little under £14 billion, or 2¼ per cent. of GDP. The rise in the forecast since the autumn statement is due for the most part to the impact of weaker activity on revenues rather than to higher public spending. Indeed, planned public expenditure this year is likely to be a little below the level that I set in last year's Budget.

Since the full impact of the recession, on both tax revenues and public expenditure, feeds through only with a time lag, the PSBR will increase further in 1992-93. Taking account of the measures that I am announcing today, my forecast implies a PSBR next year of some 4½ per cent. of GDP, about £28 billion.

As I have said, the increased borrowing requirement reflects the delayed impact of weaker activity over the last year. Even so, I expect it to be rather lower than that of Germany, and less than half the level seen in Britain following the recession in the mid-1970s. The ratio of Government debt to GDP will rise slightly next year. But our debt burden will remain very low by international standards. As the economy recovers, and growth gathers pace, the PSBR will move back towards balance, and the debt burden will resume its downward trend.

During 1991-92 the borrowing requirement has been fully funded, and that policy will continue over the year ahead. An increased amount will be funded through national savings. A new product, a guaranteed growth bond designed to appeal to taxpayers, will be launched in the summer.

INVESTMENT

The prosperity of this country does not stem from government but from the enterprise and initiative of the British people and of British business. A recurrent theme of the Budgets delivered by my distinguished predecessors has been the desire to create a framework in which economic decisions are taken on their own merits, and not in response to distortions created by the tax system. In continuing that tradition today, my Budget will ensure that recovery is not based on some short-term boost from Government but on the decisions taken by the private sector.

The proposals that I shall be presenting today should be seen in the context of the benefits that business will receive from the measures I announced last year. In my last Budget, I cut the main rate of corporation tax by a full two percentage points, to 33 per cent., for profits earned in the 1991 financial year. That has given Britain a lower rate of corporation tax than any of our major competitors, and I propose to leave it unchanged for the year ahead.

Because corporation tax is paid in arrears, companies will feel the full impact of last year's cut only in the coming year. Combined with the other corporation tax measures that I announced last year, it will benefit businesses by some £1 billion in 1992-93.

In my autumn statement I announced substantial increases in public sector investment. In the financial year beginning 1 April investment in roads and public transport will be £5 billion, and capital spending on the national health service will be more than £2 billion. Next year, public sector asset creation—in other words, total investment spending by the public sector—will amount to nearly £30 billion.

Over the last decade, this Government have fully demonstrated their commitment to investment in our public infrastructure. It would be wholly wrong to allow the impact of the recession on the fiscal deficit to lead to cuts in our long-term investment programmes, as occurred in the 1970s. But it would be equally wrong to expect public investment or an ever-expanding public sector to lead the recovery. The recovery will be sustainable only if it is led by the private sector. Investment does not take place in a vacuum. Good quality private-sector investment will come not from artificial subsidies or incentives but in response to consumer demand.

One suggestion that has been put to me is that I should raise first year capital allowances. I have considered this proposition very carefully. I would be as concerned as anyone if I thought that the corporation tax system introduced in 1984 was acting as a drag on profitable investment. But, on average, the current tax rules allow capital investment to be written off more quickly than economic depreciation would imply. In current circumstances, any general increase in capital allowances would primarily benefit large and profitable businesses. Moreover, given the way that the corporation tax system works, those benefits would not flow through into companies' cash flow until the year after next.

The evidence suggests that the cost of higher capital allowances to the Exchequer would be several times greater than the resulting increase in investment over the next few years. I have therefore concluded that, whatever its superficial attractions, an increase in capital allowances would not be a sensible use of the resources available.

NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATE

There is a far better way to help business this year. I have decided to bring forward proposals that will be of early benefit to some 900,000 non-domestic properties, large and small, throughout the United Kingdom.

Business in England and Wales has gained much from the introduction of the uniform business rate in 1990. During the 1980s, when business rates were set by local authorities, poundages in England rose on average by over 37 per cent. more than inflation. Under the new system, rate poundages are capped in real terms.

In some cases, however, the changes in bills have been substantial, and many businesses have faced a difficult adjustment. That is why, when we introduced the uniform business rate, the Government eased the transition by phasing in the losses of those who faced large changes in their bills. But I am well aware that many of the businesses which face large increases next year have also been hard hit by the recession. I have therefore decided that their burdens should not be compounded by real increases in business rates.

The Government propose to amend the transitional arrangements already enacted for next year's business rates in England and Wales to ensure that no business property will face a real increase in rates next year. The bills for properties protected by the transitional arrangements will increase by no more than the rate of inflation, like those for other properties—500,000 business properties in England and Wales will benefit at a cost to the Exchequer of £320 million in 1992-93. The present statutory limits on real annual increases in rate bills will apply again from 1993-94. Since such increases will be from a lower base, there will be a further cost of £220 million in that year.

The present rules mean that new occupiers are not eligible for transitional relief. As the property market has weakened, this has made it more difficult for businesses to move. I therefore propose to allow businesses occupying new premises after midnight tonight to inherit the transitional protection available to the previous occupier, at a further cost of about £25 million. This should help to increase mobility and unlock the property market.

But it would be wrong to concentrate help only on those businesses who lose from the new arrangements. While the transitional arrangements have postponed losses for some companies, they have also delayed the gains for those who did worst out of the old system. I believe that businesses should see the full benefits more rapidly. I therefore propose to accelerate their gains.

From 1993-94 onwards, I propose that all businesses gaining from the 1990 reforms should be allowed to have their gains in full. So, by then, no business will be paying higher business rates than it should be doing under the new system.

In the coming year, I propose that the maximum reductions in the rate bills of the gainers should be raised to 22 per cent. in real terms for large properties, and to 27 per cent. for small properties. Those limits are nine percentage points higher than in the current year: 150,000 business properties in England and Wales will benefit at a revenue cost of £85 million in 1992-93.

These changes will not reduce the income of local authorities. Subject to Parliament's approval, the Government will pay extra money into the non-domestic rates pool to make good the shortfall in business rates revenue. These payments will not add to public expenditure.

The Government will introduce special legislation as soon as practicable to implement these proposals. In the meantime, local authorities should send out bills and collect business rates in accordance with the existing legislation and regulations. Business rate bills on properties in transition will be cut, and adjustment made for earlier higher levels of payment, when Parliament has approved the legislation and local authorities can send out new lower bills.

The proposals that I have outlined will apply to business properties in England and Wales, reducing the total business rates bill next year by 3¼ per cent. Scotland and Northern Ireland each have different arrangements for business rates. The Government propose that their total rates bills next year should likewise be reduced by 3¼ per cent. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland will be announcing the details.

These measures will bring significant and early benefit to many thousands of businesses throughout the United Kingdom. The revenue cost will be £480 million in 1992-93 and £590 million in 1993-94 but will fall away rapidly in subsequent years.

SMALL BUSINESS

My proposals on the UBR will be of particular benefit to small businesses—the lifeblood of a modern economy. Small businesses have been at the heart of the supply-side revolution in this country over the last decade. The result has been a new economic dynamism, with increased competition and a more flexible labour market.

Inevitably, taxation and regulation bear most heavily on small firms, so I have considered carefully what measures I can take to ease that burden, and in particular to ease the cash flow of small businesses. Last year, I raised the VAT registration threshold by some 40 per cent. This year, I propose to increase the threshold in line with inflation, to £36,600. One hundred and thirty-five thousand traders—one third of all those eligible—now use the cash accounting scheme for VAT, which allows small firms to delay their VAT payments until they themselves have been paid. I can now announce that the rules will be relaxed to allow traders owing less than £5,000 to Customs to use cash accounting. I hope that this will encourage many more traders to take advantage of this excellent scheme.

My decision last year to allow small employers to pay income tax and national insurance deducted at source on a quarterly rather than monthly basis was widely welcomed by small employers. I propose to raise the qualifying limit to £450 a month. That will mean that nearly ¾ million employers will be able to make payments quarterly rather than monthly.

But one problem arouses more anger in the small business community than any other. I have every sympathy for small companies which find that their larger debtors are deliberately delaying payment to boost their own cash flow. Such practices are wholly deplorable; and, while there is no easy solution, my right hon. Friends and I have looked hard at what the Government can do to help. I have a number of proposals to announce.

First, the Government propose to require larger companies to state in their annual report and accounts how quickly they pay. Second, my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor will be proposing simpler procedures in small claims and debt recovery cases.

Third, I want to see the Government's good record on the payment of bills extended to firms which win Government contracts. From next month, those successfully negotiating a contract with a Government Department will be required to include clauses in their own contracts with subcontractors which provide for the prompt payment of bills, ordinarily within 30 days of receiving a valid invoice. I believe that Government have set a good example, and I hope that large companies will follow.

For businesses facing cash flow difficulties, value added tax penalties can be the last straw. It has been put to me on many occasions that the VAT penalty regime is too strict. The serious misdeclaration penalty is catching too many minor mistakes. This must stop. In future, Customs will not normally charge penalties on underdeclarations of tax of up to £2,000. That will take over three quarters of cases out of the penalty regime, although the largest mistakes will still be penalised.

Last year I reduced the rate of penalty from 30 per cent. to 20 per cent. I now propose to cut it further, to 15 per cent. But there are other aspects of the regime which require more consideration, and Customs are issuing today a further consultation document on the options for longer-term reform.

I believe that the highest rates of default surcharge levied on traders who submit late VAT returns or payments cannot be justified. I therefore propose to reduce the maximum rate from 30 per cent. to 20 per [illegible] measures, taken together, will reduce the penalties businesses might otherwise have had to pay Customs by £35 million next year.

One of the other complaints I have heard most frequently over the years is that it is unjust that taxpayers cannot be awarded costs when they appeal before the special commissioners. I now propose to introduce a measure which would give the Lord Chancellor power to make new rules about the hearing of appeals, including the powers to award costs where either party has acted wholly unreasonably.

INHERITANCE TAX

I have one final change to announce which will be of substantial benefit, particularly to small family businesses. I propose to take most family businesses out of inheritance tax altogether. This will cost £10 million in 1992-93, and £25 million in 1993-94. Relief from inheritance tax for interests in unincorporated businesses, for shareholdings greater than 25 per cent. in unquoted companies, and for working farmers will be increased from 50 per cent. to 100 per cent.

Shares dealt on the unlisted securities market, which are generally less liquid than shares with a full stock market quotation, will from today be treated like unquoted shares. That means that shareholdings of over 25 per cent. will also generally be free from inheritance tax.

For shareholdings of 25 per cent. or less in unquoted companies, and for agricultural landlords, the rate of relief will rise from 30 per cent. to 50 per cent. The 50 per cent. relief will also extend to smaller shareholdings in USM companies and to controlling shareholdings in quoted companies.

Inheritance and capital are no longer a privilege of the wealthy few. Ordinary families want to be able to pass on the wealth that they have built up over their lives to their children without an excessive proportion being taken by tax. Over the years to come I shall continue to look for ways of lightening the burden of inheritance tax. This year I propose to raise the threshold for inheritance tax by more than inflation, to £150,000. This will cost about £10 million in 1992-93. I intend to raise the threshold for capital gains tax in line with inflation, to £5,800.

Taken together, the measures that I am proposing on business rates, on VAT and on inheritance tax will be of very substantial benefit to British business as a whole and to small business in particular in the year ahead.

OTHER BUSINESS MEASURES

Over the past year I have received many representations about surplus advance corporation tax. ACT is paid by companies when they pay dividends. It serves two purposes: first, to discharge the shareholders' basic rate income tax liability; and, second, as a payment towards the company's own corporation tax liability. But some companies paying dividends out of foreign profits taxed abroad find that they are now paying more ACT than they can set against United Kingdom tax.

That is a significant problem for those affected. But it is also highly complex, and huge amounts of revenue are potentially at stake. A satisfactory and lasting solution will need to address the ways in which different national systems of corporation tax interact. This is currently the subject of a review sponsored by the European Commission, and it is clearly an issue to which the Government will have to return.

Its importance is of course increased by the abolition, from 1 January 1993, of fiscal frontiers within the European Community. That will give British business access to the largest home market in the world. But it will also necessitate a number of technical changes to our VAT and excise systems. As I announced last October, one consequence of the single market is that businesses which import from other European Community countries will pay VAT on those imports later than they do now, giving some 90,000 businesses a welcome cash-flow benefit.

This change will add substantially to the PSBR in 1992-93. I therefore announced last year that, from this autumn, the largest VAT payers—those who paid over £2 million in VAT in 1990-91—would be required to submit VAT returns monthly rather than quarterly as now. It has been put very forcefully to me that the requirement for monthly returns would place an undue administrative burden on the businesses concerned. I have listened carefully to these representations, and I now intend to take steps to allay the concerns raised by those affected.

I have asked Customs to implement a system of monthly payments on account for these large businesses, but I propose to allow them to continue to submit returns quarterly. This will avoid the requirement to fill in VAT returns every month, while still offsetting the cost to the Exchequer of postponed accounting for imports. Compared to my original proposal for monthly returns, payments on account will cost the Exchequer some £200 million in 1992-93, with a corresponding benefit again to the businesses concerned. I will introduce legislation to establish the basis for these new arrangements.

I also propose to introduce legislation to prevent the business tax rules from being manipulated to secure an unjustifiable tax deferment when rent is paid between connected persons. The manipulation which has already occurred has involved tax of some hundreds of millions of pounds. This loophole will be closed immediately.

I have one change to make to the business expansion scheme. It has been put to me that the BES could play a valuable part in helping to ease the problem of mortgage repossessions. At present companies can use the BES to acquire empty repossessed houses, but there are complications if the houses are still occupied. I propose to make it easier for the BES to be used for mortgage rescue schemes where owner-occupiers in difficulties wish to stay in their homes as assured tenants. This will add to the impact of the measures I announced in December to help the housing market.

But I have also looked closely at the entire rationale behind the business expansion scheme, which is an exceptionally generous tax relief. When my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) introduced it in 1983, the venture capital industry was in its infancy, and there was concern that the investment needs of small firms were not well understood and provided for.

The BES has been extremely successful. Over £2 billion has been raised and invested in qualifying schemes of all kinds. And Britain now has a venture capital industry the equal of that anywhere in the world, outside the United States. But the provisions of the business expansion scheme have become ever more complex; and nowadays only a small part of the total invested goes to small businesses.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) made clear when they were introduced, the BES provisions for assured tenancies were intended to expire at the end of 1993. I have decided that it is unnecessary to continue the business expansion scheme beyond that date, not only for assured tenancies, but for other investments as well. BES will therefore come to an end on 31 December 1993. As I have said, it has fulfilled a useful purpose. But its removal will significantly improve the neutrality of the tax system; and some 45 pages of complex legislation will be removed from the statute book.

As a result of my announcement today, there is likely to be some acceleration in investment, which will be welcome. In the long run there will be substantial savings, perhaps £130 million a year.

Last year, I made it clear that I was concerned about the position of the British film industry and that I would consider carefully any further proposals that the industry brought forward. I have done so. Although a special tax regime already exists, the industry has long argued that the provisions for writing off expenditure do not fully take account of their special circumstances, and in particular of the cash flow problems that may be caused by the sometimes lengthy gap between the completion of a film and its release. I propose two measures to alleviate the position.

First, relief for pre-production expenditure will be available as it is incurred; and, second, production expenditure will be available for write-off at a fixed rate of one third each year, on a straight-line basis, starting immediately on the completion of the film. This will have a cost of about £5 million in the first year, and around £15 million in 1993-94.

CARS

The motor industry is and will remain at the very heart of British manufacturing.

Facing a sharp fall in domestic demand over the last year, the industry responded in exactly the right way, by switching production to exports, which rose by 20 per cent. in 1991. The fall in domestic sales should not be allowed to obscure this growing strength, which should make Britain a net exporter of cars by 1996 for the first time since 1974.

None the less, I recognise that the last year has been a difficult one, and the measures I am proposing today will help the industry, while building on and continuing the reform of the taxation of cars that I and my predecessors have introduced.

Before the 1988 Budget, the car scale charges—the income tax charge on those who have the benefit of a company car—were too low. Since then, we have moved much closer to realistic levels. I propose this year to increase the scale charges only in line with inflation. Otherwise, the real value of the tax payable would actually fall.

But there are still aspects of the car scale charges which are both arbitrary and unfair. For most cars the tax payable is determined not by reference to the value of the car but rather by the car's engine size. As the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has pointed out, this causes distortions. It also discriminates against diesel cars. The unfairness in the current system may have been acceptable when the tax charge was only a fraction of the true value to the user, but that is no longer the case.

We need a system that better measures the value of the benefit. That means basing the tax charge on the price of the car, not its engine size. I therefore propose to introduce price-based scales as soon as practicable. The Inland Revenue will be publishing a consultative document in the summer on the details and timing of such a move.

The car fuel scales, which measure the taxable benefit of free private fuel provided by the employer, have remained frozen since 1987. I propose to increase the scale for free petrol by 4·5 per cent. But at the moment we apply the same charge to diesel as to petrol, even though the cash value of free diesel is less.

That means the fuel scales are too high for diesel cars, so I propose to introduce a new, and significantly lower, scale for diesel, bringing the tax charge closer into line with the value of the benefit received.

While the income tax treatment of cars has until recent years been much too generous, in other ways cars have been the subject of discriminatory tax treatment. I have some changes to announce that will reduce that discrimination, and provide a boost for all businesses buying cars and for the car industry itself.

First, companies that offered their employees the alternative of cash or a car have found themselves liable to pay VAT on the salary forgone by those who chose the car. That is clearly nonsensical. I shall be laying an order to make clear beyond doubt that, from 1 April, a VAT charge will no longer be imposed in these so-called salary sacrifice cases.

Second, the capital allowances available for business cars are currently restricted for cars costing more than £8,000. That limit is now unrealistically low and I propose to increase it to £12,000, enabling full capital allowances to be given on most business cars. This measure will cost £50 million in 1993-94, building up to £220 milion when the change has its maximum effect. But the revenue cost in the long term will be small.

At present, most taxi and car hire firms and driving schools cannot recover the VAT they pay on their cars even though their cars are their business. I propose to end this anomaly from 1 August, at a cost of £50 million in 1992-93.

Those measures will go some way towards improving the neutrality of the tax system as its affects cars purchased by businesses. But I have one further measure to announce, which will affect all those buying new cars.

In 1973, car tax was introduced, to make up the difference between VAT and the former purchase tax. It has remained unchanged, at 10 per cent. of the wholesale price, ever since. This tax distorts consumer spending, and car manufacturers have long complained that our taxes on new cars are higher than those of other main European producers.

This Government have always sought to reduce distortions in the tax system, and I therefore propose to reduce car tax by half, to 5 per cent., from midnight tonight. That will directly reduce the tax burden on all new cars. I trust that car dealers will respond by passing the full benefit of this reduction—about £400 on a typical family car—to the buyer. The halving of car tax will cost about £635 million in 1992-93, and £765 million in the following year.

EXCISE DUTIES

I turn now to excise duties. Last year I raised the duties on alcohol in line with inflation, and I propose to do the same this year. From 6 pm tonight, this will mean an increase in the tax on a typical pint of beer of just over 1p, just under 5p on a bottle of wine and 28p on a bottle of spirits. I also propose to raise the duty on unleaded petrol and on diesel in line with inflation.

On leaded petrol, I propose a rather larger increase, of 7½ per cent., taking the tax differential between leaded and unleaded petrol to over 5p a litre. That will continue our long-standing and successful policy of encouraging motorists to move away from leaded petrol, which now represents little more than half the market.

I propose to increase vehicle excise duty on cars, taxis and light vans by £10, and to freeze it again this year for lorries.

I propose to raise the duty on tobacco by about 10 per cent.—roughly the same real increase as last year. That will add 13p to the price of a packet of 20 cigarettes. The duties on other tobacco products will also rise by about 10 per cent., apart from that on pipe tobacco, which will rise only in line with inflation. Benjamin Franklin once remarked that nothing was certain except death and taxes, but for some people the latter may help to delay the former. As for the irreconcilables—among whom I count myself—I have one minor compensation: I propose to abolish from 1 January 1993 the duty charged on matches and mechanical lighters.

I also have a change to announce on betting duty, with consequences for the racing industry. I propose to cut the rate of betting duty by one quarter of 1 per cent., reducing the tax take by £15 million in 1992-93. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department will be announcing later today his determination of the horse race betting levy, and he will be making proposals to ensure that the greater part of that reduction will be channelled to the horse racing industry. That is an important part of the measure, and I shall review the cut in betting duty next year.

A proportion of the reduction, of course, will be attributable to betting on greyhound racing. I hope that voluntary arrangements can be found to direct some of that money to help the greyhound racing industry, and my right hon. Friend will be exploring the possibilities with interested parties.

I should also tell right hon. and hon. Members quite clearly what I am not proposing. I know that there is particular concern about the European Commission's proposals on the taxation of alcohol. But let me make it clear: I will not accept any deal in Brussels that would ride roughshod over the interests of the British cider industry. Nor will I accept a deal that would allow member states to continue to levy no excise duty on wine which they make but which forces them to put up duties on spirits which we make.

CHARITIES

Over the past 13 years, we have introduced a number of measures directed at encouraging charitable giving. We introduced the payroll giving scheme. We have extended and widened value added tax reliefs—and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, when he was Chancellor, introduced the gift aid scheme.

Gift aid allows tax relief on one-off donations of £600 or more. It has been a considerable success. Charities have received nearly £200 million in income under the scheme. I propose that from 1 July 1992 the minimum gift should be reduced to £400—the figure proposed by the Council for Charitable Support and the Charities Tax Reform Group. I shall not go further, because I know that some charities are concerned that to do so might reduce the attraction of regular giving through charitable covenants.

But I propose some changes to the arrangements for tax relief on charitable covenants, intended to reduce administration costs for charities and to help them to maintain a steady and reliable flow of income. And I propose a number of minor improvements to the VAT reliefs available to charities and for aids to the disabled.

SAVINGS

Savings are a passport to personal independence and security; the very foundation of a property-owning democracy. That is why, over the last decade, the Government have set out to lighten the burden of taxation on saving.

We have reduced the basic and higher rates of income tax, and abolished the investment income surcharge. We have stopped taxing the savings of non-taxpayers. And we have extended savings incentives to the mass of ordinary tax-paying savers by introducing tax-exempt special savings accounts—TESSAs—which allow people to invest up to £9,000 over five years in a bank or building society account.

We have also introduced new and popular incentives to invest in shares. In 1986 we introduced personal equity plans to enhance the attraction of investment in shares by making the income and capital gains from them free of tax. Today, I want to improve PEPs still further by removing the £3,000 limit on the amount that can be invested in unit or investment trusts. I propose that from April people should be able to invest up to the full £6,000 a year in qualifying investment and unit trusts. This new opportunity—which will cost £[illegible] million in 1993-94—will provide further encouragement to PEPs, and help to small savers.

We do not see the returns to savings as "unearned income", to be taxed more heavily than earned income. On the contrary, we will continue to lighten the burden of tax on savings, and to broaden the range of investments which receive savings incentives.

PENSIONERS

No one has benefited more from our encouragement of savings than pensioners. In the 1980s, most pensioners saw their real incomes rise sharply, as inflation fell and the value of occupational pensions rose. On average, pensioners' real incomes increased by more than a third between 1979 and 1988. More than half of pensioners now have a second pension, and pensioners have seen their income from saving double since 1979.

I propose that the income tax allowances for the over-65s—both the personal allowances and the married couple's allowances—should increase in line with inflation. The income limit for the age-related allowances will also increase in line with inflation.

Increases in the age allowances can, of course, benefit only those pensioners who pay tax. But this year I also want to help the less fortunate pensioners—those whose savings have been eroded over the years by inflation; those who have only modest occupational pensions; and those who retired too early to take advantage of the growth of SERPS.

Last October, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security announced that the income support rates for pensioners would be increased this April by at least 7 per cent.; and there were extra increases for disabled pensioners and the over-80s.

I now propose a further increase in income support rates, of £2 for single pensioners and £3 for pensioner couples. When this comes into effect, in October, all pensioners on income support will be at least £5·75 a week better off than they are now, and some will be as much as £10·70 a week better off. In total, some 5 million people will benefit. And it will bring the real increase in spending on benefits for poorer pensioners since 1989 to more than £700 million.

The cost—some £145 million in 1992-93 and £305 million in the following year—will be financed from within the existing public expenditure plans.

INCOME TAX

Turning now to income tax more generally, I do not propose this year to increase the basic rate limit, the level of taxable income above which people begin to pay higher rate tax. Compared with indexation, this will save £180 million in 1992-93 and £290 million the following year.

Nor do I propose any increase in the married couple's allowance for couples under 65 or the allowances that are linked to it. But I do have one significant change to announce. The introduction of independent taxation in 1990 brought privacy and independence to married women by ending the rule that a wife's income was assumed to be her husband's. This change was widely welcomed. However, it did not eliminate completely the discriminatory features of the old system.

At present, the husband receives the benefit of the married couple's allowance unless his income is too low to make use of it. That means that the husband's tax allowances are almost always greater than those of his wife. It also means that couples where the wife is a higher rate taxpayer and the husband is not pay more tax than couples where the husband is the higher rate taxpayer. That cannot be right. It is hardly surprising that the MCA has been described by some as the male chauvinist allowance.

I propose to change this system. From 1993-94, couples will have a choice. If they take no action, the husband will continue to receive the MCA as now. They will be able to decide that the wife should receive the whole allowance, or that they should split it; or the wife will be able to claim half at her own request. This measure will have only a small effect on revenue—£10 million in 1993-94—but it will make the tax system much fairer to married women.

The Government have cut the basic rate of income tax by 8p since we took office in 1979, to 25p. And, as the House knows, we are committed to reducing the basic rate to 20p as and when it is prudent to do so. I reaffirm that commitment today.

For the year ahead, I propose that the personal allowance should be uprated only in line with inflation. It will rise from £3,295 to £3,445. But having reflected carefully on the priorities for this year's Budget, I have decided that for the year ahead it is right to leave the basic rate at 25p in the pound.

I believe that it is possible, desirable and, indeed, prudent to take a substantial step this year towards our goal of a 20p basic rate for all taxpayers. It is neither necessary nor desirable that anyone earning more than their personal allowances should start paying income tax at a rate of 25 per cent. With national insurance contributions on top, that means that the Government take a third of every extra £1 earned even from the low paid. In my view, that is simply too much; and I believe that we can and should reduce that burden.

So I propose this year to cut the rate of income tax by 5p, to 20p, for the first £2,000 of taxable income. That will benefit every taxpayer in the country, but it will be of proportionately greater benefit to those on low incomes. It represents a decisive first step towards the Government's objective of a 20p basic rate.

In the next Parliament, we will gradually move closer to that goal. We will be able to do that in two possible ways: either by extending the width of the 20p band so that it covers increasing numbers of basic rate taxpayers, or by reducing the basic rate itself.

Next year, nearly 4 million people on low incomes will already be paying tax only at the 20p rate. Their income tax bill will be cut by a fifth. That will improve their work incentives and make it more worth while for those not currently in work to take lower paid jobs.

Nearly 25 million people—every taxpayer in the country—will see their starting rate of tax reduced to 20p. Combined with the indexation of the personal allowance, that will reduce taxes for the large majority of taxpayers by at least £2·64 a week.

Mortgage interest tax relief at source will continue to be given at 25 per cent. for everybody, irrespective of whether they are a non-taxpayer, a 20p taxpayer, a basic rate taxpayer, or a higher rate taxpayer. But those in the 20p band will only be liable for tax at 20 per cent. on their savings.

The new 20p band will cost £1·8 billion in 1992-93 and £2·3 billion in the following year, broadly equivalent to the cost of a penny off the basic rate. But, in comparison with a penny off the basic rate, the 20p band will be of particular benefit to those on the lowest incomes. Indeed, about three-quarters of the cost will go to taxpayers earning less than average male earnings.

I now turn to the question of value added tax. I have a very important announcement to make, to which I hope the whole House will listen carefully. I have no need, no proposals and no plans either to raise or to extend the scope of VAT.

The total impact of the taxation proposals I have put forward today, taken together with measures announced since my last Budget, will reduce the burden of taxation by around £1·5 billion, equivalent to ¼ per cent. of GDP, in the next financial year.

PERORATION

The Budget I have presented today is a Budget for the recovery. It maintains the policies that have slashed inflation and reduced interest rates. And it includes measures that will help businesses, large and small, up and down the country.

But it is also a Budget that cuts taxes for every taxpayer in the country, a Budget which marks another significant step in our constant drive to leave individuals and families with more of what they earn. Over the past decade our belief in low taxation has brought unparalleled growth in the living standards of the British people. My Budget today continues that process, and I commend it to the House.

PROVISIONAL COLLECTION OF TAXES

Motion made, and Question,

That, pursuant to section 5 of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968, provisional statutory effect shall be given to the following motions:—

(a) Spirits (motion No. 2);
(b) Beer (motion No. 3);
(c) Wine and made-wine (motion No. 4);
(d) Cider (motion No. 5);
(e) Tobacco products (rates) (motion No. 6);
(f) Hydrocarbon oil (motion No. 8);
(g) Vehicles excise duty (rates: cars etc.) (motion No. 9);
(h) Vehicles excise duty (rates: tricycles) (motion No. 10);
(i) Value added tax (penalty for serious misdeclaration etc.) (motion No. 18);
(j) Car tax (rates) (motion No. 20).—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 50 (Ways and Means Motions), and agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I now call on the Chancellor of the Exchequer to move the motion entitled "Amendment of the law". It is on that motion that the Budget debate will take place today and on succeeding days. The remaining motions will not be put until the end of the Budget debate next week, and then they will be decided without debate.

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;
(b) for refunding any amount of tax;
(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importations; or
(d) for relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

[Relevant document: European Community Document No. 10212/91 and COR2, the Commission's Annual Economic Report 1991-92.]

4.42 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): First, I offer the traditional congratulations to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the delivery of his speech, especially since he had a lot of information to offer and took rather longer providing it than he did last year and than has been customary in recent years. Nevertheless, we listened with interest. Indeed, I offer my congratulations with rather greater felicity than I usually do because this will be the last speech by a Conservative Chancellor for many years to come.

I also want to follow an even more pleasant tradition and welcome several of the measures that the Chancellor announced this afternoon. The step that he made in the direction of radical reform of the Budget process is certainly worth a warm welcome. It has been the policy of our party for some years past, and it is good that there is a consensus. The job of the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) will be made easier next year when he speaks from my current position after the change has taken place.

We should also like to welcome several of the changes that the Chancellor is introducing in respect of businesses, large and small. I refer to changes in the VAT arrangements for small businesses and the effective freezing of the uniform business rate—and to other arrangements to do with the inflation rate. We are bound to wonder, as we opposed the introduction of the UBR in the first place, why the Government waited until the recession had continued for 21 months instead of making earlier changes which would have saved many good businesses. The UBR is lingering evidence of the shambles of the poll tax system, and any changes in the right direction are to be welcomed—before we make the further changes that will be welcomed by business during the rest of this year, when we introduce our reforms.

For the automobile manufacturing industry, which has been under terrible pressure, especially during the recession—and still—the changes in the special car tax must be welcome. The Chancellor has made here another worthwhile step worthy of our support.

We also support the modest but welcome steps that he has taken in respect of the British film industry. I had hoped last year that he would take up the proposals of the working party; I am glad to see that he has rectified that this year. As the right hon. Gentleman is making large changes to the business expansion scheme this might have been an opportunity for him to make the scheme serve the interests of the film industry, which certainly needs support and which, given its remarkable record again last year, is worthy of that support.

We are in the midst of the longest recession since the 1930s, with unemployment rising towards 2·75 million again, with record repossessions and bankruptcies. What our country needed today——

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Will the right hon. Gentleman—[HON. MEMBERS: "Sit down!"]

Mr. Kinnock: What our country needed today was a Budget for strengthening Britain and promoting sustainable recovery out of the recession caused by the Government. What we got was a Budget to try to bribe voters with borrowed money which they will have to repay. The borrowing that the Government are raising to finance tax cuts is not, as the Chancellor would insist, prudent economic strategy: it is a panic-stricken pre-election political sweetener.

For the sake of a few weeks of an election campaign the Government are going to try to saddle the British electors and taxpayers with many years of debt. The borrowing —*[Laughter.]* When Conservative Members realise that the Government are running a public sector borrowing requirement of £28 billion perhaps they will be a little more silent on the subject—the more so since the PSBR is the result of a combination of long-term failure and recession and short-term fear in the face of the electorate.

The kind of borrowing that the Government propose —the extra borrowing to fund tax cuts—will not provide a single extra school or hospital. It will not provide a single extra place on a training scheme or in a childcare nursery. It will not create a single extra research project or transport improvement, or put an extra policeman on the streets. This debt is just extra Tory dead-weight debt, an extra £2 billion which gives a new meaning to the idea of state funding for political parties.

There are no excuses for this Government. In 13 years of power they have had £100 billion worth of oil revenues, £40 billion worth of income from privatisation and the revenues from the highest tax burden ever imposed on the British people by any Government. At the end of all that, the best that the Chancellor could come here today and forecast in his Budget statement was a paltry 1 per cent. growth, further rises in unemployment, a continuing balance of payments deficit, despite the recession, and a PSBR of £28 billion. That is double this year's PSBR, which the Chancellor acknowledged to be £14 billion. What a terrible confession——

Mr. Tim Smith: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kinnock: What a terrible confession the Chancellor had to make to the effects of a mismanagement that has brought this country to the point where the Government have got those finances and that growth into such a parlous state. Even now, it is quite probable that the Chancellor is not making a dependable forecast. He is having one of his visions of green shoots all over again. He started having his attack of green shoots—his equivalent of pink elephants—last year in his Budget speech. He started promising then

> "the recovery will begin around the middle of the year"—

that is, in 1991. He told us that output would increase

> "by about 2 per cent."—*[Official Report*, 19 March 1991; Vol. 188, c. 165.]

He firmly anticipated "an added boost" in the "revival" in "consumer confidence". He said that the Budget deficit would be £8 billion. In reality, as the country knows to its cost, output did not grow by 2 per cent.—it fell. The promised revival in confidence and performance simply did not take place and the deficit was not £8 billion but, as the Chancellor has just told us, £14 billion—75 per cent. higher than his original forecast. The Chancellor's predictions were not simply inaccurate; they turned out to be complete fiction.

The Chancellor has told the Select Committee that

> "forecasting is an inexact science"

and it may be that he is a hapless victim of the forecasters —innocent putty in their hands. He is, after all, only the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In that case, we have to ask him what weight we can attach to the forecasts that he has been offering us this year, especially that on the PSBR.

We also have to ask the Chancellor, if the forecasters were inexact and he was consequently in error and knew by January of this year that he was wrong, how could he still say to the January meeting of the National Economic Development Council:

> "The policy would not have been different had we known the outcome"?

People all over the country have lost jobs, businesses and homes. What faith can any of them have in a Chancellor of the Exchequer who says that, even had he known at the outset that this was going to become the longest recession, his

> "policy would not have been different"?

Despite all the redundancies, the bankruptcies and repossessions, he still, as he put it himself, regarded unemployment and recession as a "price well worth paying". The Chancellor was sticking to his economic guns even when they were turned on the people of this country.

In his last Budget statement, the Chancellor told us that he was dedicated to

> "a simple rule, which . . . requires the Government to finance their spending honestly."—*[Official Report*, 19 March 1991; Vol. 188, c. 167.]

When I heard the Chancellor laying down his simple rule, I was reminded of one of his predecessors. I recall the Chancellor who was excoriating "successive Governments" who, he said,

> "had spent more than they were prepared to raise honestly from taxation and . . . made up the shortfall by borrowing. They left that bill to be picked up by future generations." —*[Official Report*, 20 March 1990; Vol. 169, c. 1016.]

It was a stern rebuke to those dishonest borrowers and, interestingly, it did not come from a Chancellor in the distant past, not from a Victorian or even from one of the advisers to Henry VII; it came from the last Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Huntingdon, now the Prime Minister, just two years ago in his Budget statement.

When I compare those words about honest taxation and borrowing with the Budget we have just heard, a Budget in which the Government will borrow £28 billion, of which £2 billion will go for tax cuts, I realise that I do not have to condemn the Government—they are condemned out of their own mouth and on the basis of their own words. They are the dishonest borrowers whom their Prime Minister was so busy denouncing. It is not just the Prime Minister and the Chancellor who have cursed Governments for spending more than they were prepared to raise honestly from taxation.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. David Mellor): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kinnock: It is an exception to do so, but by all means.

Mr. Mellor: Will the right hon. Gentleman— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Have hon. Gentlemen started the election early? As I understood it, the Leader of the Opposition had given way.

Mr. Kinnock *indicated assent.*

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. Are we to take it that he intends to oppose the 20p tax band that the Chancellor has just announced?

Mr. Kinnock: It must have been the word "dishonest" that brought the right hon. Gentleman to his feet.

Mr. Mellor: Answer the question.

Mr. Kinnock: I will if the right hon. Gentleman will just shut up. I will answer it, no problem. We shall, next week, be offering our alternative Budget. The country will see in that how we shall have a much better offer to make to the taxpayers of Britain and to the people of Britain, who, in the great majority, want jobs, decent public services, a health service, an education system and not the bribes that the Government are offering them. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chancellor was given a reasonable hearing and the Leader of the Opposition is entitled to no less. I very much hope that we shall not get into red card territory.

Mr. Kinnock: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The right hon. Gentleman and I just made a little history there because, as far as I know, it is the first time that the Leader of the Opposition has been interrupted in the course of his response to the Budget statement. What a shame, now that we have established this precedent, that we shall be changing the Budget process, so possibly the same conditions will not arise again. However, I can say on behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) that if the then Leader of the Opposition wants to intervene, he will give way.

Mr. Mellor: Answer the question.

Mr. Kinnock: I have just given the answer.

We have been treated for months with teases about the Budget. We have been treated to the sight of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and other members of the Treasury team saying that they could not disclose anything. I think that, in the name of reasonability, they could at least give us another six days to produce our own statement in opposition to, an alternative to, what we have heard this afternoon.

It has not just been the Chancellor and the Prime Minister who have been cursing Governments for spending

> "more than they were prepared to raise honestly from taxation".—[*Official Report* 20 March 1990; Vol. 169, c. 1016.]

It is only weeks since the chairman of the Conservative party called borrowing "deferred taxation". The right hon. Gentleman probably regrets that now. He and the rest of his colleagues have to go into a general election with a promise to make tax cuts that are funded by borrowing, and that means that they will have to go into that general election campaign guaranteeing that they will make their children and everyone else's children pay the cost of their electioneering. But it is worse than that, because borrowing for tax cuts for this generation leaves the next generation with debts and nothing else.

Borrowing for tax cuts does not provide the next generation with the means of generating wealth or with any extra ways of producing revenues to repay the borrowing. Borrowing for tax cuts leaves no extra advantages, only extra burdens. The difference between borrowing for investment in the future and borrowing for immediate consumption is the difference between borrowing to put an extension on one's house and borrowing to go away for a day at the races. That is what the Government aim to do, just a few weeks at the races before they come second.

Perhaps the Chancellor will tell us whether he thinks that it is all right to compromise our children's future and to burden rising generations with the cost of our generation's tax cuts because he believes that the reduction in taxes now is the best way to stimulate the economy into recovery. If he believes that, the Chancellor is wrong— even about that. The burden of personal and company debt in Britain is so big that some of the borrowed giveaway would doubtless be used to reduce that record burden and not to generate fresh economic activity.

Mr. Tim Smith *rose*——

Mr. Kinnock: Such is the run-down in British industry that, as the Engineering Employers Federation and several others testify, much of the borrowed giveaway would be spent on imports and not on generating jobs in Britain. The Government know that, but they still borrow for tax cuts in an economy which, despite the long recession, has a rising balance of payments deficit as the Chancellor again confirmed in his speech. In making those changes the Government demonstrate their desperation and their irresponsibility.

If the Chancellor believes that borrowing for tax cuts is an effective way to promote recovery, he has to answer a simple question. If borrowing for tax cuts is the fast lane to recovery, why did not he hit upon this great scheme last year or a year ago when the recession was already nine months old instead of waiting until the recession was 21 months old? Why did not he do it a year ago when he was forecasting that Government borrowing would be just £8 billion instead of £28 billion? Why did not he do it when 50,000 more companies were still in existence or a year ago when 100,000 more families were still in their homes? Most of all, why did not the Chancellor do it a year ago when 800,000 more people were still in their jobs?

The answer is obvious. The Chancellor did not take any action to combat recession because there was no election to come just weeks after the Budget. Now the election looms and borrowing, yesterday's original sin, has become today's prudent virtue. However, the debt will still have to be paid. Perhaps the Chancellor wishes to avoid burdening the next generation with the cost of money that has been borrowed for these pre-election tax cuts. That would be noble of him but, of course, there is only one way for him to stop the obligation falling on the next generation, and it would be quickly to reclaim the cost of this year's borrowing by raising taxes on the present generation.

Obviously, that would mean that what he gave with one hand this year he would have to take back with both hands next year.

If the debt that the Chancellor has run up for tax cuts was not to be permanent, he would have to repay it with higher and wider VAT and other taxes and charges. I heard what the Chancellor said about having no plans to make changes in VAT. It was a faithful echo of what his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir. G. Howe) used to say in those precise words before the Government doubled VAT at the beginning of their period of government.

The Chancellor knows that this is the only alternative to saddling rising generations with tax. The Prime Minister also knows it. All that they have not done is to admit it. I shall give the Chancellor an opportunity to make his Budget a little more honest. First, I ask him to acknowledge the basic truth that money borrowed for tax cutting would soon have to be repaid by tax raising if he was to keep his pledge to balance the Budget over the cycle. That must be the case. The Chancellor shakes his head. Unless he has developed a new system of mathematics, what I have said must be the case. One way or another that money will have to be repaid.

Secondly, I ask him whether he would do that in this generation or leave the unavoidable task of repayment to the next generation. Which is it to be—extra tax for our children or extra tax for us? I know that the Chancellor could tell us now if he wanted to. He must have worked it out. If he can give an honest answer so that the country will hear about the real cost of his Budget and who will pay that cost, he should rise and tell us. It should not be difficult because all that he has to do is to repeat the recent words of the Prime Minister who said:

> "if borrowing takes the strain,"—

which it clearly is—

> "taxes . . . have to go up to service the debt".

If there is not an acknowledgement of that, so much for the "simple rule" of honest financing and for the Prime Minister's declarations about honest taxation and borrowing. So much for this discredited Government.

Borrowing money for tax cuts in this recession will not stimulate recovery in any significant or sustained way. It will not strengthen the economy or improve the essential public services. If the borrowed money goes into consumption, it will suck in imports and increase the deficit and debt, and bring a rise in inflation which will be combated in due course by higher interest rates, so pushing the economy back into recession. That is where Tory policies have led this country already, and that is why the British people do not want to rejoin the treadmill that they have twice been on in the past 13 years.

The British people know that in this recession, if there is to be borrowed money available, it must be invested in industry, construction, capital works, transport and other essential services. People know that if borrowing is used in that way it will generate sustained orders, production, profits and employment in Britain. It will create wealth and incomes by building a recovery with staying power. It will generate the extra revenue that will be needed in future for rising standards of health provision, education opportunities, childcare and proper security for the old.

That is the kind of resilient recovery that Britain wants and needs. The Government have never been able to produce a resilient recovery because they have always relied on the consumption-led recovery that the Chancellor advocated yet again in his speech. We need an investment-led recovery that will make Britain well equipped, well trained, competitive, consistently successful and socially just. That change will never come from this Government. They have got it wrong for the past 13 years and they will not start to get it right now. They have had all that time in power and at the end of it, it is a matter of fact that our country is under-trained, under-invested and under-performing.

Because of the Government's policies, Britain is increasingly dependent on imports and is still in recession. Our essential public services are run down, and poverty is spreading across the land. Now the Government are asking the country to believe that, having got it so wrong for so long, they can with this Budget put it all right. They cannot be believed: they are not believed. That is why they will be beaten. They are hollow men—and the Tory Government ends not with a recovery bang but with a bribery whimper. The British people will not be deceived. They want real recovery. They will not support the bribers; they will support the builders.

5.10 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): The speech of the Leader of the Opposition showed his attitude clearly. We have heard that there is to be a £30 billion programme of public capital spending—a larger sum than the public sector borrowing requirement—yet there was no account of that in his speech.

The right hon. Gentleman was asked what he would do about the 20p in the pound tax rate for the lower paid. He ducked the question and was asked it again, and again he ducked it. It is my guess that by the time that he reaches a press conference he will have been able to take advice from his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) or from other right hon. and hon. Friends. They will explain to him that he has to say either that the Labour party will vote against 20p in the pound or that it will support the reduction.

The right hon. Gentleman will not be able to get away with his tight response when replying to the Budget statement on behalf of the Opposition. It was seen to be inadequate and it disappointed his supporters. The reaction of Opposition Members at the conclusion of his speech showed that he is not up to the job of moving across the Chamber to the Government Benches.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that, to put it in a phrase, the Leader of the Opposition has been kebabed by the Budget?

Mr. Bottomley: I am not sure about that. One needs to be fair to him. He did not have much time to prepare his response to the contents of the Budget. He had to work on the assumptions that appeared in the newspapers. It is wrong to spend too much time criticising the right hon. Gentleman, because he has done a great deal with the Labour party during his time as Leader of the Opposition. It is plain, however, that there is likely to be a change of some sort on the Opposition Benches after the election. As the election has not yet been announced, perhaps we can leave that to the debate that will take place later this week.

There will be a welcome throughout the country for many of the imaginative proposals that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced. The idea of using the rate of 20p in the pound for the first

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£2,000 of taxable income is imaginative and will be welcomed. If it did not lead to a reduction in the basic rate of tax, it would be wrong. The introduction of the proposal as a stepping stone towards a reduction in the overall rate is to be welcomed.

Many people will understand that, whatever we may or may not want to do to those higher rates of tax, there are many others who are in and out of work. That is the reality, and it can be a tragedy for them. When someone in that position finds work and income, but is then subject to income tax of 25p in the pound plus national insurance stoppages, those are disincentives. It leads also to difficulties in the eventual merging of the tax and benefits system.

I recommend that both major parties in time adopt the idea of putting the social security system within an extended arm of the Treasury, so that on one side the Inland Revenue reports to the Treasury while on the other the social security system reports to it. That would enable the Chancellor of the Exchequer to decide how the tax and benefit systems can begin to come together, to overlap and eventually to merge. I do not think that it will be possible to merge them in one operation.

One of the innovations of the past two or three years which has not really been noticed is that child benefit changes are now announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Introducing child benefit was a proper move but mistakes have been made. The first mistake is to use the term "child benefit", which suggests that the benefit is selective and is taken up only by the poorest. All hon. Members know that child benefit gives no help to those on income support because it is taken into account in assessing their income. That is proper, but to retain the term "child benefit" is a mistake.

I hope that in time that benefit will be called the child cash allowance. It is right that it should be paid in cash and it is right that it should go to all children. It should be recognised that the present Chancellor has been right—as was my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister before him—with the support of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, to make the necessary decisions as part of a Budget announcement. I hope that in future Budgets it will be possible to have real increases in child benefit, or the child cash allowance, as well as to extend the 20p rate of income tax beyond the first £2,000 of taxable income.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Is it not a fact that the consequences of the measures that have been announced today will not work through into the pockets of the lower paid? Anything that they gain will be deducted from their family credit. The Government have put together social security benefits and taxation. The hon. Gentleman will see that it is not a Budget for the low-paid or lower-paid.

Mr. Bottomley: I hope that this portion of my speech will not be extended too far. I am trying to make some non-partisan points. If my support of higher rates of child benefit is partisan and the Labour party disapproves of it, that is something that should be on the record. I was working on the assumption that Labour party policy towards a child cash allowance had not changed.

I thought that it was not controversial to talk about stepping stones leading to the merger of the tax and social security systems. I accept the argument of the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) that families in work, but on low incomes, who have children will not get an immediate increase.

Mr. Battle: They will not get a penny.

Mr. Bottomley: When the hon. Gentleman has finished interrupting me from a sedentary position, I shall take up his argument. There are also those families without children who will receive benefit.

The proposals of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for pensioners will provide them with immediate help. They will be recognised as important and they will do more in a concentrated way for 5 million pensioners than would have been done under the Labour party's proposals, which would have given an increase in pensions to pensioners whether or not they were well-off.

A degree of selectivity is worth while. Indeed, there must be a degree of selectivity. It may be based on income. There may be a condition—for example, whether or not one is dealing with a child. I think that my right hon. Friend deserves congratulations for employing selectivity for pensioners based on income.

I look forward to the debate continuing over the next two or three days——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bottomley: I shall not give way.

If the debate is truncated because we are to move into a general election campaign, it will be interesting to see whether the official Opposition's leadership will make up its mind about 20p in the pound for the first £2,000 of taxable income or whether it will try to duck that and other crucial issues.

5.16 pm

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): It is not my normal practice to intervene in Budget debates. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) will be able to catch your eye tomorrow, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In the absence of the leader of my party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), because of the effect of Glasgow weather on his health, I shall begin by saying that when I last had a cold my doctor, who is also a friend, came through the bedroom door bearing a bottle of whisky, a jar of his own honey and a lemon. He said, "You add these to hot water and you will feel much better." I said, "This is the national health service at its best, but will it cure me?" He replied, "No, it won't do you any good at all but it will make you feel better." And this is a hot toddy Budget. It will not do the economy any good but it will make people feel better temporarily, for as long as the infusion lasts. I believe that that is what it was designed to do.

The Budget was designed not to help the country over the months or years ahead but to get the Government through the next few weeks as they hope. The real question is whether the Budget in these terms would have been introduced by the Government after an election in precisely the same terms in which it has been introduced this afternoon. The answer is manifestly not.

We unreservedly welcome some of the individual tinkering changes. There is relief on business rates;

arrangements for value-added tax and late payments, which will help small businesses; inheritance tax changes for family businesses—they are welcome, and especially for family farms—relief for the car industry; and the increase in income support levels. These minor changes would, I hope, have been carried out by whatever Government were in office and at whatever stage in parliamentary terms.

Our basic complaint is that the Budget's fundamental strategy is wrong. It will do nothing to stimulate the investment that the country requires. In the middle of his statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer produced a curious little homily about the difference between public investment and private investment. The right hon. Gentleman more or less said that all public investment was somehow bad and that private investment was good. It was—*[Interruption.]* That was the general tenor of his remarks. We say that such is the long-term damage that has been done to our economy that we need the stimulus which can be achieved only by the public sector if we are to turn the economy round.

My hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed put the matter well in his pre-Budget submission when he said:

> "Most economies were not as badly managed as Britain's was during the late 1980s, and few of our main competitors have Britain's underlying weaknesses of a poorly-skilled and educated workforce, an inadequate transport infrastructure and a poor record of investment in research and development."

That is why we have suggested that a programme should be brought forward which would include school and college building; energy conservation measures—how little there was in the Budget on the improvement of the environment and energy conservation; a tiny fiddling around on the margins on unleaded petrol and that was all, nothing else—major investment in railway infrastructure and, in particular, in housing because Britain is suffering from an increase in homelessness. It is one of the standing condemnations of the Government that, having introduced an excellent programme of council house sales, they have not allowed local authorities the freedom to spend the income derived from that on housing.

To give a brief example from my constituency, I had to take a deputation to see a Scottish Office Minister the other day because one of my housing authorities is unable to proceed with a programme to improve the housing stock in my constituency, including improvements such as double glazing, which surely the country should welcome; colour-washing to improve the environment of some of our rather dowdy housing schemes; internal improvements and the construction of new homes, which are needed because the waiting list in my area has risen by 37 per cent. in one year.

The key point is that, while the Government are restraining local authorities from carrying out such sensible programmes, 10 per cent. of the labour force in my area is in the construction industry which is suffering chronic unemployment.

Our alternative proposals to the Government's Budget strategy would result in a 400,000 drop in unemployment in the first year and a 600,000 drop in the second year. As each unemployed person costs the Exchequer £8,500 today, we are talking about a consequential saving to the Exchequer of £2·5 billion by the end of the second year. In all the waste of public expenditure there is no greater waste than the money spent on the growth of unemployment benefits that are paid out under the Government.

The Government are aiming for a snapshot election. What the country will want to look at is not the record over 13 days but the record over 13 years. They will look at the record unemployment, the unprecedented number of home repossessions, the unprecedented level of debt in our society, the record homelessness, the growth of the cardboard cities and, in particular, the squeeze on young people whether through the reductions in social security or in education assistance. When the Government are judged on 13 years as distinct from 13 days in the aftermath of a Budget, they will be found by the country to be severely wanting.

5.22 pm

Sir John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): There has been a certain air of unreality in this afternoon's Budget debate in that most people know that a two point cut in interest rates would do more than anything else to revive the economy, but we know that that cannot be done because of German control. As an Englishman, it grieves me that we have handed over control of our economic and monetary affairs to a foreign bank. That is a non-party point, as the Opposition are even more keen on the exchange rate mechanism than are Conservative Members. I fear that the ghost of an independent bank rate decided by ourselves alone in these islands will haunt this country and its people for many years to come.

That, of course, is not my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's fault. I congratulate him on what he has done. I expect to see clarity of purpose and execution coming from this Budget—as I am sure we shall—with its principle of low taxes, protection of private property under the law, limited state intervention in social and economic affairs, emphasis on non-state institutions such as the Church and the family and rejection of bureaucratic attempts to centralise and standardise. I object to the state telling me what to do in any aspect of life where an individual should have free choice according to his conscience. I am glad, therefore, that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has not made punitive increases in the taxation of tobacco and alcohol.

Looking at the country at large, and my constituency in particular, those in work have never been better off. With low inflation and average pay rises of 7 per cent., their standard of living has continued to rise. All that would be put at risk by a Labour Government. What is needed now is to help industry and commerce to recover as much as possible and to give individuals more confidence about their future, including those who, unfortunately, have become unemployed.

Looking back over previous years, I wish that we had been able to cut taxes by a larger amount, even if that meant paying less back in borrowing. I hope that we can still find a way to make local government more accountable to its electorate in terms of spending, which was the merit of the original community charge. I am also concerned about the increasing numbers in the exceedingly popular national health service, which is good and getting better. But we must watch the numbers. I think that I am right in saying that, with the disintegration of the Soviet army, the national health service is now the largest organisation in Europe. If its staff continues to increase at

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the present rate, in due course half the British people will be employed in the health service. Therefore, we must be careful, as I am sure the Government are, to ensure that we get full value for all money that is spent.

I welcome enormously the reduction in the business rate and the increase in VAT thresholds, as the contribution that small firms make to the economy is immense. As a Member from the west midlands, I am delighted that the tax on new cars is to be reduced. That will be greatly welcomed in my constituency and elsewhere. The reduction in inheritance tax on small businesses and farms is splendid. One hopes that those reductions will continue in the years to come with future Conservative Governments.

I welcome the lower band in income tax which has long been needed. That will help those who are in and out of work and who find life difficult. It is a splendid measure which I am glad the Government have introduced. Altogether, the tax cuts will stimulate investment and the economy and enhance confidence at consumer level. We must continue to help people to be more self-reliant and to provide more and more for their education, health and retirement.

It is vital that the Government and the Chancellor should be committed to minimising Government intervention in favour of the free market and individual choice. That is the essential difference between the Conservative and the Labour parties. We must also make it clear that we commend a Conservative Government who know what they want to do, who are confident that they can do it and who will have the chance to do it, too. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has shown confidence and competence and for that reason the Government deserve to win the next election.

I have two personal sadnesses which arise not from the Budget but from the way in which we spend or save our money. The cuts in the Army, in the armoured regiments and the infantry battalions, will prove to be a dangerous and false economy and I hope that the Government will reconsider them in a few weeks' time. I am also concerned about the headlong rush to enable more young people to go to university. More students may mean a lower standard. There are better ways of bringing on our young people than by making them mad to get a degree in all kinds of absurd subjects.

Finally, a Conservative Government must protect and defend the institutions for which Britain is so renowned —the Queen, Parliament and especially the House of Lords with its hereditary element, the Church of England, the judges, the armed services and the police.

I hope that we can emerge from this long recession, which is world wide, with more confidence. I hope that we can show that we have the will and the purpose to make our country great again, so that we can be an example to other nations, particularly on the continent, which so badly need a lead from us.

This may be the last speech that I shall make in the Chamber. I want to say how very much I have enjoyed being here. What a privilege it has been to represent my constituents and to stand up for all that is best in our country at home and abroad. I thank Mr. Speaker for his unfailing courtesy to me and everyone on both sides of the House for their kindness and companionship, which I shall never forget.

5.30 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes). We shall miss him very much in the new Parliament. He invariably claims to speak for England, so he will understand it if I say a few words in favour of Wales.

It would not be unduly prejudiced to suggest that the Budget is being used by the Government to try to win the forthcoming general election. After 13 years of their rule, Britain is in the worst depression since the 1930s. A desperate attempt is being made to save the skins of Conservative Members and to keep the Government in office. I believe that they will not succeed.

I shall consider some of the proposals put forward by the Chancellor this afternoon. I say "proposals" because the real Budget will be brought forward after the general election by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith).

Earlier, there was much speculation about a reduction in the basic rate of income tax. The Chancellor has approached that proposal in a round-about way and under the guise of helping the lower paid. It goes without saying that we would all like to pay less tax. Nevertheless, many people realise that the amount involved would be better spent elsewhere. Income tax cuts will invariably suck in imports. In addition, the Government's proposals, including the reduction in income tax, will mean that they have to borrow to pay for them.

Those tactics are completely contrary to the previously declared attitude of the Prime Minister. On 22 February 1990, he said:

> "For decades, successive Governments had spent more than they were prepared to raise honestly from taxation and they made up the shortfall by borrowing. They left the bill to be picked up by future generations."

No further comment is needed from me, but certainly we shall hear much about the Prime Minister's earlier attitude in the forthcoming general election campaign.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Has the hon. Gentleman seen the recent written answer in *Hansard* which shows the public sector borrowing requirement for each year since 1974 in real terms and adjusted for inflation? It shows the figures for 1974-75 and 1975-76 and so on, and compares them with those for the past five years. There has been no net PSBR since 1984. That puts the words of the Leader of the Opposition into perspective.

Mr. Hughes: I could have cited other quotations to reveal the Prime Minister's earlier attitude and the fact that the Budget proposals are a complete contradiction of it.

The cuts in tax which have been announced will not help the unemployed of whom there are no fewer than 2,600,000—the total is continually rising. The tax cuts will not help the homeless. What is needed is a boost for housing. The capital receipts held by local authorities from the sale of council houses should be released on a phased basis. Besides giving ordinary people the homes that they need, such a measure would provide badly needed employment to the construction industry. The cuts will not help people on hospital waiting lists or reduce exorbitant prescription charges. They will not help children in inadequate schools, which have no text books. The Chancellor is borrowing to bribe. As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition clearly pointed out, that can only mean future tax increases. The Opposition believe that the reversal of Britain's economic decline and the elimination of social squalor are the main priorities.

I want to be fair to the Chancellor about the reduction of the special car tax. I agree with that reduction and I am glad to note that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition also agreed. I am sympathetic to that proposal because it is justified. The car industry is vital to the economy. It has taken some bad knocks recently. Sales have plummeted, output has been cut and workers have been laid off.

The ripples from the car industry go far and wide in Wales. We do not have a car assembly plant, but we are very reliant on car component industries for employment. For example, we have an important Ford car engine plant at Bridgend and another Ford plant at Swansea. Bosch —the major German company—is now well-established in the vale of Glamorgan and employs hundreds of people. Lucas Girling, the brake manufacturer, is a major employer in Gwent. There are many other examples.

More importantly, the steel industry in Wales relies greatly on the motor industry to take up much of its output. In employment terms alone, the car industry is vital and we ill-treat it at our peril. That is borne out by Germany and Japan, which have encouraged and fostered their car industries. They are the two most successful trading nations.

I know that we are all green now. It is one thing to prevail on our motor manufacturers to step up research to curb the effects of fuel emissions. However, we should bear in mind that ordinary people are attached to their motor cars. Private transport was once the prerogative of the rich. Now people use their cars to travel to work, many housewives find them indispensable for shopping at the local supermarket and many families find their cars indispensable for leisure purposes. We should step up investment in rail and other forms of public transport, but we should realise how reliant we are on road transport. No magic wand can be waved to change the position overnight.

Training provision is also important. As far as I am aware, the Chancellor made no mention of that vital subject. Surely the disastrous cuts made in the training budget in 1991 and 1992 should be restored. What sense was there in cutting training in a period of heavy unemployment? I believe that we should increase the number of training opportunities for the long-term unemployed, and give all young people a guaranteed entitlement to quality training. That would constitute real investment in Britain's future prosperity.

Then there is the matter of help for small businesses. Here again, I support my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, who welcomed the proposals concerned. Of course small businesses need help—but that help is long overdue. Only yesterday, I received a telephone call from a constituent whose husband was in a small-business partnership. The company had run into difficulties, and a leading firm of merchant bankers—in pursuit of its pound of flesh, so to speak—is threatening to take over the family home. That personal tragedy is only one example of what is currently happening.

Essentially, the current recession is a product of the Government's own policies. When he was Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) allowed a free-for-all, with easy money and easy credit; now, we are reaping the whirlwind. The Prime Minister and the Chancellor are apparently on record as saying that unemployment is "a price worth paying". I certainly do not agree with that contention, or with their attempt to blame the so-called world recession for our current troubles. Comparisons are said to be odious, but let us take Japan. It was said that Japan was in recession in 1991. Some recession! In that year, its output grew by 4 per cent., while ours fell by 4 per cent.

This is the Chancellor's second Budget. He is not a Welshman, and it is extremely unlikely that he will have a third try. Today is his date with destiny. If things go wrong on 9 April, he will book himself a one-way ticket to the pet-food canneries at Melton Mowbray; how can he escape the dogs and the tin opener? Let me make it clear that that inelegant language is not my own. It is taken from the authentic voice of the Conservative party—last Friday's *Daily Telegraph*. On page 19, Christopher Fildes went on to point out that, in the Tory party,

"the pack instinct . . . is one of its nastiest qualities".

I am sure that the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) would bear out that observation.

There is little doubt that the Chancellor's head is on the block. Let us be fair: he has faced a difficult task, given that more than 2·6 million of the working population are unemployed, the figure has risen consistently over the past 22 months and the trend is likely to continue unabated. Bankruptcies are at a record level, with 200 businesses going bankrupt every day. Home repossessions and mortgage arrears are also at record levels: there were 75,000 repossessions in 1991, with all the misery and unhappiness that that involves.

After 13 years of the present Government, business confidence is at an all-time low. Leading Government figures, such as the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, have tried to cover up the catalogue of disaster with bluster coupled with music-hall humour. I can only say that that is not going to work. The game is up; "you can fool some of the people some of the time . . ." Conservative Members will know the rest of the quotation. I believe that, on 9 April, the people of Britain will elect a Labour Government.

5.45 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I well recall the speculation that heralded today's Budget and, as I look across at Opposition Members, I see them knee-deep in shot foxes. I ask them to remember what we are going to do for pensioners by means of income support and what we will do for people on lower incomes by introducing a 20 per cent. band for the first £2,000 of taxable income. That is a significant move on the Conservatives' part: the party is recognising the poorer members of society, and giving them some help in a particularly difficult time. *[Interruption.]* I used to represent Workington, one of the tougher parts of the country. I have observed the improvements that have been made there and, over the past 12 years, I have observed a general increase in standards of living throughout the country.

One of the attractions of speaking on the first day of the Budget debate is the ability to make comments that are

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unsullied by any outside views or pressures—in particular, to make comments before the combined wit and wisdom of the press have been brought to bear. Many people outside the House do not realise that the press operates as a series of wolf packs: the Sundays prowl the corridors, desperately trying to keep stories from the dailies in case they are filched from them before their publication date, while the dailies compete with each other, exchanging titbits of news and information. Thus, when the papers hit the stand, we see an underlying similarity between them.

Bereft of the combined wit and wisdom of the scribes of Fleet street, I am nevertheless convinced that their judgments on the Budget will prove that it is to be deemed one of the most ingenious, caring and clever Budgets produced for many a long year.

I shall not develop any of the points that have been made about help for pensioners and for those who will benefit from the 20 per cent. tax band. Those points have already been made and I am convinced that, as the days go by, other hon. Members will trawl over the same ground. Let me simply make one brief comment: even if we had knocked one penny from the basic rate of income tax, we could have acted with integrity and honesty. That would not have been an election bribe. Over 12 years, we have consistently lowered the basic rate: from 33p in the pound to 25p, and we aim to bring it down to 20p. That is a committed aim and, if the Chancellor had felt that that was the way in which to act, it could have been done with integrity.

Let us suppose that the roles had been reversed, and that Opposition Members had been involved, with their commitment to higher taxation and increased centralisation. In that event, such action would have been deemed to be an electoral bribe, but that does not apply to the Conservatives, because we are committed to bringing down the tax rates. I hope that that will be a continual programme, followed over the next four to five years of Conservative government.

Last year, I talked about small businesses. Then, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor devoted a substantial part of his Budget to helping them and I am delighted that he has listened further to the calls of those interested in small businesses and has brought together a series of measures that will give them even more help and support.

Let us consider in particular what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has done with the uniform business rate. For me to be able to tell the small businesses in my constituency that the increase will be limited to the rate of inflation will be an enormous benefit to them. There is no doubt that in the south we have suffered an increase in the UBR to subsidise businesses in the north. I do not object to that because I want to see an equal spread of wealth across the country, but it has been a blow in a time of difficulty, and the fact that any increase is to be held to the rate of inflation is to be commended.

Last year, I was especially fulsome about the move to raise the value added tax threshold to £35,000. As I understand it, it is now to be raised to £36,600 which is a significant improvement. It must make sense for VAT inspectors not to have to rush around to small companies, picking up tiny sums of money. It must also make sense to allow the businesses—the one-man bands—that are getting started to do so without the aggravation of filling in VAT forms and the difficulty that that brings until they are established, until their turnover increases and until they are able to launch out and participate in the normal run of tax collections as they get bigger. I appreciate the raising of the threshold, but we should consider whether it could be even further improved in the years to come.

One issue mentioned in the Budget was the declaration —and it was a declaration—that larger companies must pay smaller companies on time. It is absolutely disgusting that some large companies have bled small companies white by using their power and muscle and by not paying bills on time. It would be invidious to name those larger companies, but they are household names. I go out of my way to avoid buying their products if I have an alternative. The comments by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor about small businesses being paid on time were necessary. I know a small business man who is in desperate trouble because a large company is refusing to pay a very large outstanding bill. All I can say to the larger company is, "Shame on you".

The consideration in the Budget of the cost of appeals to the special commissioners is another move in the right direction. Too often when small businesses have made claims they have met intransigence and it has cost a fortune to fight a case. At the end of the day, the costs have not been recoverable, but now a step has been made in the right direction, and that can only be beneficial.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is wrong that taxpayers should be intimidated by the thought that they might not be able to recover their costs when they have a legitimate case to take to appeal and that consideration of that anomaly is long overdue?

Mr. Page: My hon. Friend puts the case in a nutshell. I know of instances in which people have said that the game was not worth the candle because it would take too long, and the intransigence of some tax inspectors has wrongfully won the day. Again, I know of a case in my constituency which is proceeding on exactly those lines, but now my constituent will be able to take action. I have considered his case and it is genuine. He will now know that he has the opportunity to recover some of his costs.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor also listened to the problems of people handing on their companies to ensure that they are not broken up. We all know of the vast costs involved in getting a company started and of the impact of inheritance tax on those who have built a business and want to ensure that it stays in one piece and that it retains its essential individual character. They have the opportunity to do so—now, such companies will not necessarily be swallowed up and become part of yet another branch of a large conglomerate.

It would be wrong of me to speak about the help for the car industry without declaring an interest. What is being done in this context will be a fillip to get motor manufacturers going and will, of course, have a ripple effect across the country. I believe that many people deferred their buying decisions until today, and perhaps what has been said today will encourage them.

My last point might be slightly contentious. Although I welcome what is being done for the British film industry —the one third write-off on a straight line over three years —I have to say that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. I wish that we could in some way extend that provision to manufacturing industry. If one removes from our manufacturing industry the inward investment and the investment by a few large companies such as British Gas, British Aerospace, Rolls-Royce and ICI, one finds that very little manufacturing investment is being made in this country. In fact, until 1988-89 the growth rate since 1979 works out at only 1 per cent. In a world of increasing mechanisation, of more robotics and more automation, it is absolutely right that we should have increased growth in investment.

However, we have a culture in this country whereby we do not invest, and the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) mentioned the lack of commitment to training and to research and development. I am afraid that that strand runs through this country and it must be broken. Our foreign competitors have a different culture. We suffer from short-termism, which is unhealthy for long-term survival. Let us consider, for example, Germany. It gives a 20 per cent. allowance against tax for dividends, but no more. If one pays a dividend of more than 20 per cent., one begins to eat into the residual profit of a company. Perhaps we could have some guidance to help to gain investment in our companies.

That issue has what could be described as more insidious consequences because German Members of Parliament are given a specific allowance of more than £650 a month which is ring fenced for equipment such as computers, word processors and faxes. That is the way that they think—they think of investment in automation and of using equipment to ensure a more efficient operation.

The Government have set the seal on the Conservative party proceeding to the general election. Over the years, cutting the rate of tax has left us with more taxes to put into hospitals and schools but, at the same time, we have managed to leave more money in real terms in people's pockets for them to spend as they think fit. That is the opposite of the double whammy. I have absolutely no doubt that the success of the Budget was evident in the faces of members of the Opposition, and it will be reflected in the results of the election.

5.57 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Coming prior to an election, the Budget must face the acid test of whether it is irresponsible in budgetary terms and pure electioneering. As I understand it, the Chancellor has added to the public deficit £1·6 billion, which is rather less than many people had thought.

I judge that, by limiting the amount of tax changes, it can fairly be called a prudent Budget and should, in a rational world, allow the Chancellor to reduce interest rates by at least ½ per cent. I strongly wish they could be reduced by a full 1 per cent. in the next couple of days. Whatever was said in the Budget, what will greatly help the British economy and British industry is a further reduction in interest rates. That must be the main essential of any strategy. It would be irrational of the markets to exclude a reduction in interest rates in the next few days. I profoundly hope that a reduction is possible.

As for overall economic strategy, the fundamental requirement for the economy seems to be to improve its competitiveness. Inflation shows every sign of dropping to 3·2 per cent. or 3 per cent. by the end of the year. We must not only achieve but maintain that level of inflation if British industry is to compete in the next three to four years. Those will still be difficult years for our economy because we must overcome the disadvantages of entering the exchange rate mechanism at a rate higher than was attractive for British industry.

The errors of the past five years in handling the economy have been fairly considerable and were predicted. The pre-election Budget of 1987 fed inflation. Then, of course, we had the miscalculation following the stock market collapse in the autumn of 1987. I am less censorious of the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), the then Chancellor, than many people.

First, I thought that the right hon. Member for Blaby was right to respond to prevent recession and lack of confidence. It has to be said that most people believed that. They believed that the world response was an enlightened response. Nevertheless, we all got it wrong. But the right hon. Member for Blaby, as well as the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), cannot escape serious criticism for their Budget judgment of April 1988. That Budget was grotesquely irresponsible. I and many others said so at the time.

But it was worse than that. It was the one opportunity that we have had to restructure the tax system, abolish the threshold for national insurance contributions and take the steps that the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) rightly suggested today to bring the tax and social security systems into an integrated pattern. Abolition of the national insurance contributions threshold must be done but must be done at a buoyant time. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) will have great difficulty with his proposal on national insurance contributions if he implements it at a time of economic difficulty. It is a structural change that must be made and it should have been made in 1988. It would have been appropriate in 1988 and the disadvantages could have been offset by changing the 60 per cent. tax rate to only 50 per cent.

However, it is no use looking back. The basic facts were that in 1989, with inflation running as high as it was, we had to rein back the economy. I sometimes think that the Prime Minister is too embarrassed by the phrase that he coined at the time, "If it isn't hurting, it isn't working." There was no escape from the fact that, having fed and stoked up inflation so irresponsibly in 1987 and 1988, coming to grips with inflation in 1989, 1990 and 1991 would be painful. It does not serve anyone's purpose to deny that it would be difficult. But the question is whether we compounded that difficulty.

As I said, we went into the exchange rate mechanism at too high a rate. But we all know that the political difficulty of persuading the then Prime Minister to accept that we should enter the ERM was formidable. We should have entered it in the early 1980s, and certainly when the right hon. Member for Blaby wanted to do so in 1985. There are penalties for having entered the ERM so late.

I wish that some of the people who have so glibly advocated a single currency in the past few months and yet have railed against the constraints of the ERM would face up to the reality that the constraints of a single currency system would be far greater than anything that we have experienced in the past two years inside the ERM. I and the Social Democratic party advocated entering the ERM during the whole of the party's existence. I believe that that

[Dr. David Owen]

discipline is necessary. It is uncomfortable, but it is no use trying to get out of that discipline. It is the price that one pays for being within the ERM.

In the summer I hoped that we might reduce interest rates somewhat faster than we did. But these are difficult judgments and clearly the Chancellor of the Exchequer, certainly with an election approaching, felt that it would be damaging to confidence to reduce interest rates and then risk being forced to raise them again. So he has adopted a cautious approach of ½ per cent. at a time. It is a matter of the utmost importance that we reduce interest rates in the next year to 9 per cent. or perhaps lower.

Another problem is unit costs. Britain simply must face pressure to reduce unit costs for three to four years. That is where we come to the strategy on tax reductions. Listening to the Leader of the Opposition, I must confess that I was nonplussed as to whether the Budget that he would propose in six days would have a reduced public sector borrowing requirement. Certainly the effect of what he said was that he would come in with a reduced PSBR.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): How did the right hon. Gentleman work that out?

Dr. Owen: There was constant reiteration of the problem of borrowing to reduce taxation. By implication, he said that the borrowing requirement was too great and, therefore, would have to be restricted. However, we await his Budget.

If we are to keep unit costs down, the section of the labour force who do not have large earnings must be given the greatest relief. That means concentrating tax relief on not only the lower paid but those who receive average pay in manufacturing industry. It is from that section that the pressure always comes to pay ourselves more than can be justified by increases in productivity. This is where we come to the reduced rate band.

In redistribution policy, the best way of helping the poorest section who pay tax is undoubtedly to raise personal tax allowances and take people out of paying tax altogether. However, experience shows that that has little effect on the bargaining position of people in work. They do not feel that they have had a tax reduction when personal tax allowances are raised. A reduced rate band is an interesting way of grappling with the problem of keeping down unit costs and keeping wages in line with productivity.

The Chancellor seemed to suggest in his speech that he intended to use a reduced rate band as a structural mechanism for taking income tax down from 25p to 20p in the pound. Obviously, there are several options, but I hope that he will take that one. I know that it is difficult technically, but I hope that the Chancellor will gradually take more people into the 20p rate band but come at it from below—from the lower paid up through the system. We have never done it like that before. We have simply taken slices of 1p or 2p off the standard rate. Such a reduced rate band would be an interesting development and one to be welcomed.

I am pleased that the Chancellor did not shift the married man's tax allowance. If the tax and benefits systems are to be integrated, the allowance will have to go. The only acceptable way to do that is to allow it to wither on the vine and not to increase it.

In the past two years the Government have shown themselves ready to see child benefit increase. The hon. Member for Eltham described a child cash allowance. That was a good description of the system that we must move towards. We must put child benefit into the tax system but retain the advantage of paying it to the woman, usually the wife, in cash.

To the business community, the alleviations in the Budget are extremely helpful. The one that I am most pleased about is the reduction by 5 per cent. of the new car tax. I should like to see the whole thing go, but it is very expensive and it will already cost more than £600 million to take it down by 5 per cent. The car industry has been preferentially hard hit and therefore needed preferential help. The measures on the unified business rate, VAT and others are small, but they have been sensibly designed to ease where the shoe is pinching in business and to give small businesses in particular, which have certainly felt the recession quite acutely, some welcome alleviation.

Those matters are all small in comparison with cuts in interest rates. If we continue having to keep our interest rates as high as we had to keep them throughout 1991, the recession will bite very deeply in this country. It is already biting harsher than in many other countries. I assume that the Chancellor is confident that, although the Treasury forecasts of coming out of recession have been too optimistic, there is now a real prospect of coming out of the recession in the second half of next year. I hope that that will happen, but the world is still in a difficult state to make any prediction, not least because of the protectionist pressures that are building up.

We have still failed to have a successful general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiation—it hangs over us. There are already in the United States, as evidenced in the presidential elections, very strong protectionist measures. As yet there has been little sign of the European Commission being ready to make the necessary changes in our GATT negotiating position in relation to agriculture. The GATT negotiations are probably the single most crucial matter in ensuring that the world economy starts to move forward.

For all those reasons, we cannot and should not have expected too much from the Budget. This is a difficult time. There is no doubt, too, that, while an election hangs in the air, there is, in terms of international confidence, a tendency to hold back until the election is over. It is probably true that, whatever the result of the election, the markets will view the British economy in a more settled way after it.

This is the last time on which I shall speak to the House, and I do so with a certain sadness but also with the belief that it is high time I went. No right hon. or hon. Member can leave the House without paying tribute to his or her constituency. I was born in the city of Plymouth, and I have represented it in the House for nearly 26 years. That has been a great privilege and something on which I shall always look back with pride. I have also managed to beat the record of Nancy Astor, and I am now the longest serving Member of Parliament in Plymouth's history.

My great gratitude to my constituency goes back to one single thing. The House was brought up on a dictum that Disraeli apparently taught about politics—"Damn your principles and stick to your party." That dictum has obviously been successfully followed by many people. I have turned it upside down, and I have no regrets about that. The House and parliamentary democracy survive because, from time to time, people understand that issues and principles go far beyond party and go to the root of how we regard representation in the House. It should be about how we regard and represent the best interests of our country. That must always come before our constituencies. However, at the end of the day, we must justify those decisions to our constituencies. The one thing that I shall always hold dear is that, when in 1983 my constituency was asked to endorse my decision to put what I thought were my principles before my party, it endorsed me.

6.14 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): It is a great privilege to follow the speech of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). As he said, it was likely to be his last speech in the House. It is a privilege because all hon. Members recognise his distinguished career and the contribution that he has made to British political life over a number of years. I know that the right hon. Gentleman will not take offence, but there is some irony in the light of that privilege. I was a public servant in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office when the right hon. Gentleman was Foreign Secretary. The reason I decided to make the extraordinary leap from the warm bosom of the Foreign Office to the hurly-burly of political life was that I was appalled at the state of Britain under the Labour Government of which the right hon. Gentleman was a distinguished member. I often say that the right hon. Gentleman himself was responsible for my coming to this place.

I was happy to agree with much of what the right hon. Gentleman said. However, in his criticism of the policies that were followed by my right hon. Friends in 1987 and 1988, the right hon. Gentleman was luxuriating a little in the benefits of 20:20 vision which the advantage of hindsight gives to observers. I say that as someone who can honestly claim that in January 1988 I was one of those —there were not many of us—who were warning about the dangers of relaxing the fiscal stance, whereas my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) was under pressure from Opposition Members to reduce interest rates to relax the stance still further.

The indicators that were available to the Treasury and to my right hon. Friend suggesting that the air was going out of the balloon were inaccurate. That shows that Chancellors of the Exchequer, of whatever political complexion, need better indicators, but that matter is for the past.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Devonport about the undoubted difficulties that there will be in achieving a single currency. I am positive about Europe and optimistic that we can achieve that happy state in a relatively short time, but it will undoubtedly take a number of years. There will undoubtedly be the difficulties to which the right hon. Gentleman referred. The facile Labour party, having twisted its policy on Europe six times, has now leapt into the single currency issue. That is another manifestation of its unfitness to govern.

The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to suggest that this is a responsible, prudent Budget and that the tax changes which have been announced and which seem to add about £1·6 billion to the PSBR should be well regarded by the financial markets and should give the opportunity for a further reduction in interest rates, which is badly needed. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman is right, and I endorse his sentiments.

Undoubtedly, Britain faces a difficult economic situation, as does the rest of the industrialised world. When all the political cant is swept away, right hon. and hon. Members must recognise that, if they are to treat the present difficult situation with the gravity and responsibility that it deserves, it does no good to pretend that it is just a British problem. Sadly, the problem may be exacerbated if we cannot make proper progress in the Uruguay round of the GATT negotiations, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer pointed out. From my humble position on the Back Benches, I strongly endorse my right hon. Friend's argument. I urge some of our European partners, particularly our friends in the French Government, to consider their policies and attitudes carefully and take account of the needs of the world trading community.

It is not only the European Community that has to make a move; America and other countries involved in the negotiations must also do so. We all have a responsibility, particularly the Heads of Government of the G7 nations who, when they last met under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, gave a personal pledge that they would do all in their power to ensure that the Uruguay round was successful. That pledge has yet to be honoured.

It is against that background that we should decide whose hands are required on the tiller of the nation's economy at this difficult time—with the Budget and an imminent general election. I have no doubt that today's events and what has been said in the House, by Opposition and Government Members, make that answer crystal clear—as has the Government's overall sound record of economic management since 1979.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor was faced with an extremely difficult problem. As many of my right hon. and hon. Friends continually and rightly stress, it is true that conditions have now been created for the economic recovery that we so badly need. Inflation is down to an encouraging level, and the forecast given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of further reductions in inflation is greatly to be welcomed.

The interest rate cuts—we have already had eight in 18 months—are also to be welcomed. In addition, the rise in company and personal savings has set in place the conditions for recovery. Now we need the restoration of confidence, which means a general election and a Conservative victory. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend's Budget will contribute mightily to that.

As for my right hon. Friend's judgment, all of us with an instinct for financial rectitude will consider carefully the fact that we have a public sector borrowing requirement of £14 billion this year, which will move to about £28 billion next year. In order to be satisfied that that is the right policy, one has to take a close look at the facts. I am absolutely convinced that it is the right policy, and a glance at the record of past years serves to highlight that.

Try as they might, politicians can never eliminate the trade and business cycles. We are in the dip of a particularly severe trade cycle. It is due to the depth of that recession that we must take a flexible approach to public sector funding and borrowing, albeit always within the

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tight parameters of a responsible fiscal stance. Our achievements since 1979 give us every right to take credit for adopting the proper approach.

The *Hansard* report of 6 March, at column 322, makes it clear that, from 1984 until this financial year, there was no net borrowing requirement. That is the background against which to judge that our country's finances are strong enough to take the £28 billion public sector borrowing requirement now in prospect. It is interesting to compare that figure of £28 billion—if it is reached—to the sort of figures to which we grew accustomed in the years of the Labour Government.

In terms of 1991-92 prices, in 1974-75 the public sector borrowing requirement reached £38·9 billion and the next year it rose to nearly £40 billion, before the International Monetary Fund had to step in and help the then Labour Government back on to the path of the straight and narrow. Therefore, it ill became the Leader of the Opposition, in an extraordinary and lamentable response to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, to talk about bribing and borrowing to bribe. Such remarks came from the leader of a party which now proposes a shopping list of £37 billion more of expenditure, which boasts and glories in the fact that it intends to increase taxes and which would clearly increase interest rates and destroy jobs and the economy. Therefore, there is no doubt that the Labour party is incompetent to handle the economy. That has for long been demonstrated by its abysmal record when in government and, again and again, by its pathetic policies—despite the fact that it changes them all the time.

The Labour party's incompetence was underlined this afternoon when, not having had the benefit of a briefing from his colleagues, the Leader of the Opposition was not clear as to whether the Labour party would reject the imaginative and extraordinarily helpful decision by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to produce the 20 per cent. tax rate. The Leader of the Opposition left the House with the impression that the Labour party would eliminate that 20 per cent. tax. The 4 million people in this country whose total tax payable would be reduced from 25 per cent. to 20 per cent. would be interested if it turned out that the Labour party did intend to eliminate that 20 per cent. tax. When discussing the tax equation, the Leader of the Opposition seemed to have no understanding of our experiences since 1979, which show that lower tax rates result in a higher tax take, a higher tax revenue. That proposition, which seems simple to most of us, seemed beyond the grasp of the Leader of the Opposition.

The decision that the country should take is clear at any time, but particularly at this extremely difficult time of economic challenge for this country and for all other countries of the developed world. The idea that the economic tasks that we face can be left to the Opposition to solve is unthinkable; such tasks must be left to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

I greatly welcome all the measures put forward by my right hon. Friend, particularly the help given to pensioners on low incomes, the provisions on savings, inheritance and business rates and the help for the car industry. All those policies add up to a great package, which must be added to the significant additional spending set out in the autumn statement. I have great pleasure in congratulating my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and his colleagues on what they have achieved, not only for the Conservative party but for the country.

6.28 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney)—not least because he will not be retiring at the next general election. The same cannot be said of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), who I am glad to see still in his place, and the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes).

The hon. Member for Wycombe was right to refer to the GATT negotiations and to the important and significant personal pledge made by the Government leaders that they would intervene to ensure that those negotiations reached a successful conclusion. Was that promise genuine, as I hope it was, or just another sound-bite promise, made of the moment to impress people and to allay their fears, but amounting to little?

The hon. Member for Wycombe asked whose hand was on the tiller. We will quickly know that answer, and it may come as a surprise to the hon. Gentleman. He mentioned that there have been eight reductions in the interest rate, which currently stands at 10·5 per cent. I dislike giving the hon. Gentleman bad news, but no Government have ever won a general election when the interest rate was above 10 per cent. I share the hopes of the right hon. Member for Devonport that we will see, in the interests of the economy and of the British people, a reduction in interest rates between now and the general election—although I understand that the odds are not that good.

The hon. Member for Wycombe referred to financial rectitude. I always smile when I hear that phrase. I am reminded of one of Lord Denning's famous summings up, when he observed that the more that a defendant talked of his honesty, the more one was tempted to count the silver. When I heard the hon. Member for Wycombe, I thought that I had better start counting my silver. The hon. Gentleman referred also to a responsible fiscal stance. We will have some fun with that phrase as this debate continues over the next few days.

I was pleased to be in the Chamber for what might be the last speech by the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge, who made a telling point when he said that our economy was increasingly being linked to Germany's economic and financial policies and to those of the Bundesbank.

I also enjoyed the speech of the right hon. Member for Devonport, although he may not have understood the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), to which the hon. Member for Wycombe referred. My right hon. Friend did not have the benefit of knowing in advance the contents of the Budget and had to make decisions and judgments as to the content of his speech as he went along. Today, he was right to desist from criticising the Government's specific tax policies and to welcome the tax cuts that will benefit the car industry, among others.

Today was the first time that the Opposition have been able to see the Treasury's books. We will be able to present an alternative Budget next week that will inform the British public of our proposals for the British economy.

The Chancellor mentioned a move towards the narrow band in the exchange rate mechanism and linking sterling to a rate of 2·5 deutschmarks. The challenge awaiting the next Chancellor of the Exchequer is how to equate a fixed interest rate with rising unemployment throughout the Community. No Government—whether it be that of Ireland, France or Italy—have come to terms with that difficulty. How can one reconcile the exchange rate with job creation and lower unemployment?

The Chancellor said that tax revenues depend on the level of activity, but he seems again to be going for a consumer boom rather than one based on investment and manufacturing. If we are tempted to follow the route of consumer boom, we will risk institutionalising the boom-bust philosophy with which we have lived for too long.

The Chancellor spoke of a Budget for recovery, but it seems more like a Budget of discovery. He believes its almost exclusive emphasis on tax cuts will be sufficient to switch public opinion, and that will be seriously tested when the general election is called. The Budget's proposed 20 per cent. tax rate on the first £2,000 of income will be worth £2·65 to the average working man and woman. That is the equivalent of 30 pieces of silver in olden times. We will have to see whether the British people accept those 30 pieces of silver.

I will share one secret with the Chancellor and the House. The low-paid generally vote Labour, and I do not believe that the Chancellor's endeavours to tempt Labour voters will be rewarded at the general election. Those who might stand to benefit from such a tax reduction and who might even come out of the tax band altogether will not so easily forget the last 13 years of Conservative government.

According to the Chancellor, that tax cut will cost £1·8 billion in the next financial year and £2·3 billion the following year. That is expenditure on tax cuts rather than on hospitals, schools, or—as my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn said—putting an extra bobby on the beat. When there is both an increase in the public sector borrowing requirement and tax reductions, we are right to claim that it is an attempt to bribe the British people.

Mr. Butterfill: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the richer taxpayer will be penalised because the threshold at which higher rate tax becomes payable has not been increased by the rate of inflation? Perhaps that will come as some compensation to those who imagine that the Budget is aimed at the relatively wealthy.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Although we had no prior knowledge of the Budget's content, we anticipated some of its provisions. The 20 per cent. tax on the first £2,000 of income will affect the rest of the tax system. I take the hon. Gentleman's point that the Chancellor, by leaving the indexation of allowances at 4·5 per cent., has probably not done higher rate taxpayers a service.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition put the Budget into perspective when he referred to the £100 billion of North sea oil revenues that have been used over the years. The hon. Member for Wycombe mentioned that a Labour Government incurred a £40 billion deficit. Our policy, right or wrong, was to borrow against oil revenues, because we did not want a slump worse than that which was already occurring because of oil price rises in 1974. We opted for a policy of borrowing against future North sea oil revenues. As it turned out, that policy was not acceptable to the IMF, and the Labour Government of the day were forced to change course. That is the context of the deficit to which the hon. Member for Wycombe referred.

It is right at a time of recession to try to stimulate the economy with fiscal measures. I recall James Callaghan saying in 1976—it was one of the first speeches that I had heard at a Labour party conference—that we could not spend our way out of recession. The days of deficit spending were over, he said.

Today we have the novel approach that we can borrow money to reduce taxation, and the claim is that somehow that will spark a consumer boom, which in turn will generate jobs and aid the economy. It is an interesting argument and, as the right hon. Member for Devonport said, it represents reducing taxation from the bottom upwards. We, too, described it as an interesting concept.

All that aside, we must consider the overall economic situation. It is clear that we have had five quarters of falling output—the longest period of falling output since the war. Although the fall has been less sharp than it was in 1980-81, the time of the first Tory recession, this is the longest recession since the 1930s.

I do not want to bore the House with statistics. Output as a proportion of GDP fell by 5 per cent. in 1980-81, compared with a 3·5 per cent. fall for non-oil GDP. The statistics come from the Bank of England. If all roads lead to Rome, all the fingers of culpability point to Her Majesty's Government, who over the years have followed false gods and prophets. For example, the Conservatives have consistently followed the false god of high interest rates as the single club policy to reduce inflation. The right hon. Member for Devonport recalled the phrase used about a high interest rate—that if it is not hurting, it is not working.

As a result of those policies, unemployment has been rising and output falling. The output of the construction industry has fallen by more than 12 per cent. since the first quarter of 1990. Our car manufacturing industry was sustained only by exports. The Chancellor said that the motor industry switched production to exports, which rose by 20 per cent. in 1991. But, because it is a world recession, those exports have fallen. This is the only aspect of a so-called world recession that affects our economy.

That is why I—I am sure that the same applies to hon. Members on both sides of the House—support the reduction of the special tax on motor cars to 5 per cent. from midmight tonight. We, too, hope that manufacturers will pass that on fully to the consumer and that, as a result, car purchases will increase in the coming days.

We are likely to hear many metaphors used in this debate. The hon. Member for Wycombe referred to hands being on the tiller. I have spoken of the Tory false god philosophy of believing that manufacturing counts less than services, even though the service sector could not sustain itself in the face of last year's increase in VAT. The effect of that increase on that sector was underestimated, as was the effect of the Gulf war on tourism.

My hon. Friends and I noticed wryly the Chancellor's statement that he had no intention of raising VAT or extending its scope. We shall keep an eye on that promise in the future. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, a similar promise was made by the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) in 1982 when he was Chancellor.

We are reminded of Conservative central office myths. One of them was perpetuated this morning by the right

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hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark), who is not in his place and who will be leaving us at the election. I have often heard his insistence that we should not speak from copious notes but, like the right hon. Member for Devonport, should speak, if possible, without notes. I admit that the right hon. Member for Devonport did that ably this afternoon.

The right hon. Member for Croydon, South tried to persuade us of the Conservative central office myth that in the last 13 years of Conservative rule taxation had been reduced, and the hon. Member for Wycombe developed that myth in his speech. In fact, from 1979 to date, taxation has increased across the board, from 34 to 37 per cent. Allowing for a possible adjustment downwards should the effect of today's Budget be felt in full, VAT has been increased during those years from 8 to 17·5 per cent. and national insurance contributions have gone up from 6·5 to 9 per cent.

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Gentleman misunderstood me. I said that it was a demonstrated fact that lower rates of income tax produced a higher tax take. I said nothing about indirect taxation.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that intervention and for reiterating his view that the Laffer curve is alive and well. Ronald Reagan was perhaps the first to suggest that, if one reduced the rate of tax, one somehow raised more money. In reality, that theory does not stand the test. It is not possible to reduce taxation and increase the take. That has never been true, and it never will be the case.

Our criticism of the Government is that in recent years they have not adopted a proper perspective towards manufacturing and service industries. They have not had an appropriate monetary policy, other than membership of the ERM, which is the new gold standard of the Conservative party. Apart from that, the Government's only other policy has involved high interest rates. They have had no plan for the long-term unemployed. I am glad to note that my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) has fully recovered his health. As he pointed out, the Chancellor did not once mention training, yet there have been great cuts in training programmes for youngsters.

The Government have no plan to stop the reduction in investment. Only an adequate policy on that front will increase output, yet the Chancellor said that it was not for the Government, but for the private sector, to lead the way and create a climate which will lead to more employment.

We see no plan to help those who have lost their jobs. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition referred to the 800,000 people who had lost jobs—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members will not put me off my stride by yawning or making sedentary comments. Indeed, their yawns probably reflect Conservative party thinking on the Budget.

There was no reference in the Chancellor's speech to the young people in society who are growing up amid increased crime, the figures for which were announced yesterday. There is increased irresponsibility in society, yet the Government are washing their hands of all such matters. Children are growing up without any prospect of getting jobs. Society should reflect a sense of shame at that state of affairs, and I regret that nothing has been said about that by Conservative Members. After all, we bear some responsibility for the situation, in Government and in the House generally. People are growing up without the future to which they are entitled, much of that being due to years of Conservative rule.

The Chancellor said unequivocally that unemployment would continue to rise, and unfortunately we know that to be true. We were hoping for a Budget for investment rather than one that will assist consumerism and lead to another boom/bust situation. The Government are impoverished in their approach towards financial matters. They have allowed their single club policy of high interest rates to decimate the nation and our outlook on the world as a financial and exporting country.

Not long ago, a former Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), whose presence in the Chamber we shall miss after the election, said that the medium-term financial strategy had a monetary and fiscal component. He said that in place of a steadily declining gold standard we had a steadily declining path for monetary growth and in place of a balanced budget we had a similarly declining path for the public sector borrowing requirement until a balanced budget was once again secured.

Where is the judgment of the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, as expressed in today's Budget? Where is his prudence and discretion? The only good thing that can be said about the Chancellor is that at least he has not been put in charge of forecasting our weather and he has not told us that a hurricane is not coming when one may be approaching. In the past year, he has refused to accept that we are in a recession and he has spoken about the economy using a whole set of metaphors such as, "we have turned the corner", "there is light at the end of the tunnel" and "there are the green shoots of spring". He made all kinds of suggestions that the economy was turning around, but it was not.

Why do the Government think that they can so easily dupe the British people? As Winston Churchill once asked at another time and another place, what kind of people do they think we are? Do the Government think that they can give us two recessions—first, the deepest since the war and, secondly, the longest recession, sandwiched between an economic miracle that turned out to be an economic mirage and low inflation, hard fought for by the British people? That was followed by high inflation, which also cost the British people dear, and economic mistakes that the Chancellor has freely admitted. Indeed, many Secretaries of State were queueing up on Sunday to give their version of events in 1987. They say that there was an overreaction to the stock market crash and they are happy so long as the blame rests on the right hon. Member for Blaby, who must take responsibility for those terrible events.

Now, after all those freely acknowledged mistakes, the Conservative party wants to be given another term of office. Why should the British people support this bogus prospectus of a Budget? It has no means of becoming the law of the land prior to election day but is simply a promissory note from a Government whose half-fulfilled promises are strewn back over the years like bricks on a derelict building site. Why should the British people fall for the equivalent of a three-card trick? When the time comes, they will not.

I shall come to my peroration in order to keep the Government Whip, the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown), happy. He is not as polite as usual in such debates. If this is a political Budget, so be it. Some hon. Members have called it prudent and popular. The hon. Member for Wycombe said that it was a prudent Budget. I call it perturbing and petrifying. It is the Budget on which the Prime Minister wishes to hold a general election. If it is the best promissory note, bill of goods or delivery note that he has to offer, then, to paraphrase Macbeth: "If the deed were to be done, 'tis best it were done quickly."

A general election is welcome and a Labour Government will be a godsend.

6.54 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I am always glad to follow the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) because he is one of the few Opposition Back Benchers who understand financial matters. However, he was below form today. Indeed, I formed the impression that he had prepared his speech before hearing the Budget. I suspect that it was a draft election address and, if so, I shall give him a little advice—it was too long.

The hon. Gentleman certainly knows more about finance than does the Leader of the Opposition. The task of responding to the Budget statement, no matter who has that task, is one of the most difficult roles in the House. Over the years, I have seen many hon. Members having to do it and I know that it is extraordinarily difficult. I like the Leader of the Opposition—anyone who likes rugby cannot be all bad—but his performance today reminded me of Twickenham: England 24, Wales nil. He did not contribute much to the debate.

May I make a personal remark to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and, through you, to Mr. Speaker? This seems to be an evening of swan songs, although I hasten to assure you that it is not mine. This will be the last occasion on which I speak in the House under your Deputy Speakership and the Speakership of Mr. Speaker. The three of us entered the House at the same election and I shall miss both of you enormously because your contributions to parliamentary democracy over many years in this House have been remarkable. I hope that you will accept my remarks and convey them to Mr. Speaker.

I was interested in the speech—another swan song—of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), whom I often follow in Budget debates and with whom I nearly always agree. I particularly liked his point about an overriding need for this to be a prudent Budget. I was anxious lest there should be any risk that the Budget damaged the pound and created a danger of interest rates being increased. The danger has not gone, however, because we live in a world where the German and other economies affect us. But I am extremely relieved, as was the right hon. Member for Devonport, that the Budget is sufficiently prudent to reassure the markets and avoid the dangers of increasing interest rates. One of the greatest curses from which we have suffered has been high interest rates. I have said time and again in interventions and speeches that, above all, we must get interest rates down and not let them increase further. Another danger is the prospect of a Labour Government because it is acknowledged that there would be an immediate increase in interest rates, which would be catastrophic to a country trying to get out of recession.

I have always advocated strongly the need to resist protectionism, so I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor made that clear. If there were a wave of world protectionism, we would suffer as much as anyone. Some countries—perhaps the United States—could sustain it, but countries like Britain and other European countries could not do so. That is why we should ram home to our French partners the need for a sensible resolution to the talks on the general agreement on tariffs and trade.

I shall not go through the whole of the Budget but, ever since I have been in the House, I have been interested in two aspects of financial debates and Budgets. The first is small firms, which have always been near to my heart, and the second is the cause of wider share ownership. I used to think that I was the first Minister responsible for small firms until I discovered that my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewksbury (Mr. Ridley) held that post for a short period. Ever since I had those responsibilities, I have believed that small firms and their success are the essence of a free economy and that they are vital to the future of our nation.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor was right to identify three ogres that terrify small firms: the uniform business rate; the horrors of the VAT man and the VAT regime; and the problems of credit control and the recovery of debts. He has dealt with all those problems. His proposals on UBR will be particularly well received by the small firms in my constituency. Likewise, easing the tyrannical and over-rigid VAT policy and his proposals for recovering debts will be welcomed. When I was Minister responsible for small firms, there were substantial complaints about debt recovery and the way in which large firms played the credit game. They played it with enormous skill—*[Interruption.]* It would not be fair to name such a firm. GEC was oppressive on its small contractors and had an enormous team of people stringing out the payment of debts until the last possible moment, which was intolerable to small firms.

I welcome what the Chancellor has done about Government contracts, but it is not enough; he may have to consider draconian legislative measures to ensure that the credit game is not played by larger firms on their smaller sub-contractors.

As for my second interest—wider share ownership—I was a founder member, together with the late Maurice Macmillan and my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark), of the Wider Share Ownership Council. For years we bumped along. Then we had the 1965 Budget, introduced by Lord Callaghan, which was catatrophic and highly damaging to the whole idea. It was not until recent years that wider share ownership became fashionable and popular. I therefore strongly supported the personal equity plan system introduced by this Government, and their other improvements, which I hope represent only the start of further developments which will encourage wider share ownership.

I particularly rejoice at one event under the regime of this Government. For the first time since the war, there are more individual shareholders than there are members of trade unions. That is healthy for a free society.

I was also pleased by the announcement that the autumn statement is to be abolished—or rather, that the

[Sir Anthony Grant]

spending statement is to be combined with the tax-raising Budget. The present system has always seemed to me absurd and it is not understood by the public. The long lapse between announcing what will be spent and how it will be raised has meant that by the time we get to the Budget people have forgotten the enormous commitments that the Government made the previous autumn to expenditure on health, education and other desirable things. At the time of the Budget people ask why we are lowering taxes and why we do not spend more on health and education, forgetting entirely that tax-raising and spending are quite separate exercises. Bringing them together in this way is thoroughly sensible.

I should like to respond to a point made by the hon. Member for Middlesbrough about taxation. Before the Government came to office I believed and argued that there should be a shift from direct to indirect taxation, because direct taxation is a tax on work, which is largely involuntary, whereas indirect taxation is a tax on spending, which is, to a much greater degreee, voluntary. That is what the Government have done, and they have no reason to be ashamed of it. It is in line with the policies on which they were originally elected.

I am glad—contrary to what the Opposition hoped—that there is to be no increase in VAT, and that the Chancellor still managed to reduce direct taxation. A philosophical word about taxation: one comes across an extraordinary number of simple souls who say that they would not mind paying a little more tax to have a better health service or a better education service. Such people are usually talking about other people's taxes, not their own. When I attend meetings of teachers or health service workers in my constituency, they ask why we cannot pay our nurses and teachers more. I ask how that is to be done —by increased taxation? That seems a simple solution, but these people do not want the money taken from their taxation, because if it is they will need yet more money to pay the higher taxes, and so the crazy circle continues.

This is a dilemma with which the Opposition must wrestle, and it is clear from their proposed £37 billion extra expenditure that they have not thought it through properly. They must consider who will bear the burden. They appear unwilling to consider that, so I am afraid that the chickens will come home to roost.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Talking about chickens coming home to roost, the hon. Gentleman will have observed from the Red Book published concurrently with the Budget that the overall burden of taxation in 1978-79, the last year of Labour government, was 34·75 per cent. and that for the year 1991-92 it is 36·75 per cent., clearly a higher figure than the Government inherited. The hon. Gentleman will also have observed that the projection for 1996 is a burden of 38 per cent. taxation, a dramatic increase. It is this Government who are putting up taxation.

Sir Anthony Grant: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall read the Red Book avidly. I have not yet read all of it, but I accept what he says. However, he has missed my point, which was that I sought a change from direct to indirect taxation. That change has come about. I do not dispute the hon. Gentleman's figures. I maintain that it is vital to reduce the burden of direct taxation because it is a tax on people's work. That is what the Government have done, and I am glad that the Chancellor has continued the process today. And he shot the Opposition's fox by providing the benefit at the bottom end and helping the less fortunate people, not the well-heeled. As a result, 21 million people will be an average of £142 better off, with those at the bottom of the scale doing best. That is probably what has annoyed the Opposition.

This has rightly been described as a Budget for recovery. When the recovery comes, as it will, East Anglia in general and Cambridgeshire in particular will be among the first to recover. The Budget creates the right framework for that recovery, because our area is full of small firms and of people anxious to work and to assist the economy. All we need now is tnat spark of confidence. The Budget provides the right climate. The spark of confidence will come when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is re-elected as Prime Minister.

7.6 pm

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): I made my maiden speech when you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were in the Chair, and this will probably be my last speech when you are in it. May I take this opportunity to wish you a happy retirement and to thank you for your courtesy and great tolerance of much of what I have done? You have been an excellent mentor.

This has been my first Budget since I became a Member of the House. Budget day is supposed to be a great and exciting day—it has a certain charisma. Those of us who have been outside hitherto looking in on the Budget have imagined keen minds working through every full stop and comma. We have supposed there to be great interest among Government Front-Bench spokesmen, and a crowded House until the late hours.

Of course it is not quite like that. There has been yawning on the Government Front Bench and little real examination of what the Budget does. The hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) put his finger on it when he asked whose hand was on the tiller. He got it wrong; he should have asked whose hand was in the till. This Chancellor has put his hand in the till and, instead of paying the bills, he has taken the money for a night out.

I suggest that this Budget is irrelevant to people's real needs. That is certainly true of Hemsworth, where we have suffered from a great barrage of Tory propaganda recently. Tories claim that 17 million days were lost through strikes in the last year of the Labour Government. In the past three days of this Tory Government 17 million days have been lost through unemployment. That puts it in perspective. This Budget will do nothing for the record number of people who are unemployed in my consituency.

Mine also happens to be a constituency with many medium and small-sized firms. Some of them pay good wages, but some pay truly appalling wages, with the result that a large number of people in work will not even earn enough to benefit from the tax changes made by the Chancellor. Other people will have any advantage from these changes clawed back through means testing on a variety of benefits. In other words, poor people at the bottom of the scale will be hit every time by what the Government do.

One thing that the Government could have done to give a bit of equity, fairness, justice and even mercy to the people at the bottom of the scale would have been to examine what happens with invalidity benefit. It is a scandal that those on invalidity benefit—heaven knows, it is not generous—have to pay for their many prescriptions and cannot invest in the future and get cheap prescriptions. The Chancellor did nothing about that.

What did the Chancellor do to get job creation going? At one point, he boasted about the Government's splendid training programme. It is about time that the Government looked at some of those programmes, because they are not training for real jobs. The training programme is producing cheap labour for people making a handsome profit, and whom the Government help further with their tax policies. Remarkably little real training is going on and that is a scandal and a disgrace.

How has the Chancellor helped people on occupational pensions? He claimed to have done great things for them, but let me tell him about miners' pensions. Every Christmas, miners' pensions are updated by perhaps £1 or £1·5. That is then clawed back. In one case a miner not only had his £1·5 clawed back but had another 6p taken off him. Why does not the Chancellor do something about such anomalies? Perhaps it is because he does not care about them, so he does not care about defending the people whom he is hurting.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said that the Government should not be ashamed to say, "If it's not hurting, it's not working." That may be the case, but if one knows that one is hurting people, it is a normal human instinct to protect the most vulnerable. There was no sign of that in the Chancellor's speech. He did nothing to help them.

The right hon. Member for Devonport spoke about the European Community and how he had stood by his principles rather than stay within the Labour party. His narcissistic tour of what happened made me rather sick, because some of us have had principles about the European Community and were consistent about them for a long time but stayed in the party and had the guts to fight instead of ratting on those who supported us. I yield to none in my consistency of approach to policy on the European Community.

The right hon. Member for Devonport rightly said that the exchange rate mechanism would impose a discipline, and that is important. When it comes to economic and monetary union, that discipline will be even tighter. What is meant by imposing a discipline? What action do we have to take afterwards? That is what we should be considering. There is no easy way out and we need thinking policies. The Government think only of interest rates. They are incapable of seeing things three dimensionally. Within economic and monetary union that truly accepts the European Community, we have to work out our salvation, on many fronts, alongside our partners. The Chancellor did not mention collaboration with Europe.

The Chancellor uttered some throw-away lines about the minimum wage. I am not ashamed of the minimum wage which is a just wage. Like the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), who mentioned this in his speech, I was brought up in a Christian household which believed in the just wage. We believed that a person who did a decent day's work deserved enough to look after his family and have a home and a reasonable standard of living—nothing extravagant. That is all that the minimum wage is based on. I doubt whether our modest proposal will even achieve that basic requirement, but it will be a move in the right direction. I have no doubt that, by talking to our European partners, we shall be able to get the level playing field that is required and, as a result of our willingness to co-operate, we shall have co-operation from them to assist us in our fight, and that is also important.

Although there have been a couple of derogatory references to it since the statement, the Chancellor made no mention of the social charter. What is wrong with it? What are the Government so frightened about? The charter does not mention trade unions, so it does not give them any priorities. It says that workers should be treated decently. If I go to IBM or ICI, they will tell me that they want to treat their workers decently. My hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) will confirm that ICI treats its workers decently. It is already fulfilling the social charter and that is why it is a successful firm.

The firms which are not successful are using cheap and slave labour, and they do not have a co-operative work force. They have people who work for them because they are compelled to, but they do not have people who are proud of the work that they are doing, who are keen to make their firm do better and who are willing to put every effort into ensuring that their firm is the best in the area. The Government are opposed to that. Everything the Chancellor said was irrelevant to such a system.

Small businesses need help. Conservative Members have spoken as though the Chancellor had said something wondrous about small businesses. He did not go as far as the Prime Minister went when he signed an early-day motion—way back in the halcyon days of the 1980s when Margaret was queen—that spoke of "compulsory" interest being levied on late payments. That is the only way to help small businesses. One cannot rely on the integrity of the big boys, despite what the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes) said.

If we are to help small businesses, we must do something about the business rate. I do not know why Conservative Members think that southern businesses are assisting northern businesses. Businesses in my area, the Wakefield metropolitan district council area—my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) will bear this out—have been hammered by the uniform business rate much more than ever they were by the sensitive local authority.

The Budget epitomises what is wrong with the Government's entire philosophy. They are a centrist and Stalinist Government who believe that the centre rules. They do not believe in devolution and trust, except in so far as they send civil servants—the viceroys of the United Kingdom, or at least of Whitehall—to tell elected Members what to do. The Government have no idea of how to make things tick at the bottom, and the Budget totally ignores that.

I am not simply nitpicking. The Budget shows a dereliction of duty and it has no vision for a Britain of the future. It displays the incredible tiredness of a Government who are clearly ready to go and who must go to be replaced by people of vigour and strength.

7.20 pm

Sir Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): This is probably my last performance in the House. My first was over 30 years ago. I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all the staff of the House and my constituents for their co-operation and help.

[Sir Alan Glyn]

One of the most important proposals in the Budget is the one for budgetary reform. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) said, for years we have had two financial statements which the public did not understand. It is right that they should be presented as one Budget in December.

I commend the Budget, which has been presented against a background of great difficulty and a world recession. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West that, eventually, we must move from direct to indirect taxation, which allows the individual control over how he spends his money. The Budget will help the lower paid and the small business man. That is desirable, because for years we have been trying to encourage small businesses.

The VAT payments on account have caused great trouble for small businesses which are hard hit by having to pay it and by being kept waiting for a long time for payment by the big companies. We should go further than the Budget suggests so that not only payment for Government contracts but for all contracts should be subject to a time limit of, say, 30 days. Firms similar in size to ICI are guilty of keeping small companies waiting for payment, although ICI is not guilty of that.

I welcome the tax cuts on British cars because they will help our motor manufacturers to build up sales in Europe where they have done well this year. The cuts will help not only car manufacturers but car component makers and the steel industry.

I welcome the separation in the incomes of husband and wife. It was a great scandal that, even though a wife was earning £10,000 and the husband only £200, he was responsible for his wife's tax. That system has gradually been broken down and the proposal in the Budget will end it altogether. The proposals on inheritance tax are also welcome and will help small business men who save to set up a small business only to see it smashed by inheritance tax. Small companies seem to be neglected by the Opposition even though they are the backbone of the country.

I, and I am sure many other hon. Members, have been approached by many pensioners who have suffered through no fault of their own. I hope that the Government will accept the Social Security Select Committee's recommendations on pensions because they could help people who put their money into a pension fund which was transferred to a Maxwell-controlled fund only to find that the money had disappeared and they had nothing to fall back on.

I regret the defence cuts. They are not part of the Budget but they have been mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes). Our forces must be such that they can cope with any eventuality. We never know when they may be required to serve with the United Nations. The Budget is not a vote catcher. It shows the right way forward.

I shall be sorry to leave the House after 30 years. I hope that in the near future more will be spent on staff accommodation and on the facilities provided for those who stay and rest here and have to change and wash. The facilities are ghastly and should be improved in the next Parliament.

Many other matters have been mentioned, including GATT negotiations which will have to be settled. The Budget represents a major reform, a change in the whole financial structure. I welcome the proposal to have a co-ordinated Budget in December. I wish all hon. Members well.

7.28 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): It is always a pleasure to have the opportunity to follow the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Sir A. Glyn). I have always held him in great esteem and affection. The House will certainly miss his presence. I understand that he has been in the House for about 30 years, an extremely long time to be in any one place. During the time that I have been here he has always played his part in the debates in which he has had an interest. I, and I am sure all of his colleagues, will be sad to see him leave the House. I wish him a happy and healthy retirement.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Sir A. Glyn) was the first Conservative Member to cross the Chamber on Thursday last when my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) was taken ill. That was an example of the hon. Gentleman's extremely courteous and caring conduct in the House, both to his political opponents and his hon. Friends.

Mr. Lofthouse: I have seen the hon. Gentleman do that on many occasions.

I understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you, too, will soon be leaving the House. You will certainly be missed. I have known you, too, for many years. I first met you when you visited Pontefract, for a stay of three weeks. That was some years ago, but I remember the occasion extremely well. You have always been held in high esteem in the House and your presence in the Chair will be greatly missed. I wish you a happy and healthy retirement.

Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) has left the Chamber. I shall refer to him none the less because my remarks will not be controversial. The hon. Gentleman referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), who is recognised within the House as one who understands finance. I cannot claim to be a financial wizard, but I wonder whether there are any financial wizards on the Government Benches. If there are, why is the economy in such a mess? We have the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his predecessors, not least the Prime Minister and the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson). The economy, as I say, has been getting into a mess and surely it is reasonable to ask, "Where does the fault lie?"

It is no good the Chancellor of the Exchequer and others saying, "It is a world crisis" or, "It is a European crisis." Of course there are problems throughout the world, but we appear to be in a much worse position than other countries in the European Community, for example, apart from Greece and Portugal. Why is that?

The Budget is an attempt—I do not think that anyone can put his hand on his heart and contradict what I am about to say—to convince the British public that things are not quite as bad as they appear to be. The British public will take some convincing. They are not familiar with the procedures of the House or with national finance, but they are familiar with the consequences of recessions, for example.

No one can deny that there has been great suffering within various sections of the nation over the past few years. Any Government who have been in office for 13 years cannot escape responsibility and blame for what has happened. Whether it rests with the right hon. Member for Blaby, as some Secretaries of State have seemed to suggest recently during television appearances or in the press and publications generally, I do not know, but responsibility must lie with the Government.

My constituents will want to know what the Budget does for them. In the short time that we have had to study the Chancellor of the Exchequer's proposals, there seem to be only two main features within his statement. The first is a public sector borrowing requirement of £28 billion. That will be a millstone around somebody's neck; it will bear upon this Government or the next one. At some stage, it will be a millstone. It is perhaps an attempt to alleviate the burdens of the people including, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer told us today, the lower paid. If the lower paid receive tax reliefs, many of them will lose current benefits. If that happens, they will not be helped too much.

How does the Budget help the unemployed? The Chancellor admitted this afternoon that there was not much hope for them. There are many unemployed people in my constituency. About 20,000 have been thrown out of work since 1985, and since then there have been few employment opportunities. The unemployed want to know how the Budget will help them. In fact, the Chancellor told them: it will not help them at all. The right hon. Gentleman sees no hope at present, in the near future or the medium future for the unemployed in my constituency and in other areas.

Young miners in my constituency—men in their 30s and 40s—have been thrown on the scrap heap. Many of them have had their homes repossessed. What will the Budget do for them? Nothing. What will it do for old miners who are chronically sick? Right hon. and hon. Members have heard me refer on many occasions to miners with chest diseases. I visited some of them only a few weeks ago. There are old miners suffering from emphysema who receive no industrial injury benefit. Many of them cannot breathe without the aid of oxygen. There are men who cannot lift a cup of tea to their lips. I repeat: how does the Budget help them? It does not help them at all.

How will the Budget help local authorities or the fire service? The fire service in west Yorkshire has to cut services year after year. Next year, the West Yorkshire fire authority will have to take decisions that will involve cuts to its emergency service. At the Pontefract fire station there is an emergency service unit that is specially equipped to deal with motorway accidents. The House will know that the M62 and the A1 cross are in the area. There are major chemical factories and there are still one or two pits. The special equipment is essential for the saving of life, and men have been specially trained to use it. First-class equipment will be put in storage because the authority will be unable to afford to employ staff to use it. What will the Budget do for the authority?

What will the Budget do for the West Yorkshire police? I have a report from that force that next year it anticipates that there will be a shortage of 150 uniformed officers and 130 civilian staff. Crime increased in the area by 27 per cent. last year. How will the Budget help to prevent crime? None of us condones the increase in crime; indeed, we all condemn it.

What do we do when hundreds of youngsters between 16 and 20 years are unable to find employment? They get up in the morning, they have no money, and there is nowhere for them to go. They can see no future. I think back sometimes and wonder what I would have done in their position. I used to think when I was their age—I started work at 14—that I was hard done by. We used to leave the classroom on Friday and meet one another down the hole in the ground on the Monday. It was slavery, but my friends and I did not get into mischief. That is because we were not idle. We had a job. The kids who now leave school at 16 do not have employment. What will the Budget do for them? According to the Chancellor, it does nothing. There is no hope at all for those youngsters.

How does the Budget help the health service in my area? How does it help the hospital at Pontefract? An old miner who had been in ward 7 there telephoned me to say that he had had to use his dressing gown for a pillow. That is the truth, not some trumped-up story seeking to appeal to the emotions. I thought that it was a rather outlandish story, so I went to see the chairman of the health authority and told him what the old miner had told me. He made inquiries and he confirmed that there was a pillow shortage, but it was decided to send a few—about five to each ward. How does the Budget help the health authority that is having to put up with such problems?

This afternoon the Chancellor told us that there would probably be a 1p increase in the price of a pint of beer. One might say that that is not much, but for the retired miner and the unemployed miner it is another increase for them to bear. It decreases their spending power. The same applies to the increase in the price of cigarettes. I have no objection to that. It is a step in the right direction because it discourages people from smoking. Nevertheless, those who like to smoke have not been helped by the Budget.

I might have generalised and I might not have dealt with matters of high finance, but I have touched on how the Budget affects people most. The Government can no longer continue to make excuses, saying that they have had only 13 years and that if they have a bit longer they might put matters right. The British public will not swallow that. The sooner the election comes the better for the return of a Labour Government.

7.42 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): It is a pleasure to follow the speech of the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse). I am grateful to him for the nice things that he said about my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Sir A. Glyn). I think that his tribute was one which all hon. Members would wish to share with him. I very much regret the departure of my hon. Friend. He has been extremely good to me during the 13 years that I have shared with him in the House. I wish him every success in his retirement.

The debate has been a great mixture of speeches made by those who are about to leave the House, those on the Opposition Benches who have been practising their own adoption addresses, covering a range of wholly irrelevant issues in order to fax the speeches to their constituencies,

[Sir Nicholas Bonsor]

probably in the near future, and those on the Conservative Benches who have properly addressed the Budget. I hope to join the latter category and to do so extremely shortly.

This was a first class Budget which avoided all the pitfalls which many members of the press saw faced my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and on which there has been great speculation during the past few weeks. I am particularly pleased that my right hon. Friend did not take 1p in the pound off income tax. Those who said that that would have been seen as a bribe were right. It would have been ineffective and it would have done nothing to improve the state of our economy. I am delighted that the Government avoided going down that path.

Instead, the Government have adopted the dual main thrust for the Budget of helping the elderly who need help, particularly pensioners, and adjusting the threshold to help those in the lower earnings categories. The Government have also succeeded in helping small businesses. Those achievements are extremely relevant to the state of our economy and to Britain's needs.

There is no doubt that the recession is biting hard and causing great hardship. It is a pity that much of the debate on that issue takes place with a kind of myopia. It does not appear that any Opposition Member is prepared to look beyond the channel to see what is happening in the rest of the world. It is not possible to take just the British economy to lay at the feet of successive Chancellors of the Exchequer the blame for the fact that we are in recession. The blunt truth is that the world is in recession. All our major trading partners and all the major export markets into which we hope to sell our goods are in recession.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East) *indicated dissent.*

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: It is true that most of our export markets, if not all of them, are either in or going into recession. I shall be happy to hear the hon. Gentleman give a list of those countries that he does not think fall into that category. Germany is going into recession. France, Spain, Greece, Australia, Canada and the United States are all in recession. I could give the hon. Gentleman an endless list of countries that are in recession. I look forward to hearing from him a much shorter list of those that are not.

Mr. Enright: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the task that Germany has performed—first, in taking into its currency that of another country and, secondly, in taking into its confines a backward country while remaining successful—is remarkable and that it is to Germany that we should look rather than to Greece and Portugal?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am happy to join the hon. Gentleman in his tribute to the way in which Germany has dealt with its unification problems. I agree that it is doing a remarkable job. The fact remains, however, that since the Conservatives took office Britain's inflation rate has gone down from being four times the inflation in Germany to being on a par with the inflation in that country, and that is a great achievement which I hope that the hon. Gentleman will have the good grace to approve and acknowledge.

Mr. Enright: Inflation is still higher than it was in the last year of the last Labour Government.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman looks to his books because that is not true. Under the last Labour Government, inflation went up to 27 per cent. If I remember rightly, at the end of 1978 it was around 19 per cent. The hon. Gentleman can check the figures.

Mr. Enright *rose*——

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am sorry, but I shall not continue to give way.

There are two or three matters in the Budget of which I approve. The freezing of increases in the unified business rate will be of great value to small businesses and to businesses generally. I hope that those commercial landlords who seem to be increasing their rents in an unacceptable way in the current economic climate will take a leaf out of the Government's book and follow suit in freezing the rents that they charge.

A business in my constituency has a large insurance company as its landlord and its rent is to increase by about 400 per cent. over a three or four-year period. I sent the insurance company's chairman a copy of the company's accounts to show that if he were to increase the rent in that way it would wipe out the small profit that the business was making, leaving it in grave financial difficulties. I received no satisfactory response and the company insists on putting up the rent. I have no doubt that, as a consequence, the company will go out of business and the insurance company will find itself with empty premises that it cannot let.

Such occurrences are not simply in my constituency —they are much more widespread. It is a matter of profound regret that in many instances commercial landlords are not acting with proper consideration for their tenants and for the economy as a whole but are acting in a way that is greedy and stupid, and that will backfire on them and their revenue in due course.

The VAT threshold is to go up in line with inflation and that is welcome, as is the cutting of the penalties. The penalties for what were quite minor VAT misdemeanours were unacceptably high and I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor addressed that matter.

I am pleased also that my right hon. Friend dealt with the inheritance tax burden on small businesses. The proposal has been referred to several times and it will be a great comfort to those who have built up small businesses over the years. I declare an interest because I am the non-executive chairman and a smallish shareholder in a small business. I am glad to say that it was one of the 20 fastest-growing companies in this country from 1987 to 1991. The largest shareholder has put an enormous amount of his life's work into the business and I am delighted that my right hon. Friend has made it possible for his family and his children to share in the results of that labour when he retires and, ultimately, dies. Our policy is in stark contrast to that of the Labour party.

I wish to suggest four ways in which I think that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor might go further in his next Budget. The inheritance provisions will be of great benefit to farmers, but while our agriculture is still part of the common agricultural policy and is in an abysmal state not many small farmers will be in a position to benefit from the remission of inheritance tax. Agriculture is dreadfully short of money and most small farmers will go out of business in the near future if nothing is done to assist them. We can do that only by coming out of the CAP or by persuading our European partners to take a more sensible view of the way in which agricultural returns are structured.

I should like to see the Chancellor's proposals to make Government-owned companies pay their small sub-contractors promptly extended to other large companies. It is undoubtedly one of the great burdens to any small company's cash flow that large companies use their clout in order not to pay their bills punctually to help their own position. That threatens the future of many small businesses. I hope that the Government will consider following the German example where it is compulsory in a contract to add interest to a bill if an invoice is not settled within 30 days. Firms in Germany cannot contract out of that obligation and large firms cannot use their industrial muscle to wriggle out of paying promptly as they do in this country.

I welcome the proposals on the car tax. As the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said, a 5 per cent. reduction will cost £600 million, which is expensive. However, it will be of great help to our car industry, which is in grave difficulty, although it is doing remarkably well in the European context. I hope that another 5 per cent. reduction will be announced in the next Budget, if not before.

I am delighted to see that £15 million is to be taken off the betting levy and redirected back into racing.

Mr. David Davis (Boothferry): Hear, hear.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I note what my hon. Friend says and I know that that proposal will be widely welcomed. However, the Government could go further. Value added tax, which is payable on the sale of race horses, is another threat to racing. At 17·5 per cent., it is a crippling burden and neither Ireland nor France—our major competitors—charges as much VAT. In France, it is not charged at all and in Ireland it is charged at 2·5 per cent. That being the case, we are not able to compete and I fear for the auctions at Newmarket and our entire racing community, unless the Government act. I hope that they can take some action on VAT on race horses before long.

On the level of the public sector borrowing requirement, the Opposition are trying to have their cake and eat it. They have accused us of having a PSBR which is too high, yet they also accuse us of not spending enough on public services. We will have a PSBR of £28 billion in 1992-93 because of the amount that we spend on public services. The hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford referred to the hospital which he visited. The Government may not be doing anything in the Budget for the health service but, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government increased expenditure on it from £8·5 billion in 1978 to £32·9 billion in 1992—a staggering increase in real terms.

Furthermore, the Government have taken steps to make sure that the money that they provide for the health service is properly and efficiently spent. I visited Harold Wood hospital in my constituency last Friday and was impressed by the way in which the hospital is operating. I asked the same question that I had asked five years ago: "Can you tell me how many blankets and syringes the hospital uses in a year?" The answer was yes and that the hospital had the figures available. Five years ago, the answer was no because the figures were not available and there were no mechanism or auditing controls to enable the hospital to find out the answer. I suspect that the health authority to which the hon Member for Pontefract and Castleford referred is probably Labour controlled and that the hospital does not have enough pillows because it has no proper controls within its structure to ensure that the money allocated to it is spent efficiently.

Mr. Lofthouse: I cannot follow what the hon. Gentleman says about the health authority being Labour controlled. Health authorities are not Labour controlled, nor should they be Conservative controlled. The non-executive directors who run my health authority were appointed by the Secretary of State. They have no affiliation with the area and include a former solicitor from Wetherby and someone who runs a factory 50 miles away. The authority is run by people appointed by the Secretary of State and not by the Labour party.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Yes, the hon. Gentleman is quite right. I was out of date, but my point about management administration is valid and I stick by what I said.

The Labour party does not like the Budget. The Leader of the Opposition, when challenged by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, refused to say whether he would reverse the 20p in the pound tax level. However, he promised that we would have the Labour party's alternative budget shortly. I look forward to that with great interest, although we already know much of the detail. The Labour party is committed to putting direct taxation up so that the top level, taken with national insurance, will go up to 59 per cent.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The hon. Gentleman is misrepresenting our policy. The top rate of taxation will not go up from the present 40 per cent. band. We intend to introduce a new 50 per cent. band that will affect those earning substantially more than £30,000. The hon. Gentleman should not misrepresent our policy.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am grateful for that clarification, but I did not notice that differential in any of the Labour party documents that I read. Perhaps it is a recent change, because I understand that when the changes to direct taxation were first announced, they were set to affect those on £20,500. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will correct me if I am wrong and will tell us about the proposed level later.

The fact remains that the top rate of tax will be 59 per cent. and on top of that investment income will, yet again, suffer another surcharge of a further 9 per cent. Therefore, the top rate of tax on investment income will be 68 per cent. That is what the Labour party would introduce as soon as it came to power. Heaven knows what the top rate would be if it were in power for four years; we could even go back to the level reached in 1977 under the previous Labour Government when the top rate of tax payable reached 98 per cent.

We all know about the budgetary aims of the Labour party. It is determined to kill wealth. It does not like the idea of accumulated wealth and of family businesses being passed on from one generation to another. That is why it intends to increase inheritance tax and to bring back capital transfer tax. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) may make a face and I certainly agree with the sentiment that he expresses. I am merely repeating exactly what was said in published Labour party documents.

[Sir Nicholas Bonsor]

Are we to believe that the hon. Gentleman agrees with the Conservative Government's policy of cutting inheritance tax on small businesses? If so, will he please give us his support so that we can go ahead on an all-party basis? I am sure that small businesses would be mightily relieved were that to happen. Given the fact that the Labour party has adopted such an idiotic line and we are close to an election, there is, perhaps, the faint possibility that we shall be able to squeeze some sensible accommodation out of it.

Conservative Members believe in enterprise. We believe in people being able to work for their living and to keep as much of the money that they make as is compatible with proper funding of the state's economy. On the Opposition Benches, there is a dogmatic socialism that should have died years ago: Opposition Members wish to stifle industry and enterprise and to take money from everyone who manages to accumulate it, without letting them spend that money on their families or build something for future generations.

That is the difference between the two parties. That is why the country will vote for the Conservatives, and why the present Government will remain in power after the next election.

8.8 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I profoundly disagree with what has been said by the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), except in one important respect. He mentioned his hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Sir A. Glyn). I share his affection and respect for the hon. Gentleman, who, in my experience, has always been a fair-minded adversary of the most courteous kind.

Earlier, the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes)—that splendid English patriot—claimed that he was speaking for England, and, more particularly, for his constituency. That claim seems reasonable enough, on the basis of the speeches that the hon. Gentleman has made over the past nine years. I listened closely, as I always do, to his unashamedly patriotic speech. He was followed by my old and hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), who said that he was speaking for Wales. I should like to speak for the people of Scotland—and, more particularly, for those whom I represent in Greenock and Port Glasgow.

I see that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Social Security is present. I wish to say something about the social fund later, but I should be enormously grateful if—with her characteristic courtesy—she responded promptly to the following question. How much of the increase in the social fund will reach the two local offices in my constituency? As the hon. Lady knows, about a third of the people whom I represent are in receipt, directly or indirectly, of social security incomes. This is not a joke; I am not being facetious, but making an important point. Today's Budget has nothing to offer my constituents. Perhaps, however, the Minister's reply—which, as always, will be expeditious and courteous—will answer my question about the social fund.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): Obviously, I cannot answer the detailed question about the proportion of the social fund, but I shall certainly undertake that either my right hon. Friend the Minister of State or I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Gentleman says that this is not a Budget for his constituents. What about the help that it will give his poorer pensioners?

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the Minister for responding in such a way. Yes, I will state the ways in which the Budget will help; but, in overall terms, it does nothing for the people of Scotland—at a time when the Minister's party is in a minority there, and faces elimination in terms of representation in the House. I believe that the Secretary of State will go at the general election, and that the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth)—the Minister of State, Scottish Office—may go as well. That may cause all kinds of problems for the governance of Scotland, but the Budget has been introduced at what is already a time of considerable political turbulence there.

I welcome the assistance that is to be given to small firms, especially in regard to the disgraceful companies that take their time in paying bills to smaller companies. If the proposed sanctions sorted out those miscreants, I should be delighted. On a number of occasions, representatives of small businesses have come to my surgeries to complain about the slowness of large companies in paying their bills. That has created all sorts of cash-flow problems.

I have always recognised and acknowledged the importance of small businesses, particularly in my constituency. I am a cinema buff: I was brought up on American-type films, with Doris Day singing "Blue Moon" and what have you. Given that background, I welcome the financial assistance that is to be given—belatedly—to the film industry. I refer to paragraph 4.15 of the Budget report, on page 46.

The United Kingdom film industry includes in its ranks some very fine, talented writers, producers, directors and actors, and we in Scotland have more than our fair share of talented film makers. As a cinema buff, I welcome the support that is to be given to the industry, although it has come so late in the day.

There are no car factories within hundreds of miles of my constituency; nevertheless, I welcome the measures in paragraph 4.19. None of my constituents now work in the car industry: Chrysler disappeared from Renfrew a long time ago. All the same, I am sure that this is an important measure for the United Kingdom's economy.

In one respect, however, my view differs sharply from that of the Government—and, perhaps, even from that of some of my hon. Friends. I refer to the increase in alcohol duties. According to paragraph 4.21, that increase is about 4·5 per cent. and I think that it should be much higher.

We talk about drug addiction in the United Kingdom. I can tell the House that one of the major forms of drug addiction in my part of Scotland is alcohol addiction. I hope that I do not sound too much like a whinger, but I feel that alcohol is much too cheap, and I think that the duty on it should have been increased by a much larger amount. Alcohol-related crime is on the increase in Strathclyde—and elsewhere in the United Kingdom; there is nothing special about Strathclyde in that regard. Many violent crimes are alcohol-related, especially those committed at weekends and involving the use of knives and other weapons. I do not think that enough is being done to deal with that form of addiction, and I think that the prices of drink should be much higher.

I also think that the increase in duty on cigarettes is not enough, at 10 per cent. Cigarettes should be more expensive, given the problems that affect those who are addicted to them. We need only visit hospitals to see those problems: emphysema, lung cancer and other smoking-related illnesses. A savage increase in duty may not be the whole answer, but a dramatic increase in the price of both alcohol and cigarettes would help.

I said that the Budget has been introduced largely as a way of saving the Government's neck, but it will certainly not be saved in Scotland. There, the Conservative party is a declining minority party—it is now the third party in Scotland, coming after the Liberal Democrats. This is indeed a politically turbulent moment in Scotland, and despite some of the kind things that I have said about it and despite the intervention by the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), the Budget will not help the Conservative party in Scotland. I shall spell out the reasons in a moment.

One element of the turbulence in Scotland is that the power of this place is suffering a continuing diminution vis-a-vis the extraordinarily powerful central institutions of the European Community, the Council of Ministers and the Commission. Its power has also been diminished by the over-powerful Executive, but let us bring the debate back to Scotland.

As a Member of Parliament for Scotland, I know that we are experiencing growing disenchantment with the Government and the Westminster Parliament. It is fair to say that the Scottish Tory party has lost the place. The Budget will strengthen the growing alienation from what is known as the London Government.

Yesterday I discussed the Budget—among other things—with youngsters at a school in Gourock just over the border from my constituency. The school is in fact in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) but most of its pupils are constituents of mine. My wife and I spent a couple of hours at the school and discussed the Budget with youngsters who asked me what would be done for the unemployed people in my constituency and for those living in appalling housing conditions. The answer is nothing. There is nothing in the Budget for the thousands of my constituents caught up in those terrible circumstances.

What is to happen to the unemployed in my constituency where the unemployment rate is now just under 13 per cent.? What comfort can they take from the Budget? I have to say, very little. People in my constituency are implementing the traditional Scottish solution to unemployment which is migration. Some highly skilled constituents are now working on sites in Spain, in shipyards in Holland and even further afield. They have been driven away from their homes, and there is nothing in the Budget to bring them back.

What about people living in appalling housing conditions? What do they gain from the Budget? Why have not the Government given any help to the construction industry by encouraging district councils in Scotland and local councils south of the border to build the houses that are desperately needed not only by the many thousands of homeless people in Scotland but by the scores of thousands living in disgraceful conditions? There is nothing in the Budget for those thousands of people, and they will wreak their revenge on the Government on 9 April if that is to be the date of the general election. They will ensure that the growing campaign to drive out the Tories from Scotland—largely inspired by the campaign for a Scottish assembly—reaches fruition on 9 April.

Yesterday the Secretary of State for Scotland published a document in which he claimed that there were many financial benefits accruing to Scotland from the Union. There are few in the Budget. The Secretary of State chose to ignore the fact that Scotland's gross domestic product has now fallen to 93·2 per cent. of the United Kingdom average, having risen to 97·4 per cent. in 1984. This morning's edition of *The Herald*—it is no longer called *The Glasgow Herald*—stated:

> "Mr. Lang cannot have it both ways. Are we doing as well as he likes to tell us? Or are we a poor country which would be much poorer without English bounty?"

Scotland's GDP is slipping behind. There is a great deal of poverty in Scotland and the Government, who are known increasingly as the English or the London Government——

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The south-east Government.

Dr. Godman: Behind their stockade in the south-east the Government are generating a great deal of disenchantment and alienation in Scotland, but it does not appear to concern them greatly. Let us be honest and acknowledge that we are in a desperately tight race for the election. Anyone who says that his or her party will win by 30 or 40 seats is appallingly disingenuous, dishonest or stupid. I believe that it will be a very tight race.

My constituents have to tolerate dilapidated schools such as the Roman Catholic school that I visited yesterday just over the border in Gourock. My wife and I met some very fine, intelligent young people there but, walking up the stairs from the ground floor to the first floor, we had to dodge the pails and buckets that were gathering water from leaks in the roof. It was a characteristically wet day in western Scotland.

Mr. Hardy: It always is.

Dr. Godman: Not always; we sometimes have very fine weather in the west of Scotland. The youngsters have come to accept that their education takes place in such disgraceful conditions. What help is given in the Budget by way of a new build programme or a programme of repairs for such decaying, deteriorating schools?

The crime figures in my constituency seem to be going through the roof. Only the other day, three men were gaoled for a total of 24 years for an armed robbery in Greenock. Much more violent crime is committed these days. I suspect that one of the reasons is the deadening influence of endemic unemployment in the area. However, another reason is that there are too few police officers on the streets of Greenock and Port Glasgow.

Chief Superintendent Laurence Macintyre, the divisional commander of X division of Strathclyde police, tells me that he is at least 10 officers short of the minimum requirement. The overtime requirement has been chopped by 4,000 hours, so there are fewer police officers on the streets. Therefore, street crime in particular and crime involving drugs is on the increase. What support are the Government giving in the Budget for dealing with the deeply worrying increase in the crime statistics?

[Dr. Godman]

I told the Minister that thousands of my constituents are on social security. That is inevitably the case with a 13 per cent. unemployment rate. Many are on income support because they have exhausted their unemployment benefit. There are many pensioners because it is an aging population—the young people have been driven away by unemployment. Much more needs to be done for such people, especially those on income support and the unemployed.

It is not so long ago that 300 to 400 male school leavers in my constituency were given apprenticeships in the local shipyards and in the marine engineering works. That figure is now down to between 12 and 16. That is a scandalous decrease.

I mentioned earlier that I had spoken to schoolchildren aged 16 or 17 who told me that to them the Government had betrayed them and their families in failing to provide employment and decent houses in the district. For many of them the only answer was nationalism and independence. They felt that an independent Scottish Government would provide the right sort of Budgets for them and their families. I naturally sought to dissuade them from that fantastic belief.

When I see homelessness, visit people who live in damp homes, and speak to unemployed people and people on social security incomes—a sizeable number in my constituency—I can well understand why there is growing alienation from the London Government. If anything, today's Budget will strengthen that alienation. I look forward to a Labour Government who, among other things, will create a Scottish Parliament in the capital city of my country.

8.20 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Whatever the electoral considerations referred to by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), I assume that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will still be a Member of this House in the new Parliament. For me there cannot be too many Yorkshiremen and Yorkshirewomen in the House. Therefore, regardless of any party differences, I look in that sense to your return.

I had hoped that I might be called while your colleague the right hon. Member for Woodspring (Sir P. Dean) was in the Chair, if only so that I could refer to the great friendship, kindness and courtesy with which he has always treated me and other hon. Members. Of course, similar considerations apply to Mr. Speaker, whom we shall also greatly miss. I hope that you will be able to pass on to your colleagues, Mr. Deputy Speaker and Mr. Speaker, our feelings of regret at their departure from the House and our good wishes for their future retirement.

A highlight of the debate so far was the speech by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). As always, his comments were extremely thoughtful. His departure will also be a considerable loss to the House. He spoke of the need for prudence at this time. Judging by what he said, the Budget as presented this afternoon complied with the requirement that he set out. It was certainly an imaginative Budget. It dealt with the short- and medium-term problems of recession, but at the same time it did not introduce short-term measures or gimmicks to give an artificial stimulus to the economy. I am sure that the Budget is all the better for that.

When I listened to the speech of the Leader of the Opposition, which followed that of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, it seemed that the right hon. Gentleman found himself in some difficulty. We asked whether he supported or opposed the measures in the Budget. I have to say that when he sat down I did not know whether he supported them or not. But perhaps we shall find out more in the days to come.

The Budget was certainly a Budget for recovery. Therefore, inevitably it had to be a Budget for business and industry and especially for small businesses. It is worth remembering that since the present Government came into office in 1979 more than 1 million people have become self-employed. I am sure that there will be considerable relief among many who saw or heard the contents of the Budget as they became apparent today.

The fairer treatment of value added tax will be counted as a great advance by many. The penalty regime was resented by many small business people. They felt that any minor error was treated on the same basis as a major breach. I hope that in future that will no longer be the case. I know of many small shopkeepers and other small business men who have had sleepless nights because they made a minor error and felt that they were treated as criminals. They, too, will welcome the change in inheritance tax and the increase in the relief for business assets from 50 to 100 per cent. I am sure that they, too, hope for the return of a Conservative Administration.

No one should underestimate the importance of the announcement on the uniform business rate. The change to the UBR that came about recently is often confused with the effects of the revaluation that occurred simultaneously. Listening to the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright), it was clear that he was confused about those two factors. He decried the impact of the uniform business rate on small businesses. Of course, there can be no doubt that the UBR as such was a great benefit to small businesses because by statute any increases are linked to inflation.

The revaluation caused enormous anxiety and was a great blow to many firms simply because it had been postponed for up to 17 years after the previous revaluation. When the increases came about they were an enormous shock. When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced his cap on increases in 1993 I was worried for a moment because people in manufacturing industry in the north of England have felt for a long time that they had already suffered a comparative disadvantage for far too long as a result of the delayed revaluation. But my right hon. Friend the Chancellor quickly demonstrated that he had taken that point on board by announcing that the gainers would receive their full benefit more quickly. Many retail and commercial premises in West Yorkshire, which lost out as a result of the revaluation, will also benefit from the UBR cap. So they will share in the benefits implied by my right hon. Friend's announcement.

The dramatic reduction in the special car tax was by any account a bold step. I hoped that there would be a reduction but had not anticipated that it would be so large. I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) has come into the Chamber. Only recently he became chairman of the all-party motor industry group. It is a remarkable tribute to his leadership that after only a few weeks he has prevailed on my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to make such a dramatic reduction, which will reduce the average price of new cars by about £450. I have no doubt that that will provide a great stimulus to the British motor industry and that the benefits will percolate through to the many firms that are linked with that industry.

For instance, the machine tool sector, which is well represented in my constituency, and the component industry will certainly welcome the change and the stimulus that it will give to the British motor car industry. There will undoubtedly be enormous benefits in future. Environmentally, it is an extremely beneficial move because it will encourage the replacement of old cars by new environmentally green vehicles. I am sure that that point was not far from my right hon. Friend's thoughts, bearing in mind the great importance which the Government attach to environmental issues.

The centrepiece of the Budget is the new lower rate income tax band. There was some opposition to an income tax cut from many of my constituents who made representations about the Budget. They said that there should not be a straight cut because it would benefit wealthier people. In response, I pointed out that it depended on how any reduction in income tax was distributed. Of course, I am delighted that the formula that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has adopted will direct the most assistance to low-earners. That measure has left the Opposition hypnotised. They do not know whether to support or oppose it. Certainly, if they oppose it, it will demonstrate to all that Labour is the party of high taxation.

I greatly welcome the improvement in the rules for personal equity plans. From April, people will be able to invest up to the full £6,000 in qualifying investment and unit trusts. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant), I have long had a great interest in the wider share ownership movement and the Wider Share Ownership Council in particular. One of the most significant changes that have taken place under the Government is the great increase in the number of shareholders. I am delighted that the Wider Share Ownership Council has been given a new lease of life as the Share Ownership Movement with considerably enhanced resources.

Although the ideal must be a wider share-owning democracy, whether people own shares in their own companies—one hopes that in future Budgets one will see even more encouragement for share ownership in the companies for which people work, as I have no doubt that that produces great benefits for such companies and for the economy generally—or whether people own shares in British industry generally, for many people investment in unit trusts and investment trusts represents a first step into share holding; it is a better vehicle for many small savers. Therefore, I hope that my right hon. Friend's announcement on PEPs will provide a stimulus to savings and encourage the wider share-owning democracy that we wish to see.

The Budget will also help charities and voluntary giving. There were many representations about the need for VAT reliefs to help charities. It is difficult for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to take big steps in that direction, but some extensions to VAT reliefs have been announced. That the minimum gift to attract tax relief will be reduced will also be of benefit in stimulating charitable giving.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor also spoke of the importance of GATT. I share his concern to the utmost. Many industries, not least the textile industry, which employs many people in my constituency, have great anxiety that a failure to bring about an early agreement on GATT could lead to a stultification of trade and to increased protectionism. Of course, that threat is greater when electoral considerations in the United States are so significant.

The Budget will be of great value to the country. As I left the Chamber earlier, I overheard an Opposition Member say to another, "We've lost." Who knows? He was a northern Member and he recognised the impact of the Budget in the north of England. The Budget is good not only for the country but for the Chancellor and for the Government. I look forward to supporting it in the next Parliament.

8.35 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Sir A. Glyn). Since I have been in the House, for just under 13 years, he has always been a marvellous character and certainly a great and friendly adviser to me. I know his constituency reasonably well and I am very sure that his constituents will miss him greatly. I would also like to echo the feelings of other hon. Members who have expressed their kind sentiments of thanks and a fond farewell to Mr. Speaker and to Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should be grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker, if you would convey those thoughts for me, and wish them great happiness in their retirement from this House.

I declare an interest, as detailed in the registry.

Today, it is almost trite to say that we are in difficult economic times. It is a very difficult situation for any Chancellor in which to construct a Budget. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has constructed an extremely clever Budget—so clever that, if I were a Labour Member or a Liberal Democrat Member, I frankly would find it very difficult to do anything but vote for the Budget. I certainly would find it impossible to vote against the Budget. We have yet to see when the Divisions take place, but I would be not too amazed if, for the first time for many decades, we had a Budget that was not voted against. It is a Budget for the country as a whole, and is particularly targeted towards those in need.

As I said, it is a clever Budget. I think that it is also a very prudent Budget. My only criticism of it is that I think that it is perhaps too prudent in the circumstances.

May I welcome the bringing together of the Budget and the autumn statement? This is a structural matter of procedures. I believe that it is long overdue and very welcome, and I thank my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for that initiative.

In the short term, the Budget will be greatly to the benefit of many of my constituents in Winchester, and in Alton, as it is to the constituents of almost every Member of this House.

The 20p tax band was brilliant. Many Members on both sides of the House have been pressing my right hon. Friend for a 1p cut in the basic rate of tax, which would

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have amounted to a loss of revenue of very nearly the same as the revenue that we will lose through the creation of the 20p band.

This effectively targeted tax cuts towards the lower paid, towards the young, towards those people in their first job and towards women in work. It is a brilliant initiative. From where I was sitting, I thought that I could see the wind vanish from Opposition Members' chests. I really think that the wind was taken out of their sails. It was a tremendous coup. It was a great thing to do, and I congratulate very warmly my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. As the effects flow through, I urge my right hon. Friend to ensure that the benefits targeted to the lower paid are not clawed back by the rules on income support regarding net income.

The extra help targeted on pensioners is very welcome and worthwhile.

Almost every type of farm is experiencing, not just difficult times, but horrific times, often through no fault of the farmers involved. When we were down to eight days of food in the second world war, we pushed farming. Farmers became the darlings of our nation. They were encouraged to produce and produce, and to borrow to obtain more from the land. They did so in a fantastic, entrepreneurial way and were highly successful. Due to our membership of the European Community and the resulting structural change of our agriculture, the farmers were asked to rein back, and experienced great difficulties. Farmers in my constituency are particularly worried now at some of the proposals of Commissioner MacSharry. I think that they will greatly welcome my right hon. Friend's announcements on inheritance tax.

My right hon. Friend's proposals for small businesses were welcome. I speak as a past chairman of the Conservative Back-Bench committee on smaller businesses. The proposals on inheritance tax are important for small businesses, entrepreneurship and venture capital. The announcements on the uniform business rate were welcome, and will greatly benefit small businesses and shops. The new rules for the late payment of bills by big companies, which are the customers of small businesses, are an excellent initiative. My right hon. Friend used just the right sort of clout to support the proposal. He did not put it in legal terms, from which there are ways out, but said that if a company wins a Government contract it must ensure that it pays its bills to small businesses on time, which is excellent.

The raising of the VAT thresholds will benefit small businesses. I welcome the fact that there is no change in the VAT rate, and the cutting of severe penalties for those guilty of minor misdemeanours.

The film industry of our country used to be a great industry. It is because we have not been sensitive enough to that industry's needs that we have seen it flow back to Hollywood and many other countries. It is a culturally important industry as British films are seen throughout the world. The explosion in television and television software and the huge increase in film making make my right hon. Friend's proposals even more important and most welcome. It is realistic to have tax relief on pre-production costs, which are incurred many months or even years before the earnings from released films arrive. The delay in earnings should be taken into account and should be tax deductible as costs are incurred. I welcome my right hon. Friend's initiative.

Cider makers, certainly those in the west country, will be relieved that they have escaped from the proposed threat of the European Community to impose greatly increased duty on cider.

Whisky makers will be upset at the rise in duty, but 70 per cent. of their production and, I should imagine, a larger percentage of their profits derive from exports. Consequently, the rise in whisky duty will not affect the earnings of that industry too much.

I welcome the 50 per cent. cut in the discriminatory tax on motor cars. I would have supported a 100 per cent. abolition of the tax, which I think is totally discriminatory, but I welcome the 50 per cent. that we have been given. It will help the economy as the motor industry is an important multiplier industry with various supporting industries such as rubber tyre, battery, electrical, plastics and paint. All will benefit from the reduction.

One factor that I would have liked to have been included in the Budget, and which I was upset not to see, was tax deductibility for childminders. If a company is allowed a tax deduction for a creche for children, individuals who pay for childminders—particularly those who are unable to get their children to their place of work on crowded trains and undergrounds—should be given tax deductions. That was a reasonable request and I am sorry that it was not included in the Budget.

All those measures will help my constituents and those of almost every hon. Member. Therefore, I thank my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

The economy in general affects us all. Quite rightly, inflation has been seen as the number one economic priority of the Government during the past 12 years or more. It is stil a most important priority, but it is falling fast and is, to some extent, yesterday's problem. I know that there is an inherent risk of a resurgence, but I believe that it is yesterday's problem and that today's number one priority for the Government should be the recession.

We are undergoing a severe recession—the worst in living memory. If it had not been a rolling recession, affecting one industry after another, instead of happening to all industries at once, as happened in the 1920s and 1930s, I think that it would be much worse than it is now. However, I believe that it is bad, very bad, and have urged my opinion on the Government for the past 18 months. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to convey to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor that the recession is today's problem. If we do not solve it, tomorrow's problem will be an economic depression, and Germany, our main competitor, will be the country best placed to pick up the pieces.

We are in a deep recession, for which the classic remedy is to lower, not just interest rates, but the most important interest rates: real interest rates—nominal interest rates less inflation. Nominal interest rates are coming down, but inflation is coming down faster. Therefore, real interest rates are not only high but rising. We tolerate not only high, but rising, real interest rates. We have a serious economic problem, and risk turning severe recession into economic depression. We are doing so by placing yesterday's top priority—inflation, which is falling fast—ahead of today's top priority—recession.

How does that happen? It stems from our membership of the exchange rate mechanism, which I voted against. I believe that we joined the exchange rate mechanism for the wrong reasons, and at the wrong time—too soon. We joined it before the economies that underlie all those paper currencies had converged sufficiently. Therefore, we have an exchange rate mechanism that is not for gold, silver, or currencies of intrinsic value, but paper currencies with no intrinsic value, which merely represent a collection of economies.

The exchange rate mechanism for those paper economies represents economies that were out of phase with each other and had not converged. If they had, we could have built an exchange rate mechanism and perhaps allowed a single currency to evolve.

We entered the mechanism too soon and for the wrong reasons, and, as a result, United Kingdom interest rates do not respond to the cries of the British economy. Our economy is crying out for lower real interest rates, not just lower nominal rates, which are peripheral. Our interest rates are not responding as they are dictated through the exchange rate mechanism, by the needs of the German economy. Unfortunately, the outlook for the German economy is for continued high, and even rising, real rates of interest. The Germans have to deal with the understandable inflation that is the consequence of absorbing East Germany. But it is not merely a temporary but a structural problem.

Historically, the United Kingdom economy has been based on internally generated growth—on low or even negative rates of real interest, and on a tolerance of inflation to protect jobs. Today, through the exchange rate mechanism, we are trying to change our structure to meet the requirements of an entirely different economy.

The pattern of growth in the German economy was almost the exact opposite. It was externally generated. The German economy had high real rates of interest, and inflation was not tolerated on any account.

The United Kingdom is confronted by a major structural problem at a time of national and international recession. The exchange rate mechanism magnifies that economic agony.

I accept that it is good for the United Kingdom economy to have the economic discipline that goes with the ERM, but our economy is still in a state of economic convalescence after some 35 years of socialism. When applying what might be good economic medicine, we must be careful not to kill the patient by giving him too much medicine at once.

We must avoid allowing the ERM to drive us from recession into economic depression. That is why I voted against the ERM, and why I am still against it. That is why I was saddened to hear that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is getting even further into the ERM by announcing that he intends in future to move from the broad to the narrow band.

The Budget serves as a prudent incentive. It offers tax cuts that are sustainable in the long term, which is very laudable. It is like pressing lightly and prudently on the accelerator of a stationary car. Some may feel that the accelerator is not that prudent, given a borrowing requirement of £28 billion, but that is open to argument. Let us give my right hon. Friend the Chancellor the benefit of the doubt and say that he is prudently pressing on the accelerator. The problem is that the brake of high and rising real rates of interest is still on. The risk is that the car will stall. In economic terms, that stall means changing from severe recession to economic depression.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on what I truly believe to be a very clever Budget. It is so clever that I would find it hard to vote against it. One might even find right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House voting for my right hon. Friend's Budget; that would be a real political achievement. However, I am not alone among my right hon. and hon. Friends in fearing the effects of the ERM and of rising real rates of interest on the United Kingdom economy. I urge my right hon. Friend, even at this late stage, to re-examine that aspect in the hope that our economic car will not stall.

8.52 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I have tried for some weeks to catch Mr. Speaker's eye during Prime Minister's Question Time, because I wanted to ask the right hon. Gentleman something of fundamental importance. Unfortunately, I did not succeed, so I might as well put my question to the House now.

When the Government first took office in 1979, the United Kingdom was—according to its gross national product, and to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and other reputable authorities—the fifth richest nation in the world. When the Conservatives leave office next month, the United Kingdom will be the 10th richest country in the world. It has fallen five places because it has experienced comparative decline. That ought to transcend party political differences. The severity of the situation can be seen in all our constituencies. It can be seen in the young people who are without skills and opportunities. It can be seen in the rising crime rate, the problems of the health service, and the difficulties facing our schools.

I hope that any politician and any British citizen would judge a Budget on whether or not it arrests the decline that has been inflicted on this country for the last 12 or 13 years. Unfortunately, today's Budget will do very little to stem that decline.

I was surprised that a Yorkshire Member of Parliament, the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), could perceive advantages in the Budget. The City might perceive its advantages, but in those areas where there is a need to create wealth the Budget is largely irrelevant. It scatters concessions about like confetti at a shotgun wedding, and they are of little significance.

Despite the Budget's welcome concessions to pensioners, it does not address basic problems. What have the Government done for youth, the nation's future, and investment? What does the Budget do to remedy the grievous economic conditions that exist in Britain today? Whatever the Government may say before the general election, the Chancellor admits that the public sector borrowing requirement will total £29 billion. The Government do not have that money. Over the past 13 years, they have demonstrated beyond all doubt that they are unfit to exercise stewardship of the nation's economy.

Since the Government took office, they have received £111,000 million in offshore oil revenue, and scores of billions of pounds from privatisation. What is there to show for that money? Fiddled employment statistics.

Yesterday, I gave my local press a story about a 12½ year-old-child whose whole education and social life is blighted because she cannot have an operation. Her mother, who is a very decent lone parent, does not have

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

£900 to pay for that operation. The Government had all that loot from privatisation—all that wealth from North sea oil—and yet still injustices of that kind arise.

I have been drawing another problem in my constituency to the Government's attention for months. I refer to the future of one of Britain's most important industries. The hon. Member for Keighley fought my constituency some time ago, and will be aware of the vital importance and achievements of its engineering steel industry. It is capable of competing with any similar industrial establishment in the world. It holds world production records and can knock Germany, France, Italy, the United States and even Japan into a cocked hat in producing high-quality engineering steels.

As a result of Government policy, it cannot work full time because the privatised electricity industry has put extra premiums on evening use, for under the Conservatives the values of the television soap opera are more important than the creation of wealth. This industry in my constituency in the last two years has faced huge increases in electricity charges.

The Government say that the industry has the power of the consumer. But it is the biggest consumer of electricity in the Yorkshire region. That does not seem to weigh heavily on a Government and a supply industry that are no longer concerned about exports, about the creation of wealth and about the preservation of the industrial base. The Government have given industry no priority, and there is no priority in the Budget.

When the Government were giving out revenue support for local authorities, I did not think they were being fair and, about 18 months ago, I made speeches in the House on the subject. Since then, I have analysed the position in my local authority and compared it with the two, well trumpeted Tory favourites of Westminster and Wandsworth. In this financial year, the borough of Westminster received £911 per head by way of revenue support. The borough of Rotherham received £211.

The most expensive item for local authorities is education, and in my part of the world the school population is nearly twice that of Westminster, yet the latter received five times as much as Rotherham in revenue support. Had Rotherham been treated on the same basis, not only would we have had no poll tax to pay, but every man, woman and child in the Rotherham Westworth and Rother Valley constituencies could have received £750. That would have been stupid, of course, because the money would have been better invested.

We in Britain are not investing in the creation of wealth. There is nothing in the Budget, for example, about one of the most serious problems facing Britain. In the late 1970s, my area had virtually beaten the housing problem. Now, because of the sale of council houses and particularly because of the enormous reduction in local authority house building, we are in a sorry state. Local authority housing is the only hope for half the population of the country who cannot afford to buy.

Since the late 1970s, 20,000 names have gone on to the waiting lists in my area. The only hope for those people is for the local authority to get on with building. It has the capital to do that, but the receipts from council house sales have been frozen. Had the Government really wanted to stimulate the economy in an area such as mine—which, in housing, is suffering enormous problems; the people generally have suffered economic devastation as a result of Conservative de-industrialisation policy—they would have allowed that stimulus, brought hope, and thereby reduced the queues of people attending the surgeries of councillors and Members of Parliament.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is my hon. Friend aware that in parts of Wakefield metropolitan district council in 1979 people were waiting only a fortnight for council tenancies? Since then, no bricks have been laid by the local authority and half the council houses have been sold. Day after day I hear at my surgery, and receive in the post, heartbreaking stories of people, including young couples with babes in arms, with nowhere to live. In many cases couples are having to live apart with parents and relatives. As my hon. Friend says, millions of pounds are being held in capital receipts as a result of council house sales. If councils could use that money, much of the problem would be solved.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is right. The Government have done virtually nothing to tackle the real problems of Britain. If they were prepared to tackle them, we would have had a different Budget today. Indeed, had we had more sensible Budgets during the years of Tory rule, the national economy would be much healthier. Whatever the Chancellor may say or do, and irrespective of any sensible little concessions that he may introduce, Britain's economy is unhealthy and may even be dismissed, and the Government's policies are fundamentally flawed and irrelevant.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) is no longer here but he has another important engagement. In his speech he referred to several matters that he would have liked the Chancellor to have approached more severely. I am not particularly severe on those matters. For example, I recognise that old men who have smoked from the age of 12 or 13 and may not be particularly rich may find it difficult to pay the extra charge on tobacco and cigarettes. It is not up to a well-heeled Tory Chancellor to try to make it impossible for people who have smoked since boyhood to give up whether they want to or not, simply because they cannot pay. That is a brutal approach, and it is not a question which the Chancellor should determine. Moreover, an important establishment in my constituency provides 130 jobs and I should not like those to disappear because my constituency has lost too many jobs already since the Government have been in office.

Some Conservative Members have said that the price of drink should be increased. I am not a drinker—I am not teetotal but I do not drink at work. I have been in the House for 22 years and the only drink that I have consumed here has been when I have had guests for meals, so I am not an ardent advocate for the cause of drink. If the Government wanted to do something sensible about drink, they would not price it out of the market but would have challenged and changed the unsatisfactory character of the British drinks industry. They will not do that, however, because they depend too much on the brewers' donations to fight elections on their behalf.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow and the hon. Member for Keighley mentioned the Government's wonderful decision to promote green motor cars and have us all buying new cars that burn unleaded petrol. The problem is that vast numbers of my constituents cannot afford to buy a new car and are stuck with their four-star-consuming cars. The assumption that millions of our constituents can join every fashion that the Government espouse is nonsense. My constituents cannot afford to change their cars or buy private medicine. They have to put up with run-down public services and an economy that has been badly brought down by a Government who have failed to perceive the real necessities of Britain's present economic condition, who have failed to secure investment to guarantee the future of young people, and who now believe that, by scattering a few bits of confetti here and there, Britain will feel that it is having a happy marriage.

We are about to see a change. That has become necessary because the Government have failed the country. They have led and created an appalling and serious decline—the worst that this nation has experienced in recorded history. We talk heatedly about the problem of the enormous increase in crime. But the biggest crime of all has been the Government's incompetent failures and inadequate leadership in the past 13 years. The fact that the days of their domination are rapidly drawing to a close is much to be welcomed.

9.7 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) will not be surprised to hear that I do not share his feelings of doom and gloom about the condition of Britain today—quite the reverse.

May I take up two points that the hon. Gentleman raised? First, what steps has his local authority taken to involve and encourage the development of housing for rent through housing associations? That has happened successfully in many parts of the country and I am surprised that it has not happened in his constituency. That may be due to the baleful influence of his local authority, which does not consider that housing associations are a way forward. Secondly, although I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's eloquent concern for those who have smoked all their lives and the higher prices that they may have to pay for tobacco, I thought that there was a consensus in the House that it was right to use the tax regime to discourage smoking. The health hazards of smoking are well-known, so the hon. Gentleman's argument does not stand up. He seemed to be strongly opposing the cross-party consensus on smoking and health.

Mr. Hardy: I would not dissent from the view that we should discourage young people from smoking. My point was—at the risk of being a little chauvinist—that older men who may have smoked from the age of 14 and who are now in their 70s and 80s think that a pipe of baccy is rather important, and it would be cruel of the Government if they told a poor man that he had to stop smoking simply because he could no longer afford the tobacco on which he had come to depend.

Mr. Wolfson: Be that as it may, I should like to speak about the Budget now.

I welcome the general thrust of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's statement, and I fully support the Government's continuing central objective of defeating inflation and achieving a sustainable growth rate in the economy. This ingenious Budget is consistent with Government policies over many years. Not surprisingly, my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) spoke strongly against our membership of the ERM, but I find such opposition to membership odd.

For a long time, Governments of various political complexions have been too ready to pump up or to depress the economy for domestic reasons instead of paying attention to the underlying strength of the economy and the importance of a sustainable and consistent interest rate policy. The ERM certainly provides an additional limitation within which Governments have to work, but it is a necessary discipline if we are ever to make our industrial base stronger—*[Interruption.]* I am glad to see some assent to that view among Opposition Members.

I welcome the way in which income tax has been cut; that will help the less well-off. More attention should be paid to them, not just because we are running up to an election but because they are the people who deserve special encouragement. They are the key to the future effectiveness of the British economy.

Interestingly, the Budget has been unequivocally welcomed by Sir John Banham of the CBI, who has been critical of other aspects of Government policy in the past. He sees this Budget as contributing to the competitiveness of British industry.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is remarkable. I understand that a spokesman of the CBI in my part of the country, Cumbria, said on Radio Cumbria tonight that the Budget will do nothing for our area. Could it be that those on the ground have a different experience from that of those who sit in ivory towers?

Mr. Wolfson: It is up to the CBI to decide whether its director general lives in an ivory tower. He may live in a tall tower, but it is not made of ivory. He is usually well in touch with the views of his members.

I welcome the Budget, too, because it will encourage those working in the middle and skilled ranks of industry on whose performance at work, contributing constructively to the wealth of their companies, the economic health of the country depends. If that is effective and efficient, we have the wealth to pay for the social and education services that we wish to continue to increase and to improve.

I welcome the approach to income tax because it is fundamental to Conservative philosophy. In contrast to all the Opposition parties, we believe that it is right that individuals and families should keep as much as they can of their own money to spend as they choose. As hon. Members have emphasised in the debate today, it is not an either/or choice. A low personal tax regime over at least eight out of the 12 years that the Conservatives have been in power has resulted in a growing economy, because it works with the grain of what people feel—that proper and natural desire to keep more of what they earn for themselves, which makes their efforts at work worth while to them and their families. A regime that does not pay attention to that is not working with the grain of the people and will not be successful.

Mr. Lofthouse: Does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that some of the lower-paid families who he claims may benefit slightly from the tax concessions may find themselves worse off because they receive means-tested benefits that are decreased by more than the amount that they gain from the tax changes?

Mr. Wolfson: I am afraid that I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman on that point.

Let me move on to the benefits that will accrue to pensioners, and the 5 million poorer pensioners who will gain from higher benefits. The fact that, for those on income support, a single person will receive an extra £2 and a married couple an extra £3 a week is a clear sign of the Government's concern for the less-well-off.

Miss Widdecombe: Hear, hear.

Mr. Wolfson: I am delighted that my hon. Friend is on the Front Bench to agree with my point.

The changes to car tax will be of particular benefit to the hard-pressed car retailers in my constituency, but I would not have been pleased to see my right hon. Friend the Chancellor move away from the policy which the Government have been following for several years of bearing down on the benefit of a company car. I am delighted that he has not let up on the regular and steady movement towards making that a less clear benefit to individuals and has brought it more into line with other tax regimes. Nevertheless, he has found a perfectly straightforward and sensible way to give some stimulus to the car industry, which is a key factor in the health of the economy.

In my experience, small businesses have suffered worst from the recession. Therefore, I strongly welcome the package of various measures for them announced today.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wolfson: No, I should like to continue.

A number of hon. Members have expressed concern about the size of the PSBR. I have always been something of a Keynesian. I was less happy than some on the Conservative Benches when we followed a strict policy on borrowing during earlier recessions. In the present situation it is perfectly proper for Government borrowing to rise to deal with the budgetary problems caused by recession. Structurally, there is no budget deficit. The Government have taken a sensible way forward and, as a result of the good measures that are now in place and the competitive position of British industry, we shall be able to capitalise on that and return to growth at the end of the recession. Over the medium term we shall return to a balanced budget. During their term of office the Government have been able to repay a large part of the national debt. The borrowing requirement now is different from that which existed in 1979 when the Labour Government left office. The economy is set for recovery.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: When the hon. Gentleman replied to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) about the interaction between benefits and tax reductions, the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), shook her head vigorously. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can persuade the Minister to explain why she shook her head.

Mr. Wolfson: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, but I shall continue with my speech. My hon. Friend the Minister or her colleagues will have opportunities to speak.

As I said, the economy is clearly set for recovery. Inflation and interest rates are down. Companies and individuals have reduced their debt burden, and productivity and competitiveness have increased. There can be no argument on those matters. Our unit wage costs, which are the key to the future and to our competitiveness, are rising more slowly than those of our competitors. That means that real earnings are able to rise, and are doing so on a firm base. It would be the height of irresponsibility for a Labour Government to pursue policies that would lead to further inflation and result in a loss of competitiveness in British industry. That route would lead to the loss of many more jobs, because other countries would produce the goods and services that are bought by us and the rest of the world, resulting in a loss of jobs in Britain. That is the key reason for keeping inflation down. Without low inflation, we cannot look forward to success.

The House should consider an issue that was not dealt with in the Budget, and I put up a marker to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and his Conservative successors—we shall return to the issue of British shipping and the difficulties that our merchant fleet has faced over the past 10 years. It is the Government's policy to avoid special subsidies to parts of British industry. One request by the General Council of British Shipping is that it should be allowed capital allowances. I appreciate the Government's concern that if they were to make an exception of one industry and allowed capital allowances, that would open the floodgates to similar requests from many other industries that are in difficulty. I argue, however, that our shipping industry is a special case and different from other industries, and I believe that there is concern about it in all parties.

The industry has a defence requirement that we cannot lightly set aside, and the need for action is critical. A merchant fleet that is strong and active in both ships and crew is essential for the economic and defence policies of the United Kingdom, and since last year the need for action to secure that has become more critical than ever. More well-known British companies are moving their ships or crewing arrangements offshore or they have gone out of shipping altogether. The United Kingdom-owned and registered fleet continues to contract and to age dramatically.

The capacity of our ships has decreased by a further 7·5 per cent. and on average they are over 15 years old. The average age of our seafarers is also increasing alarmingly. The average age of officers is now more than 40. For a seafaring nation such as Britain, that is unacceptable.

The Government are active in trying to solve the problem. Their strategy is to bring other countries, especially in the EEC, into line with us in not giving subsidies to shipping. I would argue that that is an unrealistic move because other countries tend to provide additional assistance to their shipping industries. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will refer to the matter in a future Budget and give it more favourable consideration than it has been given in the past.

Debate adjourned.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Bus Industry

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

9.27 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Last Thursday, the economic development committee of Cumbria county council decided to approach the Volvo corporation of Sweden, one of the world's largest commercial vehicle manufacturers, and to ask it to reconsider its decision to close the Workington bus plant.

The story of Volvo in Workington is, unfortunately, one of deceit, poor management, market miscalculations, asset and design stripping and media manipulation—certainly in recent weeks—culminating in a scorched-earth policy as Volvo desperately tears out jigs and other vital equipment from the plant in a desperate attempt to cart away the ashes of a previously profitable industry of strategic importance to the United Kingdom.

The story begins in the late 1960s when the Labour Government took the momentous decision to build a factory dedicated to the integrated manufacture of bus chassis and body production in Workington. The new bus plant prospered throughout the 1970s on the back of Labour's public transport policy. It was a fine example of good Labour planning, stemming import penetration and providing substantial employment for Workington.

The first real hurdle came in the early 1980s with the Government's deregulation policy, and cuts in fuel and bus grants. Bus plants at London's Park Royal, Lowestoft, Birmingham, Bristol and elsewhere in the United Kingdom closed as the industry contracted. All indicators pointed to Workington being the survivor plant. The Workington plant boasted two thirds of a million sq ft of prime modern industrial space, an up-to-date bus assembly production line, a competent design and development team and a healthy export order book.

The bus fleet aged as new operators came on the market with deregulation and the midi bus took off. Thereupon, the Government sold the plant to a management buy-out, which I supported, which set about the rationalisation of the Leyland Bus group with major redundancies.

The management buy-out considered midi bus production but concluded that cheap high wear and tear van chassis and body conversions were not the business of Workington whose expertise was a quality product on a bus-dedicated chassis manufactured to high specification at a competitive price.

The management buy-out led by M'Kinnon and Newbury turned the business round, if not altogether financially, so much so that the company which had been picked up on the cheap was sold for a sum in the region of £20 million, I am told, to Volvo in March 1988. The Leyland press release at the time of the sale said:

> "The complementary product ranges of Leyland and Volvo will enable us to strengthen our sales and manufacturing base within the European Common Market and throughout the world. The new Leyland bus facility will enable the newly enlarged Volvo Bus Corporation to significantly increase the chassis production which in Sweden is at full capacity. 'Volvo has increased its investment in research and development by 50 per cent. since 1986', said Lars Erik Nilsson, president of Volvo Bus Corporation at the time. He said, 'We see this latest development, with Leyland engineers joining the team, as a further significant step in a 10-year development programme.' Jurgen Bahr, Volvo Bus marketing director at that time added, 'The greatest impact will however be achieved abroad. I am proud we have been able to join forces with you. Our aim is to preserve the famous Leyland name, uphold the present workforce and strengthen Leyland Bus. I foresee we have the possibility together of becoming one of the biggest and best bus producers in the world. Our aim is together with you to enter new markets and to achieve deeper penetration in the markets in which we are already established.'"

Those were fine words from a company that knew that it was buying into a market reeling from deregulation and where losses would have to be carried for a few more years. It knew that it was buying a business struggling against recession, and such was its desperate need to buy it and secure greater market share that it was paying through the nose for it.

In retrospect, one can only speculate about Volvo's motives. It clearly wanted a potentially profitable spares business which it further reinforced with, in my view, a mistaken property acquisition in the midlands for distribution requirements.

I, along with my constituents, fell for the hype. We believed that that internationally renowned company, known for compassionate but firm management-worker participation, novel production methods, with its John Lewis Partnership reputation, could be trusted. We were badly let down and badly deceived.

Within 12 months rumours broke in the plant of a split between body and chassis production, subsequently to be confirmed by Volvo. It seemed that Volvo wanted out of body manufacture. Then a story broke of a tie-up with Renault in France, with buses being produced at Lyons. Volvo hot-footed it round to the House to reassure me that that rumour was unfounded. It said that the tie-up was a simple, logical market development. What I did not realise was that, at the same time that Volvo was reassuring me, it was busy closing down a project for the redesign of LYNX—a Leyland project.

The redesign of LYNX—a Workington product—included the use of an aluminium body and Volvoised parts. That decision sounded the death knell for LYNX and the last one came off the line in Workington the other day. The company pleaded corrosion problems as an excuse—a nonsense argument as all the problem vehicles had been repaired.

The future of LYNX then became subsumed in the design of a new product which was to be built in Sweden with a B10R rear engine chassis. The reality is that it had designed a product on a chassis built for a coach with too many steps. It is for the market to decide whether that product will be successful.

There are those who believe that the replacement for LYNX will not be made in Sweden. The bus, currently being designed at Farringdon by a French, Swedish and British design team, may be made in France, in Lyons. Therefore, it will be of no benefit to Workington or to Farringdon. Farringdon's days are numbered. Volvo is no more interested in Farringdon than it is in Workington, and I hope that the workers are beginning to get the message.

The LYNX saga signalled the beginning of the end for Volvo in the United Kingdom. Following Volvo's dreadful miscalculations about the market for spares and the substantial losses throughout Volvo's bus operations in the United Kingdom and Sweden in 1991, Volvo Sweden started the big squeeze on Volvo's United Kingdom operations. Bill Russel, the sales marketing director in the United Kingdom, and no friend of Volvo Bus operations

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

in this country, and Sandie Glennie, the United Kingdom managing director, became obsessed with closing the plant in a desperate attempt to heed their master's bidding.

Crude book-keeping exercises were made to prove that Volvo was losing a fortune and to hide the incompetent decisions that the management had taken, in particular those on spares. Recriminations in Sweden led to clearing out the Volvo management team responsible for the original Workington acquisition, including the removal of Lars Erik Nilsson and Jurgen Bahr, who was transferred to Austria. A new group of hard-nosed Volvo truck men moved in, who with surgical precision began asset stripping Leyland Bus. Their first task was to reveal that a major miscalculation had been made on the redundancy costs of closing the Workington plant. Whereas Volvo UK had budgeted £800,000, the cost was nearly £6 million. When Volvo learned of that major error, it was extremely angry, but not half as angry as the Volvo workers in Workington who found themselves blamed for the losses on the B10 Mark 3 chassis, which had been a design disaster and blamed for the 96 buses which went to Strathclyde and had to be rebuilt. Workington was blamed for losses beyond its control.

Should there have even been losses and was the Workington plant given a real chance? Tracing the order book has been no mean feat, but the evidence is that orders have been diverted. The first inkling of hidden orders came with attempts by Volvo to hide an order for 200 midi buses and 70 Olympians from StageCoach of Perth. What it did not know was that the managing director of StageCoach, Mr. Souter, wrote to me to say that the buses were to be made in the Workington plant.

Volvo thereupon denied that the 200 B6Rs were ever intended for Workington, maintaining that they were to be built in Austria, at the Steyr plant. Obviously, Volvo had forgotten that we had laid down the jigs at the Workington plant for the chassis. As for the 70 Olympians, Volvo said that they were to be built in Workington. I can only say that that was news to Walter Alexanders at Falkirk, which had been told that the buses were to be bodied in Scotland —and which, indeed, was receiving the order to body them. The value of that order was over £4 million—the order for the whole bus, that is.

Then came news of a chassis order for Singapore—order value, £10 million. When I located the order in Singapore, Volvo was furious. It ranted, "That is our business—that is Sweden's business." The fact that Workington had historically supplied buses to Singapore was irrelevant to the firm. It was stealing our trade and our business.

In mid-February, I was told that London Regional Transport had started re-ordering, and that it had bought 40 Olympians—value £4 million—and signed up the order on 7 February. Meanwhile, I was busy ringing round the world, chasing up Volvo's business. Then what happens? A story breaks back in Workington, in the local newspaper —the *Times and Star*—that a local entrepreneur, Mr. Mike Rawcliffe, who had been working in Turkey, had been approached by a company and told that an order for 200 buses for Turkey was available to the Workington plant. Mr. Rawcliffe approached Volvo, and was told that, if there was any business going, it was business that would go to Sweden. The value was £5 million.

News then came in of a further tender from Singapore, for—I am told—between 214 and 218 buses. A deal on that has yet to be struck; I understand that negotiations are still in progress. The coup de grace came, however, when, through the good offices of the Foreign Office—the good old British Foreign Office—I was able to confirm that, at the same time as Volvo was closing the Workington plant, it was signing a deal with Jelcz of Poland to produce buses in a joint venture. Further orders may well be in the offing, from Hong Kong, Lothian Transport, South Yorkshire, Nottingham Caldaire and, no doubt, others.

Where are those buses to be built? Volvo tells us that they are to be built in Irvine—in the truck plant that is to be modified for bus production. Some, no doubt, will go to Irvine, but I wonder how many will end up going to Sweden.

The exercise in Workington has been to strip out the assets, to strip out the work force, the design teams, the jigs and the equipment, and to kick a Workington work force with 20 years' experience fairly and squarely in the teeth. One can only feel great anger.

The question is, were the Government aware of what was happening? The Minister kindly met me, and I took everything that he said at face value. What he told me, I believed; but let us see what Volvo said. According to a Volvo press release of 10 February,

> "Sandie Glennie has had meetings with several senior government officials including Roger Freeman . . . Mr. Freeman has been kept fully informed of our plans, actions and the reasons behind them."

Is Volvo telling us that it told Ministers that it was intending to close Workington, and "screwdriver" assemble in Scotland with Volvo parts made in Sweden? Is it saying that the Volvo relationship with Renault—based, as it is, on an exchange of share capital—has been fully explained to Ministers? Perhaps it also told Ministers why the French Government are expressing such concern about Volvo's activities in Lyons, fanned by the Pro Cordia merger in Sweden. I understand that people in France are asking what is in it for the French now that Volvo has done a deal with Mitsubishi to produce cars at Born in Holland. Perhaps Volvo has handed to Ministers a document that was promised to me in Workington in the office of Rodney Swarbrick, the plant manager, and which set out the financial considerations behind its move to Irvine. I waited eight weeks for that document which was promised to me by, I understand, the leading Swede in the whole affair. It never arrived. Only then did I begin to campaign publicly against Volvo.

Has Volvo handed to Ministers its own analysis of what productions would be required to maintain a viable chassis operation in Workington? Everyone knows that the figure of Volvo's PR man, Mr. Broadley, of 1,500 chassis per annum is a gross exaggeration of the truth. What are the real figures—not the Broadley figures—about the viability of that plant? I should like to know whether Volvo has discussed with the Government its programme for the Volvoisation of Leyland Bus products which was stated in internal Volvo documents available in Sweden? Ministers should be aware that the Olympian—one of the British products—is being Volvoised to accept Volvo componentry. It is Volvo's intention to switch nearly all Volvo Olympian products to Volvo engines and other components made in Sweden and to drop its purchase of Cummins and Gardner units as soon as possible. That means that more jobs will be lost in the United Kingdom, on this occasion at Shotts, near Glasgow. The reality is that Volvo has stolen the Olympian product from Leyland Bus.

Ministers might do well to consider Volvo's relationship with Walter Alexander, the Scottish body builder, which will clearly be a beneficiary of this strategy. Walter Alexander recorded £700,000 after-tax losses in 1989, and £61,000 in 1990. Its turnover fell from £27·5 million to £19·3 million in the same period. Has Volvo handed to Walter Alexander on a plate a substantial turnover injection without something in return? Have shares changed hands at a corporate level or at any other level? I shall be following that aspect of the decision with great interest in the coming years.

On Friday 27 January 1992, in a reply to me, the Scottish Office was equivocal about matters that I think I should draw to the House's attention. I asked the Secretary of State for Scotland

> "what is the policy of Scottish Enterprise and local development agencies towards providing assistance to companies which have plants located in England and which they wish to relocate in Scotland."

The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), replied:

> "Scottish Enterprise and the local enterprise companies would assess very carefully any proposals from companies wishing to relocate to Scotland before considering whether it would be appropriate to offer assistance. Any assistance provided would be within the terms of arrangements agreed by the Government and would take account of factors such as employment displacement."—[*Official Report*, 27 January 1992; Vol. 202, c. *449*.]

I do not think that the Government grasped what I was driving at. Is Volvo going to be given public money to close a plant that was built in the main with taxpayers' money in the late 1960s and early 1970s and to transfer its manufacturing operations to Scotland? The answer should be no because we are dealing with taxpayers' money.

Recently, Volvo has announced that Volvo Trucks (Great Britain) will effectively take over responsibility for what remains of Leyland Bus. Many in Workington ask the question, "Why now?" Was the secret Volvo agenda on acquisition in 1988 to close the plant and strip it out and boost the turnover of Volvo Bus Company's other plant? The answer to that question is known only in Gothenburg.

I should like to say a few words about deregulation and its impact on the market. I do not want to enter into an argument with the Minister tonight about deregulation. It has happened. It is a reality. In the words of the public service vehicle manufacturers section of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders:

> "Inevitably, falling sales have had their effect on the bus makers. In 1980, there were over 3,000 heavy bus registrations but by 1990 these had fallen to just 1,000. 1991 is now the lowest market historically recorded at just over 600 units and an even lower market is forecast for 1992."

That may well be the case, but I am utterly convinced that there are stirrings in the market. I believe that StageCoach began the shift. It seems to me that the logic of that can follow only when one considers that it is not possible to run old buses for ever.

One of the problems of deregulation was that bus fleets aged as companies competed with the latest cowboy operators on a particular route. But the cowboy operators could run their buses for only so long. In the end the market has to move, irrespective of what party is in power. It might well be that a Labour Government would place greater emphasis on public transport, but all Governments have to be committed to some extent to public transport and cetainly the use of buses.

I believe that there are stirrings in the market. The Volvo strategy should have been to maintain manufacturing in the United Kingdom with a heavy sell in export markets. The business is there and Volvo knows it because it is transferring the operation back to Sweden. It should have held the plant open pending restoration of bus orders in the United Kingdom at the end of what I call the bad trading conditions that have prevailed during the period of deregulation in the market. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), our spokesman on transport, came to west Cumbria the other day. He talked very much in those terms. It is fair to say that it is his view that if there is a change of Government the stirrings will inevitably boom into something more substantial, and quickly.

Of course, the danger is that if the Government do not react to the stirrings in the market and the United Kingdom does not have a capacity to produce buses, there will be an invasion of imports. I fear that in five or 10 years our streets will be covered with buses from Germany, France, Holland and Sweden. There will be Scania and Volvo buses and perhaps even buses from eastern Europe because we do not have the manufacturing capacity in the United Kingdom. When Volvo took its decision to close the plant in my constituency, it was meddling in a plant that had a strategic role in bus supply in the United Kingdom. I believe that it did not have the right to close it.

Lastly, I want to ask Volvo a simple question from the Floor of the House of Commons. I understand that two presses for body panels have been removed from the Volvo plant in Workington in the past few days and that they have gone to somewhere in the midlands. I should like to know where they have gone, why they have gone, and what the people who have acquired them intend to do with them.

9.53 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) did me the courtesy of notifying me of the general thrust of his remarks, and I am grateful to him for that. It is also quite a rare privilege not necessarily to watch the clock—although I am sure that the Government Whip, my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood), would want me to do so—as attentively as one sometimes must during Adjournment debates. This is an important subject. The hon. Gentleman has raised a number of specific points about the Volvo Bus Company. He is an experienced Member of the House. He will not expect me necessarily to proceed by commenting on his specific allegations. Nevertheless, he has raised detailed questions with me as Minister and a number of general comments about the industry with which I shall deal.

I share the implicit assumption behind the hon. Gentleman's speech that buses play an important role in transportation, particularly in urban areas. There are 5 billion passenger journeys a year. That can be expressed most directly as the equivalent of two bus journeys a week by every man, woman and child in the country. Obviously, not everyone uses the bus, but, even expressed in that

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

simple way, the House will realise how important a thriving bus industry is to transportation needs, both business and leisure.

On Volvo, I must say that I share the hon. Gentleman's regret about the closure of the plant in Workington. It undoubtedly is a blow; there is no sense in disguising that. I understand that there are proposals to move the chassis assembly operations to Irvine in Scotland, with a £2·4 million investment at that plant to facilitate it.

The hon. Gentleman wonders what are the motives behind those moves. I shall not speculate; it is clearly not a matter on which a Minister of the Crown should comment. However, the hon. Gentleman referred to the initial investment by Volvo in the company, and I believe that he is right. The order of magnitude is £20 million—indeed, it may be a little higher. I am advised that if we take account of the losses that Volvo has incurred with the Workington plant, at a time, it must be said, of very depressed orders for the industry—1990-91 and perhaps for the first few weeks of 1992, although I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there are stirrings and hopeful signs that the industry may be enjoying some recovery—Volvo has probably invested several times the initial purchase price in the Workington operation and its directly related facilities.

In other words, the original investment plus the losses represent a significant sum. It is not for me to estimate what they are; that is a matter for Volvo. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman would find it interesting to press the company on the size of the investment commitment that it has made and may already have lost.

The hon. Gentleman asked me specifically about conversations between Volvo and the Department. I recall a letter from Volvo after the decision had been taken, explaining that decision and indicating to the Department —to myself—what the plans were. In no sense can that be described as a detailed discussion of strategy or policy. Indeed, it would not have been appropriate for the company to have entered into such a discussion. It was sensible and courteous information to the Department as to what the plans were.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Minister confirming that he has not had a meeting?

Mr. Freeman: I have not had a specific bilateral meeting with the management of Volvo. The representatives of Volvo have sat on the bus working group which I chaired and which examined ways in which demand in the bus industry can be stimulated. I shall have a few words to say about that matter in a moment.

In the past, the hon. Gentleman has been concerned about assistance that may be provided for the 50 or so employees at Workington who may be offered jobs at Irvine. I have examined that matter, and I am advised that assistance may be offered by the company in order to facilitate a move to Scotland for those who are employed at the Workington plant. I very much hope that those jobs are saved and that those who wish to go are able to move.

The hon. Gentleman referred to deregulation. It is important, for the record, to repeat some of the essential facts about deregulation, although I shall certainly not take up the time of the House by getting into an argument about the pros and cons of deregulation. According to the latest statistics that I have, in 1985, the bus share of total passenger transport was about 8 per cent., compared with 39 per cent. in 1955. Since the war there has been a gradual contraction in the share of the total transportation loads of the bus. There has been a dramatic contraction as the use of the car has increased.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Mr. Freeman: The subsidy provided by local government was about £10 million in 1972 and had risen to £500 million in 1982. As a result of deregulation there has been an increase in the total bus mileage of 19 per cent. as the private sector has provided new types of vehicles.

I looked up the figures for the hon. Gentleman, who may be interested to know that, as a result of deregulation, since 1985-86, when there were 10,000 mini and midi buses on the roads, the number has risen to 20,000. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there seems to be a sign that, with the replacement cycle now running its course, the double-deck bus may be being ordered again.

Some 84 per cent. of bus services are run commercially and there has been a one third reduction in bus-operator costs per mile. Revenue support by local authorities has been cut in half in real terms. However, there continues to be a long-term, secular decline in bus patronage outside London. That reflects individuals' desire to use the car, a much more flexible mode of transport. It is the type of transport that people prefer as they become prosperous. I argue that deregulation has made the industry better able to respond to those pressures, but that trend needs to be reversed outside London for the good of the industry and bus manufacturers.

The hon. Gentleman referred to investment. There has undoubtedly been a sharp fall in investment in buses during the past few years. That has been caused by the recession and the immediate impact of deregulation as, in a more competitive market, margins are reduced and affect the cash flow available to companies. I believe that that is a temporary phenomenon. As the industry becomes more profitable and cash flow improves, bus operators become better able to place orders for new buses and replace the fleet. As a result of management buy-outs and the sale of the National Bus Company's subsidiaries, debt has passed on to companies' balance sheets, inhibiting them when they wish to acquire new vehicles. But that effect will run off over time, as the debt is paid.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there is now evidence of new orders, and stirrings in the market. The bus manufacturing industry must be flexible in its response to that movement in terms of the type of buses that it produces. In the past, it may have produced midi and mini buses, but there may now be a need for double-deck buses. One of the great strengths of British Leyland—a great name in the bus manufacturing industry—has been the double-deck vehicle.

The Government would also like to see more low-floor buses, not only to help the disabled, but to facilitate quicker boarding by passengers at bus stops in city centres. In addition, manufacturers must make further progress with clean engines. I know that that is the responsibility of engine manufacturers, but standards for the construction and use of vehicles will become tighter and tighter over time. When I visited the 1991 coach and bus exhibition in Birmingham, I saw evidence of exciting new bus and coach designs.

There has been a welcome increase in investment by London Transport—for which I am directly responsible, under my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. Its programme totals £24 million this year, which will mean about 300 new vehicles. That is a significant improvement on last year, when the figure was £15 million. The refurbishment of the Routemaster will be welcomed by many in central London. There is clear evidence that London Transport is increasing its investment.

StageCoach has ordered 250, 9·8 m midi buses from Walter Alexander, with an option for a further 100, and 70 double-decker Leyland Olympians. Ensign Citybus has ordered 30 double-deckers to run on newly won contracted services in London, and Plymouth city recently purchased 20 new Mercedes midi buses as part of its replacement programme.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Minister agree that, despite the Government's hands-on approach, in so far as we are concerned with a strategic supplier—arguments about dual sourcing must be taken into account, for without it, and wider than dual sourcing, there is no real competition unless one includes imports—the Government ought to approach companies such as Volvo, not so much to check on them but to ask penetrating questions as to whether their market analysis is correct? Are they aware of all the considerations that both the Minister and I have in common, in terms of judging the market? Is there not a case for putting to such companies my arguments with which the Minister clearly has some sympathy?

Mr. Freeman: Yes, and I intend to seek from all manufacturers a fresh assessment of the outlook for United Kingdom bus and coach engine, chassis, and bodywork manufacturing in the light of recent developments. I look forward to discussing that aspect with Volvo also, because it has an important role to play. Those discussions will ensure not only that the Department is properly informed about the immediate future, but that it can share with manufacturers certain information. Our view is that the future of the bus and coach manufacturing industry will be best served not by a return to grants, but by helping the operators who are the industry's customers to develop in a climate of growing demand for their services.

On 16 December, I announced a package of measures that received bipartisan support—including that of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, which also has an important role to play. Even though the bus companies operate at arm's length, metropolitan authorities are still the shareholders in some cases.

The five key measures are £10 million of resources to fund demonstration projects sponsored by local authorities, to show operators what can be done to make better use of buses by way of bus lanes, park-and-ride, traffic light priority, city centre priority, and so on. I have already announced the allocation of £3·5 million of that £10 million. The message to the industry when those in it read this important debate is that it should encourage local authorities to submit bids during the summer for the balance of that money, which will be disbursed for 1993-94. That includes guided buses and trolley buses because they are manufactured by the companies to which the hon. Gentleman referred, and trials of those buses will be helpful.

Secondly, we have published guidance for local authorities on keeping buses moving. Thirdly, we have announced the tightening of the way in which vehicle emissions are measured. There is to be a new instrumented test from 1 September for all buses. The hon. Gentleman might be interested to know—I am speculating; I am not forecasting that it would be 20 per cent.—that it is not inconceivable that about 20 per cent. of buses on the road may fail the instrumented test when it comes into operation. That will have implications for the re-ordering of buses with new engines to meet the new, tougher demands. New European Community standards, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, come into operation in 1993, with a further tightening in 1996, for new buses. We have not yet reached a decision about making those standards retrospective for existing buses, but we have it under serious consideration.

Fourthly, I announced further resources for traffic commissioners to check the timetables of private sector operators to ensure that when they say they will run a service, they really run it and do not just cream off peak demand at the expense of other legitimate bus operators. Fifthly, there is research into better passenger information.

The Government believe that the United Kingdom bus and coach manufacturing industry needs to be profitable and thriving. We need a domestic manufacturing industry for buses and coaches in the same way as we need it for the railway manufacturing industry. The Government believe that the best way to help the United Kingdom industry, including Volvo, is to help promote the use of buses. But the operators and manufacturers must be innovative in design, flexible in responding to the needs of the market and confident in the long-term future of the industry.

I hope that this debate will have helped that process. When, in due course, I meet the manufacturers, I hope that I shall be able to share with them my confident belief in a market in which they will all be participating profitably.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 11 March 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

AVON WEIR BILL *[Lords]*

Order for consideration read.

Ordered,

That Standing Order 205 (Notice of Third Reading) be suspended and that the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

FOLKESTONE HARBOUR BILL *[Lords]*

Order for consideration read.

Ordered,

That Standing Order 205 (Notice of Third Reading) be suspended and that the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Libya

1. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about trade with Libya.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): United Kingdom exports to Libya have been about £250 million annually. Imports have been just over £100 million.

Mr. Brown: Does not the Minister understand one thing? During my recent visit to Libya with George More, a top Scots lawyer, the British community told us that it does not want sanctions or reprisals against the Libyan regime. Whatever the problems about Lockerbie, surely the matter can be discussed sensibly around the table? That has not happened. What are the British Government doing to resolve that question? It should be remembered that trade with Libya is important. It is important for jobs as well.

Mr. Sainsbury: Does not the hon. Gentleman understand that, in spite of his apparent admiration for Colonel Gaddafi and his regime, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 731 and called on Libya to respond positively and effectively to the demands made by the United Kingdom, France and the United States? It has not responded and further action may be required.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my right hon. Friend is dealing with trade with Libya, will he bear it in mind that the United Kingdom is happy and willing to trade anywhere in the world, because that is important to us as a trading nation, but we must never sacrifice our values and standards, particularly those concerning our attitude towards international terrorism? We must make that clear to any country with which we deal, including Libya.

Mr. Sainsbury: As always, my hon. Friend puts his point clearly and effectively. I am sure that the House—at least, I hope that the House—will join in condemning international terrorism, particularly when it is state inspired.

Mr. Kilfedder: Has Colonel Gaddafi yet given Her Majesty's Government a detailed list of all the guns, ammunition and Semtex explosives which Libya supplied to the Provisional IRA, much of which has already been used to kill and mutilate British citizens?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point about the regime which the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) appears to admire. I am not aware that any such list has been provided.

Industrial Policy

2. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet representatives of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce to discuss industrial policy.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Peter Lilley): I meet representatives of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce from time to time to discuss a range of policies.

Mr. Eadie: The Secretary of State must be aware that 125,000 jobs were lost in the first 10 weeks of 1992. If the projection is to be believed, another 400,000 jobs are at risk unless there is a change in industrial policy. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the most scathing indictment of the Chancellor's Budget judgment was his admission that unemployment would increase? What kind of Government would plan the economy on the basis of increasing unemployment?

Mr. Lilley: I am afraid that that is not the view of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, about which the hon. Gentleman asks. It welcomes my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's brilliant Budget for its changes in the uniform business rate, which it says are of enormous help to business, a great deal of assistance to growing firms and just what businesses have requested. It also welcomes the changes in VAT, which are clearly of benefit to commerce, and the measures to encourage prompt payment of VAT, the delays in which it says are a vital factor affecting a great number of firms.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Will not the control of inflation continue to be the cornerstone of industrial policy, because it will allow Britain to become more competitive in world markets? Did not the remarks made yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer reinforce that policy?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. That point has been made by many business organisations: Sir John Banham, for instance, welcomed my right hon. Friend's prudent Budget and the priority that he gives to reducing inflation, while the Institute of Directors said that the Budget was prudent and correct in every way.

Mr. Gordon Brown: In what will be his final appearance at Question Time as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, will the right hon. Gentleman confirm the facts of the Budget statement? Will he confirm that investment will fall in 1992; that business investment will fall by 3 per cent; and, that hundreds of thousands of men and women in this country are in danger of losing their jobs if the Government continue in office?

Given that the Prime Minister told us in January that a recovery had started when patently it had not, will he now apologise, tell us when a recovery will happen under Tory policies and agree with the country that the first step towards saving the jobs of thousands of people is for the Government to lose theirs?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman's response to the Budget is as empty as that of his right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, whose comments yesterday, I thought were proof positive that the Michelangelo virus was alive and operating inside the Labour party. It has wiped Labour Members' minds clean. What we want to hear from them is what they plan to do about the tax proposals in the Budget: will they vote against them, or will they support them? I shall be happy to give way to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) if Mr. Speaker will allow him to answer that question.

Mr. Squire: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is no serious argument about the fact that the members of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce are fearful about a possible change of Government, and that the only question open to debate is whether higher taxation is worse than higher interest rates, and whether either is worse than higher inflation?

Mr. Lilley: Indeed: that is absolutely true. A recent study by James Capel and Co. showed that, of 105 leading businesses in this country, 86 per cent. believe that Labour policies would make the economic position dramatically worse. I have no doubt that, after the Budget, an even higher proportion will prefer our policies to those of the Opposition.

3. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will next meet representatives of the West Midlands chambers of commerce to discuss industrial policy.

Mr. Lilley: Together with the hon. Gentleman, I had the pleasure of attending a meeting with the Wolverhampton chamber of commerce last Friday.

Mr. Turner: The Secretary of State is right. He was well wined and dined by the Wolverhampton chamber of commerce last Friday. Why, then, did the Department of Trade and Industry try to gag its president and not allow him to deliver a part of his speech that was mildly critical of Her Majesty's Government? Will the Secretary of State answer that question truthfully because it strikes at the very heart of democracy?

Mr. Lilley: The president of the Wolverhampton chamber of commerce delivered precisely the same speech as the one of which he sent me a copy beforehand and I have it here. He called for a reduction in the special car tax, and I am sure that he will be delighted that it has been halved. He also called for measures to favour lower-paid employees in respect of income tax, and for measures to help small businesses. I have no doubt that the Wolverhampton chamber of commerce will give a warm welcome to the Budget, as it did to my speech last Friday.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the measures introduced yesterday by our right hon. Friend the Chancellor, the harmonious industrial relations restored by the Government and the substantial investment from home and overseas mean that manufacturing in the heart of England is deeply grateful for all that the Government have done in the past 13 years? The last thing that manufacturing wants is a Government who adopt the European social charter which would destroy the advantage that we have in the west midlands.

Mr. Lilley: That is absolutely right. A study of leading businesses shows that a vast majority of British firms believe that if we had a Labour Government there would be slower growth, less investment, higher inflation and worse unemployment. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has spent much of his time over the past few months telling industry about his policies. It has clearly listened and understood.

Trade Balance

4. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects exports to reach the same level as imports.

The Minister for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): My Department does not forecast the balance of payments. The hon. Gentleman might like to know that last year saw record levels of exports from this country and that our share of manufactured exports in world trade has been rising since 1984.

Mr. Cohen: Is not the truthful answer to my question, "Sometime never", because the Government have not invested in British manufacturing? To achieve an export-import balance under current Tory policies would mean an even worse slump than we have at present because the only thing made in Britain under the Tories is a Tory-made recession.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman is wide of the mark. There have been good levels of investment for business and manufacturing in recent years, as the hon. Gentleman should know. It is way above the levels when the Labour party was last in control and understandably so, because Britain is now a good home for investors with much better labour relations, much better quality, much better business management and much better relations between employees and management.

Mr. Norris: How much more quickly does my hon. Friend think that we might achieve a balance between exports and imports when we introduce a minimum wage, increase taxes on investment, increase personal taxes and allow the trade unions to ride rough shod once again?

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend makes his point extremely well. Those policies would be ruinous. They would drive away inward investors, make manufacturing investment much more difficult and defer the day when we improve our balance of trade in televisions, cars and all the other things that are now improving so strongly under the Government's policies. That is why it is important that those policies should continue.

Mr. Hoyle: Yes, but will the Minister say how he could ever expect to balance exports and imports when the Chancellor has forecast growth of only 1 per cent; when we have rising unemployment, falling investment and companies going bankrupt? Is not that a terrible record on which to fight a general election, in which the Government will be defeated?

Mr. Redwood: The trading performance of many sectors is very good, and that trading performance has been strengthening in recent months, as the hon. Gentleman should know. I draw his attention to the fact that we are now net exporters of televisions whereas we were net importers under the Labour party and to the fact that motor output has been expanding in recent years whereas it was declining under Labour. That is the heart of British manufacturing and it needs our policies to carry on its renaissance.

Mr. Roger King: Does my hon. Friend agree that one way in which we can cut down imports is to buy British? Will he extend warmhearted support to the Labour party, which advocates such a policy, but dissociate himself from the actions of the shadow Home Secretary and the Leader of the Labour party who buy foreign cars?

Mr. Redwood: I agree entirely. What humbug it is for some Opposition Members to say that one should buy British and then travel around in foreign cars. I bought a British car and I am proud of it. It works extremely well. Many of my hon. Friends have done the same. That is the best way to back Britain and British industry.

Ms. Quin: Has the Minister had time to have a look at the table published in *European Economy*, which clearly shows that in terms of the annual change in the volume of exports of goods and services between 1979 and 1990, the United Kingdom had a worse record than any other European Community country? Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the Budget statement envisages a widening trade deficit over the next few years, especially in manufacturing products? The honest answer to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) is that under this Government there will never be a balance between exports and imports.

Mr. Redwood: That last statement was wild and silly. The hon. Lady should know that in the past 10 years exports of British manufactured goods have grown faster than those of France, Germany, America and even Japan, because manufacturing is doing so much better and needs our policies. She might like to know that the imports of manufactured goods amount to 17 per cent. of our national income—the same proportion as Germany.

Mr. Warren: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is appalling that the Opposition whinge on about the failure of this country to export, when we know that what we need from both sides of the House is unanimity to help exporters and not complaints about them?

Mr. Redwood: I agree and go further: let us congratulate them. They have achieved much in recent years, but the Labour party never gives them any credit and is always moaning. There have been fine achievements in the export of cars, televisions and other consumer durables. Let us hear some praise for a change and congratulate exporters.

Footwear Industry

5. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement on initiatives to help the footwear industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: The footwear industry, like other industries, is eligible for a range of Government assistance.

Mr. Vaz: Does not that answer prove that the past 13 years have been wasted years in terms of the Government's commitment to the footwear industry? Hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost in Leicester, the midlands and elsewhere in the past 13 years, yet the Government have done nothing to support the industry. Now that the election has been announced, will the Minister take the opportunity to apologise to the industry's workers and employers for failing to do anything to protect them in the past 13 years?

Mr. Sainsbury: I hoped that the hon. Member would be aware of the changes in fashion with which our footwear industry has had to deal and would have noticed the internationally competitive conditions in which it has had to operate. I hoped that he might be prepared to congratulate it on its 30 per cent. improvement in productivity during the past decade.

Mr. Michael Morris: My right hon. Friend the Minister should ignore the gloom and doom of the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz). In very difficult trading circumstances, footwear exports in the past 12 months were up 11 per cent. in volume and 15 per cent. in value. Nevertheless, will my right hon. Friend continue to put pressure on the 35 countries that still place restrictions on our exporters?

Mr. Sainsbury: Indeed. My hon. Friend has been a close supporter of the industry for many years and has taken a close interest in its activities. I join him in congratulating the industry on its export achievements—something that we never hear from the Labour party. It has almost doubled exports since 1985 and we shall continue to work to ensure that more and more markets are open to the high-quality products that are produced in my hon. Friend's constituency.

Beer

6. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what response he has made to the complaints he has received about measurements relating to the head of a pint of beer in the current year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Edward Leigh): After careful consideration of the complaints, I have decided that section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985 should be implemented and that the trade should be allowed two years to make the necessary changes.

Mr. Canavan: Is the Minister aware that there would be widespread opposition, particularly in Scotland, to any Government imposing legislation that led to the disappearance of the traditional head on a pint of beer or to increased costs being passed on to the consumer in price increases? We all agree about the need to protect the general public against short measures, but does not the Minister realise that flat beer is just as bad, if not worse, than small beer?

Mr. Leigh: There is no question of having to serve flat beer in Scotland. I am only implementing the weights and measures legislation that the previous Labour Government introduced. I should be interested to see whether an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman will intervene on this point. Surely we all agree that no one should be served a short measure. If one pays for a pint of beer, one should get a pint of beer. If the hon. Gentleman and some brewers say that prices will increase, I can only quote a leading national newspaper which said:

> "Why should a pint be a pint everywhere but in a pub? Just imagine how the brewers would react if their customers decided to hand over only 99p out of every £1 they were charged."

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my hon. Friend give greater and more sympathetic consideration to the question that has just been asked, because those of us who understand cask-conditioned ale—real beer—know that it is extremely damaging for it to be dispensed under pressure? The head is an important part of a pint of beer and if beer is dispensed in the way that he is advocating through the implementation of section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985, the taste, texture and colour of cask-conditioned beer could be altered to the detriment of the discerning beer-drinking public.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend is quite rightly a great traditionalist, and so am I. Nothing that I am proposing will result in hand pumps being phased out. I am giving the industry two full years to bring in lined glasses. The entire stock of the nation's glasses turns over in two years so there is no reason why this measure should result in any implementation costs or why the price of a pint should go up. It is right that when one pays for a pint of beer, one should get a pint of beer.

Electronics Industry

7. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of overseas earnings by the United Kingdom electronics industry in 1979 and 1991.

Mr. Redwood: Exports of electronics from this country in 1979 amounted to £2·7 billion and rose to £13·6 billion in 1990, the last full year for which I have the figures.

Mr. Coombs: Will my hon. Friend speculate on the effect on jobs in the electronics industry in my constituency and elsewhere of a Labour party proposal to increase value added tax on luxury items to 25 per cent? Does he agree that the right way to encourage the electronics industry to export is to help it at home by tax cuts such as those announced yesterday by our right hon. Friend?

Mr. Redwood: I agree. Such a big increase in VAT would be very damaging. I was delighted to learn recently that Arcam has announced that it will be the first British company in 10 years to make a cassette deck here in the United Kingdom. That builds on the success of the television industry and other electronic industries to which I referred in answer to earlier questions. We need to develop a good strong home market, and for that we need relatively light taxation so that people have more money in their pockets to spend. That is what the Labour party does not understand: there is no investment unless there is demand.

Mr. Flynn: What plans does the Minister have to ensure that the British-designed and British-invented transputer continues to be manufactured in this country? Is he aware that the parent company, which was nationalised as part of a French and Italian consortium, has threatened to remove the transputer from this country because of the British Government's failure to support British industry in the way that the French and Italian Governments have? Is another marvellous British invention—the miracle transputer which will be sold all over the world—about to be employed and manufactured by foreigners?

Mr. Redwood: There are many examples of good inventions developed here thanks to our industrial market-oriented policies. The United Kingdom is one of the leaders in open systems, which is a very important technological development. As for the future of the transputer, that, of course, depends on commercial decisions, but we have the right environment for many types of technological developments. We have an extremely lively electronics industry. What a pity that the Opposition never tell us any success stories.

Industrial Policy

8. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will next meet representatives of the Yorkshire and Humberside regional CBI to discuss industrial policy.

13. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will next meet representatives of the Yorkshire and Humberside regional CBI to discuss industrial policy.

Mr. Lilley: Ministers and officials of my Department keep in touch with the CBI on a wide range of matters.

Mr. Michie: Does the Secretary of State recall that in answer to an earlier question of mine to his colleague at the Department of Employment, I was told that 25,000 manufacturing jobs had been lost in the past 12 months in Yorkshire and Humberside? Has it occurred to the Secretary of State to discuss that with the CBI and perhaps also to nudge his colleague, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to try to change that trend?

Mr. Lilley: If the hon. Gentleman is in contact with the CBI on Humberside, I am sure that he will have noticed its comments on the Budget. It especially welcomed the measures introduced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to encourage late payment of bills—[HON.

MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—to encourage early payment of bills, and to overcome late payment of bills. The regional CBI believed that that would be of great benefit and was grateful for my right hon. Friend's measures to alleviate the uniform business rate. I do not think that any business men whom I know support the Labour party's policy of unleashing local authorities to raise the poundage for the uniform business rate without capping. During the 1980s, local authorities raised business rates by 37 per cent. more than inflation. We have frozen them, but the Labour party intends to unleash them again.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: With the Government, it is more a question of the late delivery of policies. The Secretary of State will be aware how crucial the textiles and clothing industries are to Yorkshire, Humberside and, indeed, Grimsby. Is he also aware that those industries have been losing 2,000 jobs per month in addition to the 60,000 jobs already lost and the 7 per cent. fall in production since the recession began? It is too late now to ask the right hon. Gentleman what he intends to do about that, as he will lose his job over it on 9 April, but can he tell me of any other Government who have allowed their textile industry to bleed to death in that fashion without helping it?

Mr. Lilley: The textile industry is and remains important to this country. That is why we have taken up the position that we have over GATT, a position which is widely welcomed by that industry. The hon. Gentleman's region has benefited greatly from diversification, not least because we have encouraged inward investment. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, like me, condemns the Trades Union Congress motion which rejected "alien investment" in this country, as the TUC saw it. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is as amazed as I am that Labour Front-Bench spokesmen refuse to dissociate themselves from that position, and therefore stand to reject "alien investment". That is one reason why they will be rejected by the electorate.

Mr. Batiste: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in many parts of the Yorkshire and Humberside region unemployment is significantly lower than it was at the time of the previous election, and that what the regional CBI fears above all else is the havoc that would be caused by a Labour Government, with their commitment to a statutory minimum wage, which would wipe out so many jobs, and to the European Community social chapter, which would make British industry uncompetitive in world terms?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is right. I receive a great many representations from business men worried about the threat of a minimum wage and about the social chapter. Business men find it especially odd that the Labour party intends to introduce a minimum wage with one hand while with the other hand it would remove our tax cuts for the lowest paid. Thus its Budget—if it ever got the chance—would hit the lowest paid disproportionately.

Mr. Michael Brown: Will my right hon. Friend totally reject what the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) has just said, bearing in mind that only four days ago my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State was in my constituency, which adjoins Great Grimsby, to announce that Kimberly-Clark from America was to build a factory at Barton-upon-Humber involving 770 new jobs, thanks to the Government's industrial policy and a large Government grant to that company?

Mr. Lilley: Indeed, I was especially delighted that we won that contract for this country. The investment will create 750 jobs directly and a great many more indirectly. We pulled out all the stops and gave the company a response in record time.

Mr. Henderson: After 13 years of so-called Tory economic miracle, how does the Secretary of State explain to industrialists in Yorkshire and Humberside why manufacturing investment there is now below the 1979 level, and why there were no measures in the Budget for manufacturers and manufacturing investment?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman knows that if we compare the position now with that of 10 years ago—at the same stage of the economic cycle—we see that manufacturing output is up by a quarter, manufacturing investment is up by a third, manufacturing productivity is up by more than a half, and manufactured exports are up by almost three quarters. Industrialists do not want to return to Labour party policies because they know full well that that would mean Front-Bench Labour Members taking decisions instead of them. They know that the Opposition team consists of a television producer, a psychiatrist, a social anthropologist, a trade union official and a charity worker—and that is about it. Not one of them has a day's experience of working in British industry.

Mr. Riddick: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a survey conducted recently among the top 200 companies in this country, many based in the north of England and in Yorkshire, showed that 86 per cent. of industrialists believed that a Labour victory at the next election would be bad for the economy? They believed that inflation would go up and that interest rates would go up, which would clearly lead to higher unemployment in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Lilley: Yes. I am sure that, following the Budget, support among business and industry will be even higher than the 86 per cent. recorded beforehand. The fact is that industrialists are scared stiff of a Labour Government and are determined to do all that they can to ensure that we achieve, as we shall, a resounding and decisive Conservative victory. That is the best thing for industry and for a strong recovery from the recession.

Regional Development Areas

9. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last discussed with his EC opposite numbers revision of regional development areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: Our intention is to review the map early in the next Parliament after we have won the election.

Mr. Hind: When my hon. Friend returns to his desk after the next election has been won by the Conservatives, will he bear it in mind that in the past 10 years west Lancashire has benefited greatly from being a development area? It has attracted inward investment, there are new factories and jobs, and unemployment is now 22 per cent. lower than it was when I was elected in June 1987. In the negotiations, will my hon. Friend especially ensure that west Lancashire and Skelmersdale are adequately supported with European and regional selective assistance through his Department?

Mr. Leigh: When my hon. Friend has been returned with an increased majority in his marginal seat, he will no doubt wish to make representations to me as I carry on with my present job. Our review will be objective and it will be based on supporting areas in which there is a disparity in unemployment rates. Of one thing I am sure: the last thing that business in west Lancashire wants is the election of a Labour Government, who will put up business taxes, put up costs and impose a minimum wage.

Dr. Kim Howells: As the Minister knows, regional development grants have played an important part in helping to replace some of the jobs lost in mining and steel in south Wales. Is he aware that many of us are concerned because the next generation of inward investment will be attracted not by a low-wage economy or a low-wage work force, but by the best trained and educated work force in Europe? Day by day, the Government are unwilling to put more money into training. Indeed, the Department of Trade and Industry actually agrees with cuts in training imposed by the Department of Employment. Those cuts mean that regions such as south Wales will be less able to compete with other regions in Europe than they are now.

Mr. Leigh: That was a very moving speech. If it is true, why is this country the No. 1 location for inward investment? Why do we account for 41 per cent. of Japanese investment in the EC and 36 per cent. of American investment in the EC? The reason is that foreign companies want to come here for a highly trained and highly motivated work force who work for good British companies. That is the truth.

Post Office

10. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet the Post Office chairman to discuss Post Office efficiency.

Mr. Leigh: My right hon. Friend regularly meets the chairman of the Post Office, Sir Bryan Nicholson. I have no doubt that after 9 April he will meet him equally regularly.

Ms. Hoey: I am sure that the Minister is aware of the widespread concern about the threat to postal services that the Government are determined to impose by bringing in tin-pot competitors who will make the rural services a threatened species. Does he realise that throughout the country in the election people who care about the Post Office and Post Office services will vote Labour as the only way to preserve a good postal service?

Mr. Leigh: I do not think that the hon. Lady really believes all that. We already have the best Post Office in the European Community. What harm is there in trying to achieve better value for money and more choice for the consumer by more competition—always giving an assurance, which I repeat today, that we will ensure that the uniform tariff structure remains in being even in rural areas? What possible harm can there be to the Post Office from more competition? More competition will lead to better service, and the whole House knows it.

Mr. Fry: When my hon. Friend sees the chairman of the Post Office, will he impress upon him the need for absolute efficiency in delivering election addresses from Labour candidates? Should not every household in the country know that the Labour party officially wants to deny the low paid the tax reductions given by our right hon. Friend the Chancellor yesterday?

Mr. Leigh: It is extraordinary that the Labour party, which we all know want to tax the rich, now wants to tax the poor as well. *[Interruption.]* Are we about to hear an Opposition spokesman telling us their tax plans? The House wants to know. Do they intend to reverse those tax cuts? Will they tax their people more? We want to know.

Manufacturing Industry

12. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the change in manufacturing industry productivity in the past 10 years.

Mr. Leigh: Manufacturing productivity rose by over a half between 1981 and 1991.

Sir John Farr: I thank my hon. Friend for that encouraging news. Does he agree that, at the same time, manufacturing exports increased by more than two thirds? Is that not a significant springboard for the future for British manufacturing industry?

Mr. Leigh: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right that manufacturing exports have increased by nearly three quarters since 1981. In fact, they have grown faster than in the United States of America, Japan, France and Germany.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Minister recognise that between 1979 and 1981 much of British manufacturing industry was razed to the ground? Will he now give us the figures for the whole period since 1979, when the Government came to office? I believe that they tell a rather different story.

Mr. Leigh: If we compare this stage in the economic cycle with the previous stage, we see that output is up a quarter, investment is up a third, productivity is up a half and exports are up three quarters. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may not like it, but we will keep saying it. One thing is absolutely clear: why should manufacturing industry benefit from a quadruple whammy with higher costs, higher prices, higher inflation, a minimum wage and more red tape? That is the question that the Opposition need to answer.

Iran and Russia

14. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about Export Credits Guarantee Department cover for Iran and Russia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have received a number of representations about ECGD cover for Iran and Russia.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating Beloit Walmsley in my constituency on winning a £63 million contract in Russia and a £90 million contract in Iran? Is not that the way for us to gain increasing shares of world markets for the fourth successive year, in contrast with the strike-torn, tax-weary years of decline under Labour?

Mr. Sainsbury: Not only am I happy to join my hon. Friend in congratulating that successful exporter, but I congratulate my hon. Friend on the energetic and effective way in which he has supported Beloit Walmsley in winning those contracts.

Mr. Godman: Do we really want to develop trade with a country whose Government sanctions the murderous fatwa placed upon the shoulders of Salman Rushdie? Should not the Government, in the last few days of their existence, bring to bear upon the Iranian Government the utter condemnation that is felt by the people of the United Kingdom for the disgraceful action in imposing a death threat on a British citizen in the capital of the United Kingdom? Nothing should be done to further trade with the Iranian Government until that fatwa is lifted from the shoulders of Salman Rushdie.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government have made clear their opposition and abhorrence for the fatwa to which the hon. Gentleman referred, but he differs from the view of his colleagues on the Opposition Front Bench if he wishes to stop trade or perhaps impose an embargo on trade with Iran or, indeed, any other country. It is the policy of the Government to encourage our exporters and to congratulate them.

Manufacturing Output

15. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has recently received about manufacturing output.

Mr. Leigh: My right hon. Friend has recently received the excellent report by the CBI's manufacturing advisory group which showed that there had been a transformation in manufacturing performance during the 1980s.

Mr. Smith: Given that 80 per cent. of manufacturing jobs were lost in Barry in my constituency in the last Conservative recession, manufacturing growth is down 3·7 per cent. on last year, we now have one of the lowest growths in manufactured output in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, and 3,000 manufacturing jobs are being lost every day, why did the Government fail yesterday to take any action to bring about a recovery in wealth-creating manufacturing industry?

Mr. Leigh: All right, let us talk about yesterday if the hon. Gentleman wants—let us talk about giving more than £1 billion to industry over the next two years to ensure that there is no increase in business rates. If the hon. Gentleman wants to talk about that, we shall talk about it even more. Let us talk about reductions in corporation tax, which are still feeding through the economy and will be worth £1 billion to industry in the next year. Those are the facts that industry wants to hear. That is why industry, the Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors and the Association of British Chambers of Commerce all support the Budget. That is what puts Labour Members on the spot.

Mr. David Shaw: Is my hon. Friend aware that high levels of manufacturing output lead to high levels of exports and that the Dover ferry industry has done well under the Government out of high levels of exports? Can my hon. Friend confirm that he will do all in his power to ensure that the Government are returned so that the Dover ferry industry can continue to benefit from high levels of exports?

Mr. Leigh: Yes. We will be returned. We are winning the debate. We are winning the debate this afternoon. Opposition Members have not scored one hit so far, and nor will they during the election campaign.

Exports

17. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current performance of British exports.

Mr. Sainsbury: British exports in 1991 were at an all-time record high.

Mr. Arnold: To what does my right hon. Friend attribute that success in the middle of a world recession?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend asks a relevant question. British exporters achieved all-time record exports partly because in 1991 we had all-time record low numbers of strikes and days lost through industrial action. That was because we had a sensible framework of industrial relations laws. The success of British industry in exporting last year was also attributable to having the right framework for taxation, which encourages and rewards enterprise on the part of both individuals and companies.

Mr. Leadbitter *rose*—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] This may be my last question, Mr. Speaker. Will the Secretary of State respond to a question that I have put several times since the Select Committee on Science and Technology in another place produced its recommendations for the Government? It said that the Government had no policy for industry and no policy for the country, and that if they did not take a new direction there would be no British-owned manufacturing industry left in this country—now answer!

Mr. Sainsbury: The success of British exporters, which apparently does not get one word of congratulation or praise from the Labour party, gives the lie to what the hon. Gentleman has just said.

Short-termism

18. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to combat short-termism among investors in British industry.

Mr. Redwood: The way to combat short-termism is to have the right policies for the support of industrial investment—policies based on competitiveness, lower taxation, good industrial relations and a belief in quality.

Mr. Dunnachie: Does the Minister agree that it is a disgrace, when British industry is striving desperately to find a starting point for recovery, that the Government have not provided tax incentives for investment in industry?

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor put forward a number of measures which give a lot of cash flow help to British business—and none more important than that on the unified business rate, which means £500 million extra for business and relief from any increases in business rates. Under Labour, businesses suffered greatly from the increase in business rates. Labour's plans would make British companies wide open to easy takeovers because they have proposals for company law, to renationalise companies, which would leave many other companies vulnerable.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Has my hon. Friend seen the latest survey from the Institute of Purchasing and Supply—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading!"] which publishes a regular report based on surveys of purchasing managers throughout British industry, studying their purchasing activities and intentions. That is an important survey—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading!"] Clearly Opposition Members do not care to brief themselves with such important information—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us get to the question. Please hurry up.

Mr. Davies: I am sure that my hon. Friend has seen this survey—*[Interruption.]* Has he noticed that for the first time, in February, the indices for orders and output show a rise?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That was a very long-winded question.

Mr. Redwood: I agree entirely with the bit of the question that I heard. I thought that it was a most helpful question. Its length was entirely related to the fact that it contained good news and, once again, Opposition Members did not want to hear it.

Regulatory Burdens

19. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received from business men about the impact of regulatory burdens on industry.

Mr. Redwood: I have received a number of representations from business men about the need to cut regulatory burdens. What a first-class job my right hon. Friend the Chancellor did by cutting a large number of them in his Budget yesterday. The business men came, we heard, the Chancellor listened, and he has incorporated in his proposals a large number of deregulatory measures, which will ease cash flow and make it easier to deal with the VAT man and the Inland Revenue. How much I welcome that. I hope that Opposition Members will support it in the Division Lobby when the time comes.

Mr. Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that the CBI, in its publication, "Competing with the World's Best", drew attention to the fact that industry does not want to be organised, run and intervened in by TV producers, social workers and others? Industries want to be left alone so that they can continue to export more than the Japanese. In particular, the Scotch whisky industry, with such a splendid export record, does not want its business to be run by politicians, who should only consume the stuff and not organise and manage the businesses.

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend is a great champion of the Scotch whisky industry, and many of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members support British business by drinking Scotch—and how wise they are. This Government will ensure that discriminatory taxes are not imposed on that industry by our friends in Europe, because it is a vital British interest. My hon. Friend is also right that business wants regulations kept in bounds, with decent regulations so that markets are fair and open, but it does not want the masses of red tape that the Opposition are always recommending day after day in the House.

Mr. Douglas: Turning from the attractions of the Scotch whisky industry, can the Minister give us more information about the important regulatory aspects of getting companies which sub-contract to the Ministry of Defence to pay their bills or have them paid quickly? As I am sure that the Minister will appreciate, it is important for the cash flow of small businesses that settlements be paid appropriately and quickly. Can he give us more information on how that might be done?

Mr. Redwood: I cannot improve on the information that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave in his statements to the House yesterday and in the papers supporting the Budget. Yes, the Government are insisting that the bills are paid on time when the work has been done, and that that should flow through the system from the main contractors to the sub-contractor. I know from my discussions with business men that prompt payment is vital. The Government should and will give a lead.

Mr. Allason: Is my hon. Friend aware that a large proportion of those employed in the south-west, and certainly in Devon, are part-time workers in residential homes? Is he aware that the owners of those homes are already burdened by a large number of regulations and that any new regulations from Brussels should be resisted by him and his colleagues, particularly regulations on part-time workers and the implementation of a minimum wage?

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend is quite right. For that very reason, the Government are standing up for British businesses and British services in Brussels as we want more jobs, not fewer. Some of the regulations from Brussels would destroy jobs as surely as the policies of the Labour party would if they were ever to be followed.

Ms. Mowlam: Is the Minister satisfied with his Department's record on regulating financial businesses after Blue Arrow, Guinness, Maxwell and this morning's extremely critical report from the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee on the Bank of Credit and Commerce International? Does he not recognise that his Department has failed, because the electorate will on 9 April?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Lady seems to be confusing the regulatory record of my Department with the regulators outside my Department, who were deliberately set up as independent regulators as a result of legislation passed by the House. Unless she asks a more precise question about a particular regulator and a particular action, I cannot comment on the detailed points that she makes. I believe that the legislation passed by the House has created a strong regulatory framework and I am always encouraging the regulators to root out fraud, incompetence and crime wherever it may be.

Home Income Equity Plans

20. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what initiatives he intends to introduce to assist those in financial difficulties arising from their involvement in home income equity plans.

Mr. Redwood: There are several ways in which assistance might be available to people who have been caught up in some of those unfortunate schemes. If, for example, there is any question of repossession, the individual should go to his building society, because those societies have said that they want to avoid repossessions wherever possible. If there has been an investment failure, people may be eligible for compensation either from the investment company or from the compensation scheme, depending on the precise circumstances of the individual case.

I do not want to hold out false general hope, but in some cases assistance might be available. I suggest that any hon. Member with a constituency problem should get in touch with the Securities and Investments Board, which is taking the lead in this matter and which knows the individual details of specific cases.

Mr. Flynn: The Minister is trying to do a Pontius Pilate act on the weakness of the regulatory system set up by his Government. There are thousands of victims of those home income equity plans. Virtually all are elderly people, mostly widows, who have bought their own homes and were sold those plans through so-called independent financial advisers. We should make it clear that those people are not independent at all, but profit-hungry, commission-hungry salesmen. They have conned those elderly people who now have the dreadful prospect of losing their homes in their 60s and 70s because of that or because of the weakness of financial regulation. Will the Minister give a guarantee in the last few days of his Government that none of those elderly people will have their home repossessed?

Mr. Redwood: Obviously I want to avoid that, which is why I said that those people or their advisers or friends should get in touch with the building societies, which have told us that they want to avoid repossession wherever possible.

The hon. Gentleman's extraordinary attack on independent financial advisers was very unwise. If someone is registered as an independent financial adviser, it is his or her duty to give independent advice and that adviser is regulated by the appropriate body to do that. If the hon. Gentleman can give examples of IFAs who have failed to give good independent advice, he should refer them to me, or direct to the regulatory body, which will take them up as a matter of urgency. Of course I give the hon. Gentleman the pledge that we shall take up any of those cases, should he send the details to me. However, the SIB is in charge of this and I refer hon. Members to it if they have problems.

Mr. Butterfill: Will my hon. Friend accept my thanks for the helpful way in which he dealt with my representations on this subject? Does he accept that it is largely due to the regulatory framework that he has put in place that the activities of, for example, the Aylesbury Group have now been accepted for the investors compensation scheme? Will he also impress upon the building societies involved that they have a duty and an obligation to ensure that people are not evicted from their homes until the compensation scheme can take effect?

Mr. Redwood: I give that undertaking. My hon. Friend's comment is extremely helpful. He has done a great deal of important work to expose the problem and to help us find a solution to it. As he said, in some cases there are already agreements that compensation could be made under the investors compensation scheme. I welcome that, as it is important that compensation should be made available where appropriate.

Manufacturing Investment

21. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the total of manufacturing investment in 1990 and 1991 and the percentage fall *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* in real terms.

Mr. Leigh: Fifteen per cent.

Mr. Williams: The level of manufacturing investment is now lower than in 1979, and the growth in manufacturing output since 1979 is just 4·9 per cent.—far lower than in Germany, where it is 26 per cent., the United States where it is 33 per cent., and Japan where it is more than 60 per cent. Against that appalling background, why did yesterday's Budget contain nothing to help investment in manufacturing industry?

Mr. Leigh: There is a great deal in the Budget to help investment. How would investment be helped by the Labour party's policies of higher costs, higher taxes, more red tape and a minimum wage? They would drive British industry into bankruptcy. That is why industry will vote Conservative and we shall win the election.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a short business statement.

In the light of the announcement earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, the business for Friday 13 March and for Monday 16 March will be rearranged. In the meantime, I shall be tabling a motion later today which will be set down for the commencement of business tomorrow. This will enable the House to conclude the remainder of its business in an effective manner which I trust will be for the convenience of the whole House.

The main provisions of the motion will be to enable you, Mr. Speaker, to bring the debate on the Budget to a conclusion at 10 o'clock on Thursday night, to enable Government business to be taken on Friday and to enable the House to meet at 9.30 am on Monday 16 March for Government business.

Following discussions through the usual channels, I shall make a further statement tomorrow on the detailed arrangements for business for Friday and Monday next.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Does not everything that the Leader of the House has just said flatly contradict the assurances that he gave my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and the House last week? He said that we should wait and see——

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to behave in an orderly manner.

Mr. Cunningham: Is it not also typical of this discredited Administration that, having wrecked the nation's economy, they cannot even conclude their parliamentary business without the imposition of more guillotines to bring matters to a conclusion in a shambles, just as they have made a shambles of the nation's affairs? May I make it clear to the Leader of the House that he and his colleagues should not assume that much of their outstanding business, which is controversial and which we oppose, will be nodded through on Friday? We shall go on exposing the inadequacies of the Government's legislation until we finally put their record and our alternative to the people, and we know what the outcome of that will be.

Mr. MacGregor *rose*——

Mr. Cunningham: I have not finished yet.

The most important issue today is not the statement by the Leader of the House but the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), and the sooner we get on to that business the better.

Mr. MacGregor: The statement that I made about business last Thursday was exactly as the business for this week was at that point. I am making another statement today because of the decision by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister this morning, with the consent of Her Majesty the Queen.

The hon. Gentleman is absolutely wrong to suggest that we shall end this Parliament in a shambles. We shall be ending in an orderly and highly effective way, with a programme of Government business that is very much in the nation's interests and which, in a shortened Parliament, will be largely completed. That is a sign of a Government who know what they are doing and do it well.

It was entirely in character for the hon. Gentleman to suggest that, on Friday, he and his party will oppose a number of measures that are entirely in the nation's interests—I guess that they will be taken on Friday, but that will depend on discussions through the usual channels. The vast majority of higher education institutions want the Bill that we are currently taking through Parliament. The Education (Schools) Bill greatly increases the rights and choice of parents, which is what millions of parents around the country want.

Above all, the Finance Bill contains a set of proposals that today's reactions clearly show are warmly welcomed by business, especially by small businesses. On Friday, the hon. Gentleman will be fighting vigorously the proposal to reduce the taxes of the lower-paid. That is in character for the Labour party, which is a high-spending, high-taxing Opposition, and will remain so.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): May I start on a constructive and conciliatory note by asking whether the Leader of the House intends to make provision for the Charities Bill, on which so much has been done in another place, to be enacted before the dissolution? Does not the Leader of the House agree that no business that he can announce tomorrow to foreshadow any measure taken before dissolution will do anything to take this country out of recession? The Liberal Democrats look forward to the Leader of the House announcing in the next Parliament measures to take this country out of recession and embarking on a programme of needed political reform.

Mr. MacGregor: On the latter point, it is clear that the British economy is now in a highly competitive position, as the Confederation of British Industry acknowledges. The CBI is making it clear that we are much better placed than we were at the beginning of the 1980s to meet international competition and, as the world recession clears, the British economy will receive greater benefit from that due to the policies pursued by the Government.

I agree that all charities would like to see the Charities Bill on the statute book. I hope that we can attain that goal, but that will depend on discussions through the usual channels.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a very narrow statement. The Leader of the House has announced that he will be making a fuller business statement tomorrow. In equity, I shall call two Back Benchers, one from each side, and we shall then move on to the Budget debate. As there is great pressure on business today, I shall have to impose a limit on speeches.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): A very large number of Conservative prospective parliamentary candidates will want to know on which day they will be reporting for duty after the election. Will the Leader of the House tell us?

Mr. MacGregor: Monday 27 April.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): In warmly welcoming the right hon. Gentleman's statement as a sign of the approaching general election, may I say that it would be entirely inappropriate, in the discussions that he has through the usual channels or elsewhere, to urge the Government to use the mandate of 1987 in the entirely different political circumstances of 1992 to push through under the guillotine the measures on education and asylum, or the economic ones contained in the shortened Finance Bill? He should put those policies to the people of this country, not ram them through on Friday and Monday.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman had better await my statement tomorrow, following discussions through the usual channels.

Orders of the Day

WAYS AND MEANS

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [10 March].

AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;
(b) for refunding any amount of tax;
(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importations; or
(d) for relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Question again proposed.

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

[Relevant document: European Community Document No. 10212/91 and COR2, the Commission's Annual Economic Report 1991-92.]

3.39 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East) *rose*——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Hon. Members: Goodbye!

Mr. Speaker: Order. This takes time out of the speech by the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman.

Mr. Smith: The most notable omission from yesterday's Budget was that there was not a word of apology——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the right hon. and learned Gentleman, but I was taken aback by all this noise. In view of the large number of right hon. and hon. Members who want to participate today, I propose to put a precautionary 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm, but I hope that it will not be necessary if Members called to speak before then are brief.

Mr. Smith: The most notable omission from yesterday's Budget was that not a word of apology was uttered by the Chancellor in this Government, a Government who have caused the longest recession since the war. There was not a word of apology to the 1 million people who have lost their jobs since March 1990; not a word of apology to the 47,800 businesses which failed last year; not a hint of contrition for the families who lived in the 75,500 homes that were repossessed last year.

Nineteen ninety-one was the year in which the economy shrank by 2·5 per cent.; it was the worst calendar year of recession since the 1930s. Last night, in his Budget broadcast, the Chancellor described 1991 as a year of achievement. Some achievement—record-breaking levels, certainly, but record-breaking levels of business failures, of house repossessions, of homelessness and of economic decline. If that is a year of achievement, what on earth would the Chancellor describe as a year of failure?

[Mr. Smith]

Not only is there no apology from the Chancellor or the Prime Minister—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"] I confess that I am slightly surprised that the Chancellor is not here to take part in this debate——

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Get on with it.

Mr. Smith: I am quite prepared to get on with it; the Chancellor might have done us the courtesy of attending the debate to hear what I have to get on with. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will go and see him and ask him if he will trot along.

Indeed, it was the Chancellor who told us in this House at Treasury questions:

> "Rising unemployment and the recession have been the price that we have had to pay to get inflation down. That price is well worth paying."—[*Official Report,* 16 May 1991; Vol. 191, c. 413.]

It was the Prime Minister who told us when he was Chancellor: "If it isn't hurting, it isn't working." We see on the Government Front Bench for a few days more some of the guilty men who told us first that there would be no recession, then that there would be a soft landing for the British economy and that the recession would be shallow and short-lived, that recovery was around the corner, that the green shoots of recovery were sprouting, that the housing and construction industry would exhibit the first signs of the vague stirrings of the recovery, and that all we needed to do was to wait in patient expectation for Conservative economic policies to bring a triumphant end to the dark days of decline. I note that the Chancellor is so worried about justifying all that that he did not bother to turn up in the House this afternoon.

It has been the hallmark of Majorism to promise that good times are just around the corner. Unfortunately, we never seem to turn the corner. The technique is deployed again in the economic forecast in the Budget. The economy is in a much worse condition than was predicted in the autumn statement only a few months ago. Last November, the Chancellor told us that growth in 1992 would be 2·25 per cent. Yesterday, he had to scale that down to just 1 per cent. Manufacturing output was forecast last November to grow by as much as 3·25 per cent. this year. Yesterday, he revealed that it is expected to grow by just 0·5 per cent. Investment, forecast to grow by 1·25 per cent., is now expected to decline again this year and, alarmingly, the balance of payments is forecast to deteriorate sharply once again to a £9 billion deficit in 1993. Of course, borrowing has doubled from £14 billion to £28 billion. Clearly, we are heading for yet another year of what the Conservatives choose to call achievement.

As the Chancellor told us yesterday:

> "unemployment is likely to go on rising for some time."—[*Official Report,* 10 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 747.]

What is perhaps even more revealing is that that prediction of rising unemployment was made on the explicit assumption that growth will resume in the course of the year. So much for the Budget for jobs forecast by the Secretary of State for Employment. But perhaps we should not pay too much attention to him because, like the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is no need for this.

Mr. Smith: I am glad to see the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Perhaps I should start at the beginning again. *[Interruption.]* I can understand why Conservative Members do not want to hear it twice. They do not want the double whammy of the Conservative party's measures. It was too painful even for the Chancellor to listen to, so he lurked outside until he thought that I was about to come to another part of my speech, and then he sneaked in.

I was referring to the Secretary of State for Employment, who promised a Budget for jobs, and I was observing that we should not worry too much about him, because, like some others, he is not in the election A team. But we had a glimpse of how the A team deals with the problem of Conservative economic failure in the interview given last Sunday by that tyro of the casual knockabout, the Secretary of State for Education and Science. He was asked by Mr. Walden last Sunday what he would say to a viewer——

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman mean the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) being roasted?

Mr. Smith: The other one.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science was asked what he would say to a viewer who blamed the Conservatives for hundreds of thousands of people having lost their jobs, for 100,000 people having lost their homes, and for some having lost both. The Secretary of State replied:

> "It's been a bad recession through which most people actually have not suffered any of the consequences you have described."

What country is that member of the A team living in? It is simply not good enough to dismiss the unemployed and those who have lost their homes as a minority of the population. *[Interruption.]* I see that there are some who agree with the Secretary of State.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): The right hon. and learned Gentleman is right to point out that we all have to be concerned about unemployment, but, as he is talking about loss of jobs and unemployment, and so that we can consider the figures that he will be coming up with in a week's time, will he tell the House today what the pledge of a half median wage amounts to? Is it £4 per hour now, rather than the £3·40 that it was two years ago?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman should read the newspapers. It is £3·40 per hour. That is the figure that the Labour party is committed to.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science said that most people had not suffered the consequences of the recession, and that basically that was all right. The depressing facts are that, in 22 months, 1 million people have lost their jobs; if we take 1990 and 1991 together, almost 130,000 homes were repossessed; and in 1991 alone, 275,000 households were six months or more in arrears with mortgage payments.

The latest study by the Policy Studies Institute, published only last week—the most detailed study yet undertaken of the problem of debt—showed that 2·5 million households in Britain are struggling with a combination of household debt and unpaid consumer credit. I can tell the Conservative party that there is no way in which it will be able to ignore these facts, or to minimise their significance, in the course of the forthcoming election.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Interventions will take a great deal of time out of the subsequent debate.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) has provided me with such useful interventions in the past that I think that I ought to give way to him again.

Mr. Nicholls: The right hon. and learned Gentleman said yesterday that now was not the right time to reduce taxes on the lower paid. When does he think is the right time to do that?

Mr. Smith: What I said, was absolutely clear about and will repeat today is that I think it wrong in our economic position to borrow for tax cuts for anyone. I think that, when the country can afford such a reform of the tax system, it ought to be introduced.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): If the right hon. and learned Gentleman thinks that it is wrong to borrow for tax cuts, why was it right for the Government of which he was a member to do so in 1978? The public sector borrowing requirement was high then, too.

Mr. Smith: We did not borrow on the eve of an election in 1979, as the right hon. Gentleman knows very well. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is great pressure from Back-Benchers to be called today, and this kind of thing takes a great deal of time.

Mr. Smith: I should like to know whether the Chancellor stands by what he said on 28 November last year. Then, he said:

> "He asked how we are going to pay for the borrowing. We shall pay for the borrowing by borrowing—that is the normal way in which one pays for it."—[*Official Report*, 28 November 1991; Vol. 199, c. 1062.]

If the right hon. Gentleman disagrees with that, or wishes to explain his statement, I shall be happy to give way to him. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer"] I fear that the Chancellor does not have a typed response to that question. There it stands, unamended: Conservative economic policy—borrowing should be paid for by more borrowing.

The other device that will be used by the A team—and by all the other apologists for this discredited and incompetent Government—is that, even if things are bad, it is not the Government's fault; it is the fault of the nasty foreigners from whom we contracted the infection of recession. That comes in two forms. First, we got the recession from abroad, and nothing much could have been done about it; secondly, other people's recessions are worse than ours, and for that we should be grateful to our Government.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science was running the Saatchi-approved line in the Walden interview. He said:

> "it's not been a catastrophic recession of the kind that we had in the past or even the Americans are suffering now."

Let us look at the facts. In 1991, the United States economy declined by 0·5 per cent. In Britain, the figure was 2·5 per cent.

However, facts do not deter a member of the A team. The Secretary of State went on to make the following international comparison—again, I quote from his interview——

> "I mean, the Germans and Japanese looking at Britain under the Conservatives must say, boy they've got good, actually being able to get themselves into a steady competitive state, when they faced difficulties, certainly in the States, they'd like to have a government which was so competent in actually restoring good conditions for economic recovery."

I must say, I have not met a single Japanese—I doubt whether any other Member of Parliament has either—whom I have heard say, "Boy, they've got good," let alone express any wish to emulate Britain's economic condition.

The Chancellor himself, in a bid to retain his uncertain position in the A team, tried the same trick in his Budget broadcast last night. He displayed a graph which tried to show that, of all countries, Japan was suffering more in terms of industrial decline than Britain. I have to tell the Chancellor that my considered view is that that was an error of judgment, scarcely forgiveable in a member of the A team. In the past three years, Japan's investment has risen by 41 per cent., whereas Britain's is down by 4·2 per cent. Over the past three years, Japan's GDP has risen by 15·5 per cent., while Britain's grew by only 1·1 per cent. That is a background against which it is imagined that the Japanese whisper to each other, "Boy, in Britain they've got good."

Mr. Oppenheim *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I must make it clear that I was not issuing an invitation to him: I am just giving way.

Mr. Oppenheim: The right hon. and learned Gentleman, rightly, mentioned the need to boost investment. He will know that investment and saving rates are closely linked. How will his policy of clobbering savers with higher taxes boost investment?

Mr. Smith: Our proposals are designed to create fair treatment between those who receive unearned and those receiving earned income, and that is what they will achieve.

Against the background of such depressing economic failure, the Budget was a missed opportunity. There was nothing in the Budget for investment, nothing for jobs, training or skills development, nothing for the construction industry and nothing for sustained recovery from recession. Once again, the Chancellor rejected the plea for increased capital allowances for investment in manufacturing. Once again, he failed to restore the tragic cuts in the training budget. He failed once again to realise the seriousness of rising unemployment, and he took no action to permit the release of local authority capital receipts to help fund much-needed house building and modernisation programmes.

Why do the Government not comprehend the plain common sense of enabling unemployed building workers to earn a living by providing houses for families who lack them, thereby helping to regenerate confidence and growth in the construction industry, which, on present trends, sees no prospect of recovery in the whole of 1992? From the vantage point of prudent financial management, why do the Government not realise that it costs the Exchequer £8,000 a year in benefits and forgone taxation for every person who becomes unemployed?

[Mr. Smith]

We needed a Budget for investment and recovery and for industry and employment. Instead, we got a Budget the only purpose of which was to seek to rescue the Conservative party from its imminent election defeat.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Would the right hon. and learned Gentleman care to cast his mind back to early January, when he and the shadow spokesman on trade and industry came to Longbridge in my constituency to visit the Rover car factory as part of a "buy British" campaign? Does he recollect standing on the shop floor of Rover and being asked whether Labour would reduce the special car tax? He replied, "No, we would not reduce the special car tax." That was a clear indicaation that Labour would not back the British car industry. Has he changed his mind?

Mr. Smith: The question I was asked in Birmingham was whether I would abolish the special car tax—*[interruption.]*

Mr. Roger King *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has given way once.

Mr. King: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Nothing out of order has occurred.

Mr. King: The right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot get away with a reply like that. He had every opportunity to say that he would reduce the tax, but he said that there would be no reduction at all.

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for the replies.

Mr. Smith: I bear the hon. Gentleman no ill will, because his remaining period in this House is very short. In the few days that remain, I should not want to fall out too sharply with him. But he is simply wrong. We made it clear that we could not afford to abolish the car tax—and nor have the Government done so: they have reduced it. Let me make it clear that our car industry is in such a dire state as a result of the Conservative party's policies that it needs the relief that has been given on this occasion. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members can shout if they like, but we shall press on with the debate.

As is now being increasingly realised, the public will not be fooled by the Chancellor's Budget. The Government are borrowing money that they do not have to buy votes that they do not deserve. In the context of the doubling of the Government's financial deficit, voters ask, "How can it make sense to borrow money for tax cuts?" They do so particularly because they have repeatedly been told by the Conservative party under its former leader, as well as, from time to time, its present head, that borrowing now means higher taxes later.

If I may say so, the co-ordination and management of the Government's presentation of their Budget, particularly through the Tory tabloids, have not reached their usual skill. Those who opened the *Daily Mail* today and turned to the political column would read the ex-editor of *New Statesman and Society*, Mr. Paul Johnson, who wrote:

> "Now Major's on the road to victory"—

[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Let me repeat what he said:

> "Now Major's on the road to victory".

There follows a glowing account of all the virtues contained in this Budget. Indeed, there never was a Budget of such all-consuming virtue as the one to which Mr. Paul Johnson had his attention drawn yesterday by the spin doctor from the Conservative party.

Unfortunately, the spin doctor from the Conservative party failed to call on the City desk, where Mr. Andrew Alexander has as his headline, "Lamont misses his chance". There follows a gloomy account of Britain's parlous economic condition, stressing how serious our condition is and making statements such as this:

> "It also makes it hard to take seriously the Chancellor's pledge that the Government will successively reduce income tax in the years ahead."

The distinguished writer of the City column continues—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members do not like listening, but I shall tell them any way. He continues:

> "Thatcherites, viewing the prospects of six years of budget deficits stretching all the way to 1997 (and suspecting that they are understated anyway) may well feel that the Government is simply squandering its inheritance of fiscal prudence."

That is quite different from the account of the Budget that appears in the political column.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: No doubt the hon. Gentleman wants to clear this matter up for me, so I shall give way to him in the hope that he will do so.

Mr. Butterfill: Would the right hon. and learned Gentleman compare the PSBR of 4 per cent. that we are running with the 6 per cent. average of the previous Labour Government and the 9 per cent. peak that they reached?

Mr. Smith: During the years to which the hon. Gentleman refers, most deficits were higher in most countries because we were suffering the oil price shock throughout the western world. The proper comparison would be a comparative one, not a historical one, which the Conservative party would not want to make.

However, I cannot confess that I am dismayed at the lack of co-ordination. My only worry about drawing it to the attention of a wider audience is that it might go on the agenda of the A team and the spin doctor from the Conservative party will have to widen his round to the square mile and elsewhere.

On the question of the Conservative party borrowing, which is one of the interesting features of our present political debate, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition challenged the Prime Minister on just this point last month during Prime Minister's Question Time. He quoted from a Conservative party publication called "Towards 2000", which was issued last year and which says that it was written by the Prime Minister himself. That might be stretching credulity, but that is what it says on the document—that it was written by the Prime Minister himself, the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major). The document states that

> "if borrowing takes the strain, taxes—not just our taxes but the next generation's too—have to go up."

That was the Conservative view just a few months ago.

The Prime Minister, clearly irritated by my right hon. Friend's question and even more irritated by the fact that very recent Conservative party propaganda stated the position so clearly, challenged the Leader of the Opposition to do some more research. On 25 February —last month—he told the House:

"If he"—

my right hon. Friend—

> "had done a little more research and had seen the evidence that I gave to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee in 1987, he would have seen then—when we had a fiscal surplus of many billions—that I indicated that it would be right, in a downturn, to borrow money in a recession."—[*Official Report*, 25 February 1992; Vol. 204, c. 808.]

Apparently, that is a complete defence to the charge against them.

Of course, taking the Prime Minister at his word, a number of interested parties—including BBC's "On the Record" programme and my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), who is a member of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee—decided to do some research. They looked for the evidence of the former Chief Secretary, the right hon. Member for Huntingdon. They searched right through the Select Committee's evidence for 1987, but they searched in vain, because the right hon. Member for Huntingdon did not give evidence to the Select Committee in 1987 at all. Not a word did he utter to the Select Committee.

Undaunted, our intrepid researchers kept working, and discovered some evidence given in 1988 by the then Chief Secretary after that year's autumn statement. Perhaps that had got confused in the right hon. Gentleman's mind. On these matters, given the stresses and strains of the House of Commons, one should take an indulgent attitude but, unfortunately for the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]* I think that I am entitled to be reasonably patronising about this kind of thing. Unfortunately for the Prime Minister, his 1988 evidence is not so helpful after all. He was wrong about the year——

Mr. Butterfill: What would you do?

Mr. Smith: Well, I would not say that I had given evidence to a Select Committee if I had not.

The right hon. Gentleman was wrong about the year, but he was also wrong about the contents of the evidence that he revealed to the Select Committee on 23 November 1988. He did not say anything at all about running deficits in recessions. What he said was far more revealing. As reported on page 18 of the Select Committee's report on the 1988 autumn statement, he said:

> "Over a run of years it remains our policy to reduce public expenditure proportionately to national income and we plan to achieve that. If we found that our projections were that growth in the economy would level off quite significantly, clearly we would have to look at the impact on public expenditure and whether we had to take a very clear, fresh and draconian look at the levels of public expenditure that were appropriate."

Note the words

> "clear, fresh and draconian".

We know—it cannot be a matter of doubt—that unfortunately growth has not only levelled off but disappeared. According to the Prime Minister's own rules, he should be taking a

> "clear, fresh and draconian look"

at public spending, but of course he is not, because he has just called an election.

If he were to win the election, we could expect "clear, fresh and draconian" action. That would come in one of two ways: either through increases in taxation in the favourite Conservative manner—by raising the level of VAT or extending its range of application, or both—or by cutting public expenditure sharply. The Conservative party is engaged——

Mr. Norman Lamont *rose*——

Mr. Smith: Will the right hon. Gentleman allow me to finish the sentence? It is not bad my giving way twice to him when he did not have the courtesy even to turn up for the debate, but I shall do so.

The Conservative party is engaged on a three-card trick. It is promising to maintain levels of public expenditure, to cut the basic rate of income tax to 20 per cent. and to balance the budget. In our economic situation, they cannot do all three things at once.

Mr. Lamont: I am afraid that what the right hon. and learned Gentleman says about borrowing is totally unconvincing. He should remember the lectures that the Leader of the Opposition used to give my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) when she was Prime Minister, urging her to borrow ever more money. A few years ago, the Leader of the Opposition said:

> "The vitality of the US economy has been initiated by Government . . . borrowing. To renovate our economy we have to generate expansion in much the same way."

The question that the right hon. and learned Gentleman must answer is——

Hon. Members: Speech.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has given way.

Mr. Lamont: The right hon. and learned Gentleman must answer this question: is the present level of borrowing too high, or is it about right? If it is too high, will he tell us which taxes he will put up, or which spending programmes he will drop from his manifesto?

Mr. Smith: The right hon. Gentleman took some time to put his question—some people will think that he wants to have another run at presenting his unsuccessful Budget to the House. It is a bit rich to be asked questions about borrowing by the right hon. Gentleman, but I shall answer his question directly, and I shall be obliged if he will do me the courtesy of answering me, and explaining the quotation from him that I cited.

I shall fulfil the first part of that bargain by saying that I shall accept the public sector borrowing requirement which exists after we win the election. I shall have no choice, because it will be there, and we shall operate on that basis. Having given that answer, I shall give way to the Chancellor if he will explain to us what he meant by saying:

> "We shall pay for borrowing by borrowing—that is the normal way in which one pays for it."

I shall give way to the right hon. Gentleman now if he wants to explain that.

Mr. Lamont: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has not answered the question that I put to him—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] The right hon. and learned Gentleman says that he accepts the borrowing requirement, yet he also makes promises that would cost some £37 billion. Which promises is he prepared to drop?

Mr. Smith: The right hon. Gentleman did not behave terribly honourably there. I gave way to him on the basis that he would answer a specific question. However, he will now have to live with the fact that the quotation will go into the record uncontradicted. He said:

[Mr. Smith]

> "We shall pay for borrowing by borrowing—that is the normal way in which one pays for it."—[*Official Report*, 28 November 1991; Vol. 199, c. 1062.]

That is not the normal way at all; it is the Conservative way.

The Government cannot do all three things at once. Most people will therefore conclude that in this context reductions in income tax are a cynical pre-election device, which, as the history of the Conservative party shows, could be equally cynically overturned if the Government were to achieve their purpose at the polls.

The Conservative party's professed concern for lower-paid people is equally cynical. The proposed income tax cut is designed to reduce everyone's tax bill by just under £2 a week—I do not think that the Government could deny that. The reduction is not £2·64 per week—the figure which appeared in newspapers and, I believe, in Government statements—because 72p of that sum results from the annual indexation of allowances in line with inflation, and should not be regarded as a genuine reduction. Of course, the gain is less for the 250,000 people in taxpaying families on family credit. They will lose 70p in benefit for every pound that they gain in tax cuts.

It was revealing that, in his Budget broadcast last night, the Chancellor, on his own initiative, took as the example of a lower-paid person a taxpayer earning £70 per week. He asked whether we could charge so much tax to a person earning £70 a week.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. I have given way frequently in the debate—more than most people would have done. I have given way, although it has been to little purpose.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): You have not given any answers.

Hon. Members: You are a Whip. Be quiet.

Mr. Smith: Yes. It is a sad state of affairs that the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) is a Whip. I did not know that the Conservative party had descended to a condition in which the hon. Gentleman had been made a Whip. I see that it has now happened. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will become the Government Chief Whip as well. He certainly looks as if he aspires to that office.

I return to the subject of the taxpayer on £70 a week, whom the Chancellor told us he had in mind when he made his tax change. The tax reduction offered to that taxpayer is just under 19p per week. That is the price of a box of matches, which may be why the Chancellor referred to the tax on matches.

If the Conservative party truly cared for the interests of the lower-paid, the Government would increase retirement pensions for all pensioners—by £5 for a single person and £8 for a married couple—instead of £2 and £3 only for pensioners on income support, and they would uprate child benefit to £9·95 for every child in the family. That would have been its level if the Conservatives had updated it in line with inflation, as is customarily done with tax allowances. That neglect may not be surprising in a Cabinet that does not have a single woman member.

The money that the Conservatives have borrowed for tax cuts should be used for investment in our public services and in the improvement of our economy. That is the preferred choice, and the better choice which will be made by families throughout the country who depend on our national health service for all their health care needs and who look to our education system to provide the opportunity for their children.

Over the past 13 years, Britain has been subjected to the rollercoaster economics of boom and bust—of stop, go and stop again. We have had to suffer two recessions. The one at the beginning of the decade was the deepest since the war, and the one that we now endure is the longest since the war. Separating those two recessions were the years of an inflationary boom. During the Conservatives' period of office, economic growth has averaged 1·7 per cent., which is the worst record for economic growth of any Government of any political colour since the end of the second world war.

Despite all the benefits of North sea oil, with those revenues alone worth more than £100 billion, and despite selling off the family silver, our public finances are now in debt and in disorder. Fortunately for our country, time has run out for a party living on borrowed money and on borrowed time. The time for choice is now; it is time for Labour. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that we shall now proceed in good order. Will hon. Members please leave quietly if they are not remaining in the Chamber?

4.18 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. David Mellor): I am glad that Labour Members enjoyed the speech by the next Leader of the Opposition. To those of us who attend these events more regularly than some of those who were cheering, it was yet another of the "green" speeches of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith)—endlessly recycled. He chanced his arm in a number of respects—for instance, the mention of Japan, and the "Boy, they've got good" remark. I wonder whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman has studied the figures that I gave in a parliamentary answer to his hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle). They actually tell us something about the Japanese attitude to Britain.

In 1978, the last full year of a Labour Government, when the right hon. and learned Gentleman held quite high office, Japanease investment in this country was minus £10 million. In other words, there was disinvestment. The Opposition were not saying, "Boy, they've got good." In 1989, there was Japanese investment in this country of £1·12 billion. Whether or not the Opposition were saying, "Boy, they've got good," that is what the investment is actually telling us they felt. They are doing that in the teeth of nonsensical opposition to overseas investment by the Labour party, including the Trades Union Congress speech from the rostrum denouncing it as alien—something never repudiated by the Opposition Front Bench.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman trailed his coat by making reference to the Frost programme last Sunday. I am astonished that the Opposition wish to be reminded of the performance of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), unless the byzantine complexity of the politics of the Labour party at the moment mean that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was quite happy that his colleague should remember what a fool the hon. Gentleman made of himself.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, last weekend, Japan's second biggest investor in the United Kingdom, the president of the Toyota motor company, was here and that he made it crystal clear that he regards Britain as one of the most successful countries in the entire European Community?

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Cheap labour.

Mr. Howell: He intends to build on his investment here, and he has undiminished faith in the economic success and dynamism of this country. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), by bad-mouthing Britain in the eyes of the Japanese and undermining our reputation and success, is doing no good whatsoever to this nation?

Mr. Mellor: It is interesting that, even this early in the debate, we have revealed the two faces of the Labour party —on the one hand the attempts at moderation and understanding of a market economy by Front-Bench Members, and on the other hand the real voice of the guts of the Labour party. The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) shouted out "Cheap labour" when my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) referred to Japanese investment. Even more extraordinary is that he from south Wales should shout "Cheap labour" when the economy of south Wales has been transformed by inward investment from countries such as Japan. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman wishes to withdraw "Cheap labour", I shall give way to him. After all, in four weeks he could be a Defence Minister, so we should hear a bit more. He is laughing. He does not think that that is very likely.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough) *rose*——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian) *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: I shall push on for a bit now. *[Interruption.]* I shall give way to the devolutionist tendency a bit later.

This is a Budget for recovery, and I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on it. But, as it happens, I do not need to add a single word of commendation of my own; I can let the business men and industrialists of Britain do that for me. Contrary to the picture that has been portrayed by the Opposition, what has been said by business and industry is a tremendous vote of confidence in this Budget, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and the Government. The Confederation of British Industry said:

> "This is a prudent and positive Budget—reflecting the prime importance of keeping inflation under control. Business welcomes, particularly, bringing forward the benefits of the Uniform Business Rate reforms, and the measures to help small firms and the car industry."

The Institute of Directors said that the Budget was

> "prudent, sound and correct and producing a realistic base for business recovery."

[Interruption.] Opposition Members do not like it, but they will have to deal with the business community in Britain. They do not understand for a moment— *[Interruption.]* During the election they will have to deal with what the business community of Britain thinks of them. It is better that they prepare now by knowing what the business community has said about the Budget.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mellor: I shall come to the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) in a moment, if he will contain himself. I wish to remind him of a comment of his.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the Minister give way?

Sir Patrick Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must get on.

Mr. Mellor: The president of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, Mr. Miles Middleton, said:

> "The combined effect of these measures will provide considerable assistance for businesses fighting their way out of the recession. UK business believe that the Chancellor is wholly justified in his continuing priority of defeating inflation. The Chancellor has the full support of British firms, who had not asked for nor expected cuts in corporation tax."

He went on to commend the uniform business rate.

Mr. Home Robertson: He would, wouldn't he?

Mr. Mellor: I hear the hon. Gentleman say, "He would, wouldn't he?" One scratches the surface of the Labour party and that is its attitude to business men in Britain.

Sir Patrick Duffy: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mellor: No. I am not giving way for the moment. The hon. Gentleman is an experienced parliamentarian. I shall give way to him when I have finished telling him what the business community says about the Budget.

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said:

> "The Motor Industry is pleased with this year's budget. We are delighted Car Tax has been reduced to 5 per cent. . . . We believe that about 70,000 extra sales should result, with all the implications this has for employment."

The Federation of Small Businesses has sent a letter to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor this morning from its chairman of financial affairs. It says:

> "Dear Mr. Lamont,
>
> I am writing to congratulate you on your budget statement, which contained many proposals which will be of benefit to many small businesses . . . It has been most refreshing to see that you have listened to the recommendations put to you and have been able to act upon a number of them."

The Road Haulage Association said:

> "It was a very clever Budget."

The secretary of the National Farmers Union's taxation committee said:

> "This is a substantial help for the farming industry and something we will welcome."

[Interruption.] The childish attitude of Opposition Members shows that they are not remotely interested in dealing with the central issue. If they wish to take issue with the suggestion that the Budget is a Budget for recovery, they ought to weigh in the balance what all the business men and industrialists of Britain are saying about it. Their unwillingness to do so reflects no credit on them. Perhaps they might listen to this——

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Will the Minister give way?

Sir Patrick Duffy *rose*——

Mr. Home Robertson *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us settle down. Several of the hon. Members who are rising to put questions seek to participate in the debate. It will make it difficult if they take time now.

Mr. Mellor: Peugeot Talbot, which manufactures at Ryton in Coventry, said:

> "Reports coming in from dealers are of increased retail sales and fleet enquiries. I would estimate that we have taken over £3 million worth of additional sales in the first morning of post-Budget trading."

Sir Patrick Duffy: The Minister challenged my hon. Friends to listen to what the business community was saying. May I remind him of the views published only last week of the regional secretary of the Yorkshire and Humberside Association of Chambers of Commerce? He called on the Government to rescue the sinking economy in Yorkshire and Humberside and went on to say that sitting there and doing nothing was no longer an option.

Mr. Mellor: The essence of what is being said is that, far from doing nothing, the Government have produced a Budget which has been welcomed by the Association of British Chambers of Commerce in the quotations that I employed. The Association of British Chambers of Commerce has welcomed the Budget in unequivocal terms.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): Before my right hon. and learned Friend leaves the subject of what the business community has said, will he accept that the cider industry is delighted at the Government's robust attitude? The many people whose jobs depend on that industry will look with great gratitude upon the Government's robust approach.

Mr. Mellor: I had many more quotes, including one from the cider industry. It is simply that, after a while, the barracking from the Opposition gets to the point where it may be sensible to move on. There is a proliferation of quotes from many of the affected industries, making clear how much they welcome the measures introduced by my right hon. Friend.

Also, it was a Budget for people—21 million taxpayers gain £140 a year, there will be a 20 per cent. cut in the marginal rate of tax for 4 million taxpayers, including 570,000 single people and 1·3 million pensioners, and 5 million poorer pensioners will see increases of £2 or £3 per week from October.

Again, the House should not just hear that from me. Let us hear what Help the Aged had to say:

> "All too often we find ourselves grumbling after Budgets but this time we have something to cheer about . . . It is a positive Budget that will make a positive difference to older people."

We also heard a contribution——

Mr. Battle: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mellor: If the hon. Gentleman, who is a Whip—although Whips are not subject to vows of silence——

Mr. Battle: I am not a Whip.

Mr. Mellor: Was the hon. Gentleman dismissed? I shall give way.

Mr. Battle: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. What will he say to my constituent who is on £120 a week and has worked out that, with what he will lose in family credit, he will gain 19p a week as a result of the tax changes? When the tax changes are put together with the loss in family credit, is it not a fact that many people will not gain the sort of money that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is trying to con them that they will?

Mr. Mellor: That sounds like a desperate plea in mitigation for the Opposition's foolish decision to oppose that change. I shall give the hon. Gentleman the figures.

Mr. Battle: Is it true?

Mr. Mellor: I am about to deal with that—it is not true. Of the £1·8 billion in tax reductions due to that 20p move, only £18 million is taken back under the family credit arrangements, which is less than 1 per cent.

I am sorry that I accused the hon. Member for Leeds, West of still being a Whip. I appreciate that he was one of those who was honourable enough to resign from the Front Bench because he disagreed with policy.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mellor: No. I shall push on—*[Interruption.]* I do not think that the Labour party wants to listen to this speech, Madam Deputy Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order.

Mr. Mellor: The Leader of the Opposition delivered the wrong speech about the wrong Budget yesterday. Notwithstanding the fact that the shadow Chancellor, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, had supplied him with the wrong speech for the wrong Budget —whether deliberately we do not know—astonishingly the Leader of the Opposition decided to plough on anyway. I wondered what was going on. Was this the first human brain to be affected by the Michelangelo virus? In case that may be thought to be unfair, let us consider what Mr. Matthew Parris of *The Times* had to say about the performance of the Leader of the Opposition. He said:

> "Mr. Kinnock decided to read the speech anyway. Who can blame him! We have all experienced moments of intellectual panic and at such times there is comfort in having in one's hands a speech, even if it isn't the right speech.
>
> But it wasn't the right speech, and, on the faces of his party around and behind him, it showed. John Smith, tight-lipped and (in Richard Page's phrase) 'knee-deep in shot foxes', looked as though his mouth was full of live spiders."

It was not that much different last year. In a sense it is a shame that the Leader of the Opposition was not away from the House yesterday, as he was from Twickenham on Saturday when, perhaps, he was the only Welsh penalty that was not missed.

During his speech, the right hon. Gentleman said that it was all

> "a panic-stricken pre-election political sweetener."

The only thing that was panic-stricken was the look on the right hon. Gentleman's face when he realised what the Chancellor of the Exchequer was saying, matched only by the even more panic-stricken look on the face of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, the shadow Chancellor, when the Leader of the Opposition chose to give way half way through his speech. The right hon. and learned Gentleman knew that a question would be asked that his right hon. Friend would be unable to answer.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South) *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman seems very frisky. Let us see if he has got something worth saying that matches the smug look on his face.

Mr. Boateng: The chairman of the Conservative party has said that debt is deferred taxation. Which taxes have been deferred and by how much will they be increased?

Mr. Mellor: I do not think that that has anything to do with the point. *[Interruption.]* At least it is one thing in life if one can satisfy oneself and the hon. Gentleman is satisfied that he made a very clever intervention, but it was not.

I want to know why the Leader of the Opposition was unable to tell us straightaway the attitude of the Labour party to the 20p tax reduction. Instead, the right hon. Gentleman came out with a feeble excuse. When the history of feeble excuses comes to be written, it must appear as one of the feeblest and also one of the longest ever uttered. He said:

> "We have been treated for months with teases about the Budget. We have been treated to the sight of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and other members of the Treasury team saying that they could not disclose anything. I think that, in the name of reasonability"—

that word is a good argument for more expenditure on adult education—

> "they could at least give us another six days to produce our own statement in opposition to, an alternative to, what we have heard this afternoon." [*Official Report*, 10 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 763-65.]

That is what the Budget debate is for and that is why the right hon. Gentleman was supposed to make his speech. After all, one could say that they have had 13 years to get their attitude straight on such matters. Why the delay of six days? The answer is that the launch of the shadow Budget was designed to happen the morning after the Budget debate was due to finish, in order, of course, to avoid proper scrutiny.

Why have neither the Leader of the Opposition nor the shadow Chancellor been able to produce for us now, at this historic moment when the election has been announced, what they intend to do? Why can we not know now? I have got the back of an envelope here and the shadow Chancellor could do that for us now. After all, most of the calculations that the Labour party has made and has had to move away from, had to apologise for and give contrary explanations for in the past eight weeks, all seem to have been worked out on the back of an envelope. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is being extremely noisy, particularly about my electoral prospects in Putney. He might ask the Labour party why it has not targeted it as a seat that it expects to win, because it knows a bit more about Putney than he does. I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman and then, I hope, he will shut up for the rest of my speech. What has he got to say for himself? [HON. MEMBERS: "Up, up."] The hon. Gentleman has one of the most remarkable bodies that I have ever seen. His mouth works when his bum is on a seat but not when he is standing on his feet.

Sir Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): Will my right hon. and learned Friend explain why, after 13 years of Conservative rule, my constituency and most constituencies are spending 30 or 40 per cent. per pupil more in real terms than in 1979? Why is Calderdale the best area health authority, universally accepted by people of all sides, not just in Great Britain but in Europe? Why do we have massive land grants from the Government in a non-selected area? How have the motorways, railways and roads been improved after 13 years' Conservative rule?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend points to the Government's remarkable achievement of making substantial increases in public expenditure, while bringing down the taxation rate for so many people. That is what happens when an economy works successfully, as the British economy worked for most of the 1980s, when we had eight years of continuous growth.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mellor: No, I wish to push on.

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: The Labour party does itself no credit by trying repeatedly to disrupt my speech.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister has made it clear that he will not give way. The hon. Gentleman should not persist.

Mr. Mellor: The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East told us last night that he intends to oppose the reduction of the basic rate to 20p for the first £2,000 of earnings. That was said at about the same time as the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) was telling me on Sky that he intended to vote for it, and the same time as the hon. Member for Norwich, South, who has unfortunately now left us, had obviously been telling a Lobby correspondent—it was reported in this morning's press—that it was a good idea because it would help the poor.

The truth is now out about the right hon. and learned Gentleman's plans—Labour would soak not only the rich but also the poor.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I am appalled and amazed at what my right hon. and learned Friend has just said. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), in a radio interview on Radio Humberside just before I was interviewed, told the people of south Humberside that of course the Labour party would support the Government's proposals for a 20p tax plan and of course the Labour party would not reverse it. I cannot understand how the shadow Chancellor could oppose what the hon. Member for Great Grimsby said.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Mellor: We shall come to the explanation for that. We have an absurd spectacle of the Labour party proposing a minimum wage as an imperative to help low earners, while proposing to fund the cost of that minimum wage by increasing the marginal rate of tax on those same low earners back to 25 per cent.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that 4,600 people are employed in the hospital service in Lancaster, the vast majority of whom will gain immensely from the 20p rate of tax? They will be incensed beyond measure if the Labour party undoes that reduction in their taxation.

Mr. Mellor: Obviously. I cannot think of a more ludicrous position for Labour Members to get themselves into. Over the years, they have got themselves into more ludicrous positions than those in a Jane Fonda workout, but to propose a minimum wage and express compassion for the low paid and then propose to claw back 25 per cent. in taxation must be the most ludicrous of all.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mellor: The marvels of medical science.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Who will gain most out of the 20 per cent. concession—a Member of Parliament or someone earning £70 a week? Will the Minister give an honest answer?

Mr. Mellor: The answer is that everyone—21 million people—will gain.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Answer the question.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Member for Workington is abusive beyond reason. The answer is that everyone who is within the tax bracket gains. The impact of the 20p band means that those who gain more are those within that bracket and anyone who is outside the tax system gains because of the increase in social security benefit, income support, family credit and so on. That has been announced.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): The hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) was reported in the *Eastern Daily Press* this morning as welcoming the 20p tax band that we have introduced. What does my right hon. and learned Friend say to the hon. Gentleman and the Opposition Front Bench?

Mr. Mellor: The Labour party is in a muddle and a mess, and I think that I know why. Is this a pamphlet that I see before me? Was it not published in February 1992, which is quite recent, even for the Labour party? Is it not a Labour party publication entitled "Pocket Policy Guide"?—*[Interruption.]* As the hon. Member for Workington will rely on it to mislead the citizens of Workington, he should at least open his ears and close his mouth.

Do I not see a section marked "Fair Taxes", and does it not say:

> "Labour's plans—a move towards a starting income tax rate of 20 per cent."?

We have already moved there, so perhaps the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East will tell us what the problem is—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] What is the problem? It is interesting to see that the Opposition Front-Bench Members, who are supposed to represent the party, sit mute while the Opposition Back Benchers shout their heads off from a sedentary position.

Mr. John Smith: The Minister will have heard my speech earlier. He may not have comprehended it, but he must have heard it. I made it clear that we oppose any tax cuts that are financed by borrowing. Will the Minister explain what the Chancellor had in mind last night when he drew our attention to people on £70 a week who will receive 19p out of that great concession?

Mr. Mellor: I shall not deal with that evasion, as I have already said.

Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman's excuse the fact that he does not think that we should reduce tax through borrowing? May I remind him of what happened when he was a Minister in 1977? After the International Monetary Fund had intervened, the public sector borrowing requirement was down to 4 per cent.——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Here we go again.

Mr. Mellor: Indeed, here we go again. Notwithstanding an improvement in the economy, the Government of which the right hon. and learned Gentleman was a member drove up borrowing to 5·5 per cent. to finance tax cuts of tuppence off income tax and reductions in VAT. The right hon. and learned Gentleman was in no danger of resigning, so what is the difference? There was no difference whatsoever.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mellor: No, not yet.

The Labour party was enthusiastic about a 20p tax band. Not long ago, the Leader of the Opposition said on television:

> "I'd like to introduce a lower rate band so that people don't leap immediately into what's called standard rate."

I think that the 20p band is a bit like the exchange rate mechanism—it is advocated by the Labour party only when it thinks that we are not going to implement it.

Many Labour candidates now have lots of words to eat. They have no need to go to Luigis, but can have a satisfying meal eating their own words about the 20p band.

Mr. Beith: Why did the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) speak so clearly against the reduced rate band when he led Conservative Members to oppose it? Why did the present Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), say that the reduced rate band was not the way to help the low paid and was

> "a measure . . . forced upon a reluctant Labour Treasury team by the TUC as part of the pay-off for an incomes policy . . . a price that was too high when it was introduced, and . . . too high now?"—[*Official Report*, 2 June 1980; Vol. 985, c. 1161-62.]

Mr. Mellor: The reason is that this band is intended ultimately to remove the 25p band. That is a good reason, and another is that we had to endure criticism from the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, (Mr. Beith) and others that we were not serious about the 20p income tax. Our proposal is the best way to demonstrate just how serious we are so that people are offered a real choice between this Government who cut taxation and, among other options, the Liberal Democrats who say that they will put up the basic rate. At least they are honest in saying that they will increase that rate; the Labour party seems to think that it can increase spending and it will not have any impact on taxation.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Mellor: No, I must push on—I think that my hon. Friend has intervened a couple of times.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about bribes. He should learn one lesson: taxation is a takeaway, not a giveaway. He seems to assume that the state has some moral right over everything that anyone earns, and that it is an act of magnanimity by the state to allow people to keep some of their earnings as pocket money. That is not how it is.

The right hon. Gentleman came out with a remarkably ill-judged comment that I do not think that he will be allowed to forget, when he likened the reduction to

"borrowing to go away for a day at the races."—[*Official Report*, 10 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 766.]

What about the improved standard of living that the money will buy for many hundreds of thousands of people? The right hon. Gentleman believes that he knows how to spend people's money better than they do, which is patronising and inappropriate, and calls into question all aspects of Labour and tax.

If the Labour party is prepared to claw back from the least-well-off taxpayer, what else might it do to feed its spending ambitions and what price the sanctity of the 25p basic rate, which Labour opposed through thick and thin as it came down to 25p? Why should we expect the Labour party to honour its commitment when it is prepared to increase taxation for those just within the tax bracket?

The reason that the right hon. Gentleman thinks that the clawback is acceptable is that he said that it would be spent on public services. He thinks that £1·8 billion is available. One can see how far that would go, given the ambitions of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), the greatest serial spender at liberty, or the hon. Member for Livingston or the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). That money will be spent more times than even Bob Maxwell would have managed.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned the health service, and here we come to an interesting fact about the Labour party and the health service. By the time we take account of the money that it will have to spend to honour the minimum wage, which the hon. Member for Livingston recognises to be between £400 million and £500 million, the £365 million cost of abolishing the charges, getting rid of competitive tendering and introducing no-fault compensation, we reach a total of more than £1 billion of public money that is to be spent on the health service without one penny of it going on patient care.

Therefore, the assumption that the Government would spend money more wisely than the individuals who have it in their pockets is unsustainable. I expect that a Labour Government would spend the money as wisely as the Labour-controlled councils of Lambeth, Haringey, Hackney and Liverpool. If people want to know the difference between the parties, it is that the Conservatives believe that the public have a right to retain as much as possible of their income and spend it. We do not believe in state direction that penalises everyone, rich and poor alike.

The nonsense is that the Opposition's critique of the Budget proceeds on the assumption that money is not being spent on crucial public services, and that tax reductions are being preferred. Nothing is further from the truth. Capital spending on hospitals next year is up 76 per cent. since 1978-79 in real terms. More than £2 billion will be spent in the next 12 months. The Government have completed 600 major building schemes costing more than £1 million, and there are currently 435 major building schemes in progress, each worth more than £1 million. That is the record of a Government who need no lessons in how to provide for public expenditure on sensitive services from a Labour Government of which the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was then a complacent member, with none of the sparky, critical tongue of which we hear so much, enjoy so much and look forward to enjoying from the Opposition Benches in whatever office he is called on to serve. The Government of which the right hon. and learned Gentleman was a Member cut capital funding by 30 per cent.—22 per cent. in real terms—in 1977-78 alone, despite driving up the public sector borrowing requirement during that period.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mellor: No, I shall carry on for a bit.

The Labour party condemns a PSBR of £28 billion, but only £1·8 billion of that is tax cuts. The rest reflects our determination to sustain our public expenditure commitments across the cycle and the fall in revenue. The Labour party criticises us for borrowing, and fails to recognise that that reflects the consequences of public expenditure plans that Labour spokesmen have persistently denounced as inadequate. They think that they do not have to square that circle——

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mellor: No.

Labour Members think that they do not have to square that circle. The deficit is nothing like——

Mr. Douglas *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman can catch Mr. Deputy Speaker's eye later.

The deficit is nothing like that of the Labour Government. We have already given the figures. They were running a persistent deficit, which was not due to cyclical factors, but increased as the economy came out of the 1975-76 recession.

Mr. Douglas *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order.

Mr. Mellor: The reality on borrowing is that the Labour party offers no path back to a balanced budget. In *The Mail on Sunday*, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East did not even claim to try——

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has been lecturing everyone on public sector borrowing requirements. In the heat of the debate I may be in danger of misquoting him, for which I apologise, but I think that he said that it was right to have a £28 billion——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I simply want to know what the hon. Gentleman's point of order for me is, as I must deal with it.

Mr. Douglas: It is a matter of putting the record straight. I think that I am correct in saying that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has been lecturing the House——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am trying to be helpful. This is an excitable day, and if the hon. Gentleman seeks to catch my eye later, I shall certainly look his way. If he has a point of order with which I can deal, I must do so, but I cannot involve myself in an argument.

Mr. Douglas: I am asking you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to assist the House in setting the record straight. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury made a statement about the public sector borrowing requirement, and said that it was because the Government had to finance certain expenditure, but the reason for the £28 billion rise in PSBR is—as everyone knows—that the right hon. and learned Gentleman miscalculated the depth of the recession——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That was the most bogus point of order that I have taken in the past 48 hours.

Mr. Mellor: The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East knows that the Labour party offers no path back to a balanced Budget. In an extraordinary article in *The Mail on Sunday*, as well as criticising the Government's level of borrowing, he sought by means of intellectual evasion to claim that additional borrowing would be all right as it was to be used on policies that the Labour party believed to be in the public interest. He cannot even agree with his hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), who said on "Newsnight" last night that Labour accepted the level of the PSBR and would not increase it. I wonder whether she realises the implications of what she has said: it means that there is no room for any of Labour's spending plans unless Labour puts up taxes.

We know why the right hon. and learned Gentleman is producing his shadow Budget. He did not want to produce one at all. He is doing it because of protests from Labour Back Benchers about the implications of the limited tax increases that Labour is prepared to consider. We know all about the pressure on the right hon. and learned Gentleman to tone down his tax increases, thereby making it even more difficult for the Labour party to be responsible with the PSBR.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney) *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: As it happens, the right hon. Gentleman is a constituent of mine, being wise enough to live in my constituency while representing another, so I give way to him.

Mr. Shore: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has been justifying the size of the PSBR at 4·5 per cent. this year and, according to the Red Book, probably more than 5 per cent. next year. I do not quarrel with that, but does he agree with me that we should say "Thank God" that we are not members of economic and monetary union stage three? If we were to sign the Maastricht treaty as it stands, when it came into force we would all be compelled to limit our public sector borrowing requirements to 3 per cent. In the light of the telling experience of a full-scale recession, does the Chief Secretary draw from that the obvious lesson: that we should on no account subject ourselves to such foreign intervention?

Mr. Mellor: The right hon. Gentleman might more pertinently ask Labour Front-Bench spokesmen that question. EMU restrictions do not preclude moving above 3 per cent. in certain instances. The restriction applies across a period of years. How would the Labour party deal with this, given its determination to drive up spending, with the inevitable consequence of having to drive up borrowing above what we have disclosed, or of having to put up taxes to which it is not prepared to admit? As was recognised in the leader in *The Independent* and in many other parts of Fleet street yesterday, we offer the opportunity to go back to a balanced Budget across the cycle and to be well within the 3 per cent. limit.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I am pleased that the Chief Secretary has touched on this matter, because looking at page 17 of the Red Book the question that occurs to me is: what does the right hon. and learned Gentleman mean by "across the cycle"? Five years' worth of PSBR is laid out in the Red Book; every single one of them shows a substantial deficit.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman should have asked me two years ago to help him with the questions that he had left on the photocopier about how Labour would handle these matters. None of them has yet been answered. To answer the question, the problem will be resolved when the economy returns to trend growth. The hon. Gentleman knows that we moved into balance in 1987. Everything turns on how quickly the economy grows; but there is nothing for the Labour party in this, because it would not be able to stimulate growth over and above what we have achieved. It will not be able to manage the PSBR given its expenditure plans, either.

We have produced a Budget that allows us to restate our commitment in three crucial areas. We believe in low personal taxation—brought down by 3p in our first term, by another 3p in our second term and by 2p by the introduction of the 20p band in our third term. That is a steady record of achievement, of returning spending power to the people. Real take-home pay for the typical family has increased by £78 a week since 1978-79. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I are proud of that. The money has been used to good effect. Millions of people have bought their homes and improved them. Millions more now own shares or have bought equipment that would have been beyond the dreams of families years ago. They have travelled abroad more; foreign holidays have doubled in number since 1981.

This is a Budget for people which allows us to reaffirm our determination that the living standards of the British people should rise. It is also a Budget for proper public provision. That provision has been a hallmark of this Government, which shows that, with growth in a successfully managed economy, it is perfectly possible substantially to increase public expenditure in priority areas while reducing taxation.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): If the right hon. and learned Gentleman is so concerned about public provision and helping families, why was there nothing in the Budget to help women back to work by helping with child care? Single families and people living in poverty will receive nothing. Child benefit, which would have helped people in need, was not increased either.

Mr. Mellor: Most of those assisted by this measure are working women, because they predominantly constitute the category of people most helped by the 20p band. What the hon. Lady has said in her well-intentioned way is exactly the sort of stuff that we will be hearing from the Labour party. The shadow Chief Secretary does not propose any increase in the PSBR; on the other hand, when the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) gets on the hustings, she will offer all sorts of inducements to working women, outlining what Labour will do even though what she says is not part of Labour's spending programme.

Will Labour put up taxes or will it put up borrowing? Or will it repudiate the priorities that the hon. Member for Eccles and so many other Opposition Members are peddling?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mellor: No. The hon. Gentleman seems even more than usually disturbed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am trying to be helpful——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I cannot help that, but it would be helpful to the Chair if the hon. Gentleman would resume his seat, as the Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Mellor: I can outline some matters to the hon. Gentleman later in private; he might like to follow them up.

The conditions for the recovery of the British economy exist: low inflation, competitive interest rates, improving productivity, the best industrial relations since records began a century ago, a good export record and money in the pockets of consumers.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman is just trying to be disruptive. Although he takes advantage of the rights of Parliament, he does not like others to do so.

The response of the business community to the Budget showed that its members feel the wind in their sails. What is needed now is a return to confidence. And what is the single greatest obstacle to confidence? The prospect of the election of a Labour Government. Today, we embark on the great and necessary task of removing that obstacle.

Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition said:

> "They are hollow men—and the Tory Government ends not with a recovery bang but with a bribery whimper."—[*Official Report*, 10 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 768.]

I beg to remind Opposition Members of how the last Labour Government ended. The following are some headlines from the last six months of that Labour Government:

> "999 cover only by ambulances . . .
> 1,100 hospitals under siege . . .
> Ambulance strikers ignore emergencies"—

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat. The Minister has made it clear to me and to the House that he is not giving way.

Mr. Mellor: The Opposition do not want to know, Madam Deputy Speaker. Other headlines read:

> "Cancer ward sent home . . .
> Rees ready to use troops to move medical supplies
> Callaghan says: I see no chaos".

Many people in this country remember what the last Labour Government were like. Those who fail to learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them. Judging by their performance this afternoon, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East and his colleagues have learnt nothing except—and this only with partial success—the art of evasion.

Some say that everything has changed about the Labour party. Its members have certainly been willing to change inconvenient attitudes. The right hon. and learned Gentleman says, "These are my principles; if you don't like them, I have others." In that sense everything has changed, but nothing has really changed. The Labour party is as incompetent as ever, as unready to listen to reason as ever, and that is why it must be defeated.

5.9 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): This will be my last speech in the House of Commons. If it were not, I would have been tempted to take up the point made by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury when he chided the Welsh rugby team for being so bad at Twickenham. That I agree with, but I found his nasty anti-Welshism nauseating. When I speak in Cardiff next week in a marginal Tory seat, the constituents will not be highly amused at the sage of Putney who hates the Leader of the Opposition largely because he is Welsh and from the mining valleys. I am prepared to give way to the right hon. and learned Gentleman but he does not seem to wish to intervene. He would be anti-Welsh to the nth degree, and he always is when it comes to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Mellor: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman is capable of recognising the difference between being anti the Leader of the Opposition and being anti-Welsh. He has made a thoroughly unworthy point.

Mr. Rees: I would repeat it because I feel it, even if it were the last thing that I said in the House. I would join the right hon. and learned Gentleman in having a go at the Welsh rugby team, but not in having a go in the way that he does in the snobby phoney accent of outer London against a decent man whose only crime is that he has a Welsh valley accent.

In most of my parliamentary career, I have not spoken on economic affairs, even though it was my academic interest for a number of years. Therefore, I finish in a way that I should have started 30 years ago, when my first speech was on education and its implications for technology. Today I want to talk about the Budget. I shall be brief, but it will be sufficient to bring out the issue that dominated my formative years. I was born in a village with 80 per cent. unemployment. My father walked to London during the depression. Therefore, I cannot shake off an abiding hatred of unemployment in any form.

In the south Leeds part of my constituency and in the area represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), unemployment is still more than 20 per cent. I cannot glory in that. People say that we must grin and bear it, but many of those 20 per cent. have been unemployed for years. Nothing in the Budget will help them. In *The Independent* today, a research fellow from the London School of Economics makes it clear that the majority of non-taxpayers will not be helped by yesterday's Budget. That is the group I am talking about.

In his Budget speech yesterday, the Chancellor said:

> "Even with a resumption of growth, unemployment is likely to go on rising for some time. But while the increase will moderate over the months ahead, a sustained reduction in unemployment over the longer term will depend crucially on our success in keeping inflation down".—[*Official Report* 10 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 747.]

In the 1930s, inflation was low because of high employment. The moment one moves to full employment, one has inflation. Unemployment is one of the reasons —not the only reason—why the Government have been able to bring down inflation.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Francis Maude): If unemployment is so easy to solve, why have every Labour Government left office with unemployment higher than when they started?

Mr. Rees: If the Minister looks at the figures for 1951 and 1979 he will see that the relative increase is right, but the figures overall were falling. I shall come to that point in a moment.

In no way will unemployment in my constituency be reduced by the upturn. That is not how the upturn works. It works in that way in the city, the suburbs and in the affluent middle of Leeds where there is a boom at the moment, but it has no effect on the sort of people whom I and my hon. Friends from Leeds represent. That is one of the gaps in the Government's thinking.

Mr. Rogers: Earlier in the debate, despite having mentioned me, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury would not give way. I said that Japanese investment was coming to Britain because of our cheap labour. The Chief Secretary, in his usual reptilian way, is still not listening. As well as the levels of unemployment that exist in many of our communities that the Chief Secretary is not prepared to accept, he is also not prepared to accept the low wage levels of the economy surrounding those levels of high unemployment. One reason why the Japanese are investing in Britain is that our wage levels are so much lower than those of France, Germany, Holland and Belgium. Until the Government recognise that, our communities will continue to suffer.

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend knows that in south Wales, which I left many years ago, the work of the Japanese firms is to the credit of the area. They have brought in better management and they make a product. They are in manufacturing. I approve of that.

The unemployment that I am concerned about is the unemployment in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central. The reason for it is the decline of manufacturing industry. My constituency —I have always said that I do not like that phrase—the constituency that I represent was a manufacturing area with engineering and clothing industries. Those industries have gone. Manufacturing there has been decimated. It is no longer a proud manufacturing area. Sometimes I think that one of the things that is wrong with the Government is that they have never understood the value of manufacturing, because their Members come from areas where manufacturing is not the norm. It was the norm in my area.

I am the last person to want a return to the smokestack industries and the old collieries with the 1ft 6in and 2ft 6in seams—which, thank heavens, were shut down in the 1960s; no one wants to go back to those—but we need a Government who are concerned with a return to manufacturing, with training and education. As my hon. Friends know, we talk in the House about the great changes in education, but we see nothing of those in my constituency. The number of people who stay on at school after 16 is remarkably small. I often used to meet my young constituents in Northern Ireland. They were in the infantry battalions, in the KOYLIs and the Duke of Wellingtons and so on. There is much talk about picking out one or two to go to independent and direct grant schools. That might be a good idea in some respects, but it has no effect on my area in the sense in which I am talking. The Budget played little part in what I want to see in my area in training, educational changes and investment.

I have a memory of the day when people began to be concerned about full employment. They were not so concerned in the inter-war years, when the heavy unemployment was largely due to the decline in manufacturing and there were the hunger marches and so on. Seeing the films of that time, one would have thought that the majority of people in Britain cared. They did not. Otherwise, the election results would have been different, but, as a result of the war, people began to be concerned.

I was doing other things at the time, but some years later the speech of Ernest Bevin introducing command paper 6527 on employment was brought to my notice. Before I came here today, I had it looked up in the Library. He introduced it in June 1944, just after D-day. That saw a resumption of the years when we tried to do something about unemployment with employment exchanges; when we tried to get labour mobility with schemes for bringing people from the depressed areas. He said:

> "It is now and universally accepted the primary responsibility of Government to maintain a high and stable level of employment. We are turning our back on class doctrine."

I was gald to be able to find one section that was at the back of my mind. Mr. Bevin said:

> "The Government"——

the coalition Government, that is——

> "welcome the fact that Parliament is—I hope irrespective of party, and with widespread agreement—at last facing this problem as a fundamental issue. We are . . . grappling with the problem which is uppermost in the minds of those who are defending the country to-day, at home, overseas".

Mr. Bevin described a visit, with the Prime Minister, to the 50th Division, who were in boats off Portsmouth. They leaned over the side of the boats and asked:

> "'Ernie, when we have done this job for you, are we going back to the dole?'"

A clever dick who was in the House when I was in the House many years later—Mr. Pickthorn, representing Cambridge University—sneered, and said, "For you?" Mr. Bevin replied:

> "Yes . . . they knew me personally. They were members of my own union."—[*Official Report*, 21 June 1944; Vol. 401, c. 212-3.]

He was referring to the 50th Northumbrian.

In those days, people were concerned about unemployment. In one way, I regret leaving the south Leeds part of my constituency. I know that things have been done over the years. The back-to-backs have been cleared; only one section is left in the area represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central. But there are people there who will never find jobs, and nothing is done about it.

The situation is viewed through the eyes of writers on *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Independent*—people who are mobile. Those people in Leeds, however, are not mobile, and they will not find jobs. They are brought up to go into unemployment, and nothing is done about it. The training programme in Leeds has been cut in half: that was announced only the other day.

For a while, following Beveridge and the work of the coalition and then the Labour Governments, full employment mattered. It is not enough to get out of a slump—call it what you will. In the 1930s, when I was first active in politics, we heard all the arguments that were advanced in the old days of Keynesian economics—was it deflation? Was it reflation? My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Sir P. Duffy) and I attended the London School of Economics together as ex-service men. Such questions did not matter very much; it just meant that a lot of people were out of work.

Even reflating the economy is not enough: it will not have any effect. People in areas such as "up the tops", in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) and in my village, represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), will be affected. They will not vote for any party other than Labour. No one cares. We see the odd programme on television about how dreadful the situation is, but nothing is really done. If it happened in the south of England, something would be done, but it is happening in the wrong place.

The Chancellor seems to be querying that statement. Why is nothing done? If this were happening even in the northern part of Leeds, something would be done. The position is accepted, and the community as a whole does not really care. That is what it boils down to; it is not just about political parties.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Has it occurred to my right hon. Friend during his long and distinguished service in the House why we have benefited from men of his calibre? His Welsh heritage has made it very clear to him that we must never again treat people with the disrespect with which his parents and mine were treated.

Mr. Rees: I am grateful for that comment. Although he belonged to a slightly older generation than mine, my hon. Friend's father was of the same generation as my father, and came from the village round the corner. I have been away from that area for a long time, and I am proud to be a northern Member of Parliament, but I have never forgotten living in a home where we had very little. As I leave this place, I want others not to forget that: indeed, it was part of what brought me here. I am aware that nothing is being done about it.

There is a cycle of boom and slump. We shall return to the previous position at some time or other, but it is not enough to provide extra demand. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Attercliffe remembers the arguments advanced by President Hoover. The change to Roosevelt was an attempt to do something more fundamental. It will all come back. We always get out of a slump; we always experience the drop—the quick drop that we experienced between 1929 and 1931—and then the slow movement along the bottom, followed by the pick-up. In this country, that will happen the year after next. It is all annotated: the eight-year cycle can be traced all the way back to 1793. It is as clear as a bell.

Sir Patrick Duffy: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. He has been gracious enough to refer to me on two occasions, and he is right—we have shared much together. We are almost lifelong friends, having shared wartime service and post-war studies at the London School of Economics.

More important, our formative years were shaped by the great slump of the 1930s. Does not my right hon. Friend agree that the present developing recession—perhaps almost a slump, in terms of its configuration, certainly in terms of its length and perhaps soon in terms of its depth—will come as near to the great slump of the 1930s as anything that we have known since?

Mr. Rees: The Chancellor mentioned in his speech yesterday the fact that some people hold that view. I felt a strong pang when he said it. Nowadays, people say that the failure of the Austrian banks in 1929-31 need not have happened if only the world banks had acted together, and I imagine that that is true. There is a danger that a similar position could arise now. The Secretary of State for Education and Science is a political ruffian—I say that with a smile on my face—but he speaks up occasionally. He has said that the country's problems are to do with the present Government—and of course they are—but there is also a world recession. Of course that is true. There is a danger that the situation will not pick up as much as before. My point is that we have learnt that investment is required.

I am speaking off the top of my head—perhaps the Chancellor will check the figures—but I believe that we moved slowly out of the big slump of 1931, and that by 1937 the economy was not as high as it had been in 1929. Then it began to drop again. At the beginning of rearmament, the activities of the shadow factories masked the position to an extent, but we did not return to full employment until 1942. By then, millions of people were in the armed services, and Barnbow in Leeds was making guns and tanks. It takes a long time to get out of such situations, and the economy does not necessarily rise to its former level. Therefore, investment is required: members of all political parties in the House should consider that.

Schools in my constituency were badly built in the 1960s—it does not matter whether they were built under a Labour or a Conservative Government. Corporation houses were badly built as well. They need to be knocked down or repaired. Old people's homes are to close because it costs too much to rebuild them; the same applies in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central. Building work could be done on schools and houses. We are short of houses. I shall continue to interview my constituents until polling day. Currently, families of owner-occupiers are telling me that their houses have been repossessed and that they are being put into hostels because there are no houses for them to go to.

Now is the time to go in for capital investment and to build houses. Let me tell the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, in regard to taxes for current spending, that it is wrong to have a deficit on current spending. It is wrong to use receipts from privatisation for current matters. Borrowing must be for investment. Unless this country goes in for investment in the same way as the Japanese and the Germans, we shall have a problem. We may not enter a world slump, but we may always remain a third-class nation, never able to pull out of the recession.

The poverty that exists in some cities of the western world shows that the position is not peculiar to this country, but I want to stress the problem of unemployment in my area. I would be exaggerating if I referred to sub-standard living, but the point is that people are not going to move out of their present circumstances. Their houses often contain a photograph of the grandfather of the family in uniform, taken during the war, and perhaps one of a grandmother who may have been in the WAAF. Those people are citizens of this country, yet we do very little for them. I do not think that the Budget meets the needs of the moment.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I lived through the same period as my right hon. Friend. The

[Mr. Martin Flannery]

Conservatives are now taking refuge in what they describe as a world recession. The fact is that it is a slump here and a recession there. Figures can be obtained from the Library to show that, last year, new unemployment throughout Europe amounted to 972,000. Of those people, 777,000 were British—80 per cent. That is four times as large as the figure for all the rest of Europe put together.

Mr. Rees: It is my last go at this, and I am not just being wet, silly and soggy. Unless the whole House puts its mind to these problems, we will not get out of them. The Budget was a little like the Budgets of the 1930s. The first Budget that put its mind to accounting in the sense of savings and investment was that of 1941. I believe that there will be another Budget in a few weeks' time, whoever wins the election—I have my views about who will win. Unless we become involved in investment and think about the structure of the country and the problems in certain areas such as those that I have tried to represent over the years, I believe that we will fail.

The Chancellor referred to the danger of a world recession. With a bit of luck, we will not get into that. The Budget is too near the election to have any real sense of the country's needs.

I often wonder—it happened this afternoon—what in heaven's name I do in this place. One can think of the problems of the world and then the office-boy humour that comes from both sides of the House. Never again will I —well, I will for a while—have the antidote of travelling on the sleeper and arriving in an area that makes one feel that it is worth it because at least one might be able to do something.

The House will do itself a disservice if it ignores the real problems facing the country. I went to the funerals of two Popes during the time I was a Minister. I remember going into a room at the Vatican and looking at who mattered. I realised that I did not. We have been bit players since Ernie Bevin's speech. Since that time, the Americans and the Russians have mattered, and look what has happened to them. If we are to count in the world and in foreign affairs, and if the words that we speak are to matter, we have to produce; we have to produce modern manufactured goods. Only in that way will we provide the schools and education that we need. My grandchildren will receive such an education, have no fear about that. What about the others? What about the kids in my village, represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd?

I have said it, and I have done it. Parliament is a good place. One can speak one's mind. There are people on both sides who have done that and that is what makes it worth while. That is why it is here.

5.32 pm

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): There is a tradition in the House that, after a maiden speech, the next speaker makes complimentary remarks about the person who has just spoken. I do not know if there is a tradition that one should act similarly after a valedictory speech, but if there is not, I shall try to start one. I should like to pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees). I do not believe that I have ever followed him in a debate speech before. In my experience in the House over many years, he has been a fine parliamentarian and he was a brave Secretary of State. The House will be a poorer place for his departure.

I share the view expressed by the right hon. Gentleman about unemployment. For whomever it affects, unemployment is a great personal tragedy. The Budget presented by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will help to reduce the level of unemployment. It has been recognised as a balanced Budget that is imaginative in many ways. It will create a situation with which the Conservative Government will be able to live on their return. So, in that sense, it is not an electioneering Budget.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for effectively announcing the demise of Budget day as we know it. His proposals for transferring the arrangements to December, when one takes into account both public expenditure and taxation, are a long overdue reform. It will enable the actions that the Chancellor takes to regulate the economy—an immensely difficult task for whoever is in office—to operate in a more effective way.

On this occasion, however, one should look at both sides of the equation. The Budget deals only with raising money, not spending money. We know that decisions on spending are taken in the autumn. Therefore, on this occasion, we need to look at expenditure and taxation. The argument is sometimes used that the money used for cuts in income tax, such as those announced by my right hon. Friend yesterday, could be spent on the national health service. We must consider the enormous increase that was announced in the autumn statement in the amount expended and planned to be expended on the NHS. One could say that tax cuts and increases in spending on the NHS are election bribes. That enormous increase in spending on the NHS went on last year, the year before and the year before that. If it is an election bribe, it has been going on for a long time. The same is true of income tax cuts.

The Budget contains a number of aspects that I welcome, not least for Worthing, which I represent. I welcome the help for pensioners on income support, the proposals for the uniform business rate which will certainly help small businesses at a difficult time, and the provisions for charities. I should have thought that those measures would have support on both sides of the House.

I had grave doubts about the proposal for reducing the standard rate of income tax, despite the fact that the Conservative party is committed to reducing the standard rate to 20p. My right hon. Friend's proposal is a much better way of working towards that objective than simply leaving the standard rate at 25p and reducing it salami-like until we reach 20p. It is much better to have a reduced rate of 20p and gradually to raise the level at which that becomes applicable until, perhaps over the life of a Parliament, we eliminate the 25p rate. I welcome that. It is of considerable help to those on low incomes, not least working women, many of whom fall into that category. The basic approach is imaginative and correct.

I shall deal now with the public sector borrowing requirement and the question whether tax cuts are being paid for by borrowing. I find the arguments of the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen extraordinary. There have been very few years in the past century when the situation has been such that the Government have not borrowed in one way or another. It is almost true to say that whenever taxes have been cut the Government, certainly in recent times, have done that against a background of borrowing. There is nothing unusual about that. I cannot recall any year when a Labour Government cut taxes without borrowing, so it is a strange argument for Opposition Front Bench spokesmen to use. Perhaps there will be some comment about that in the reply to the debate.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Higgins: No. I should like to deploy some rather complex arguments.

Another question is whether the PSBR is excessive as a percentage of gross national product. One should compare the present level—4·5 per cent. of GDP—with the percentage when the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) was Chancellor of the Exchequer. I believe that the figure was double the current rate. That puts the matter into perspective. At all events, the level of borrowing in the Budget is entirely appropriate against a recessionary background, about which the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South rightly expressed concern. I believe that that borrowing will help to get the economy out of recession. A large percentage of it has been caused by the recession—by the reduction in Government revenue from taxation and the increase in public expenditure on unemployment benefit.

The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee made it clear that the use of automatic stabilisers is entirely appropriate in a recession.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The right hon. Gentleman is a distinguished Member and Chairman of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. The Red Book refers to borrowing of £110,000 million—£110 billion—over the next five years. Does he find that excessive? Is he saying that even when we borrow £6 billion in year five or £19 billion in year four we shall still be borrowing to get out of this recession? How long will it take?

Mr. Higgins: I make two points. First, the economic effect of borrowing depends on the extent to which it is funded. That is what affects the money supply. Secondly, on every occasion since the war the Treasury has underestimated turning points—both going down and coming up. I therefore treat with much scepticism the figures to which the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) refers. As the recovery continues, borrowing will reduce substantially below the estimated figure. If someone says, "That is the official forecast", I shall be happy to express my views on forecasts in greater detail, as I have in the past.

Against that background, it is appropriate not only to use automatic stabilisers, but to do more. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has been modest, and the foreign exchange markets have recognised that. That is an important point, because we are constrained by those markets. None the less, the further stimulus that he has given the economy is appropriate.

It has been said that this is a massive reversal of policy, that suddenly the Government are borrowing when they said that they would not do so. There has indeed been a change in policy: we have joined the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system, which has resulted in a rapid reduction in inflation. It has been possible to combine that with a welcome reduction in interest rates. As the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee pointed out, when we are constrained by the ERM from acting in the way that we are now acting, it is all the more important to have active fiscal policy in order to manage the economy efficiently.

In that context, to answer the point made by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), I am glad that the Government have resisted Mr. Delors' attempts to force us into a fiscal deficits straitjacket.

I share many of the concerns that have been expressed, but I still believe that the Budget is prudent and appropriate. It will provide a firm basis for the Conservative Government when they return to power in a few weeks' time. I regret that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee will not be able to take evidence from the Chancellor, when we could have gone into greater depth and at a more sophisticated level. None the less, my overall feeling is that this is the right Budget at the right time and I believe that it will help to improve the economy, to the benefit of my constituents and those in the country as a whole.

5.44 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), who is Chairman of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. I work with him on that Committee and have much respect for his fairness and objectivity. However, I cannot remember a single occasion during the period of the Conservative Government when he has not felt that, broadly speaking, the Chancellor's Budget judgment was sound and that it was the right Budget at the right time—even the 1988 Budget introduced by the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), which helped to get us into this recessionary mess. Perhaps I can excuse the right hon. Member for Worthing on the grounds that he will shortly be off to Worthing to fight an intense election campaign, but his analytical and objective skills are not brought so obviously to bear in debates on the Budget.

It is a pleasure to begin a speech on the Budget by welcoming the inclusion, in virtually the first sentence of the statement, of Liberal Democrat policy—the sensible proposal to integrate the Budget in a single revenue and expenditure statement. I wonder why it has taken the entire life of the Government to persuade the Treasury that that is feasible. Even at this late stage, I am glad that the conversion has been made. No party will want to go back on that proposal. I assume that it will proceed with general support.

There are other measures in the Budget that I can welcome and support. It was obviously right to index alcohol duties and obviously sensible—we had argued for it—to take steps to deal with the business rate. We argued for the cancellation of this year's 4·1 per cent. increase. The Government chose a slightly more complicated method which amounts to something short of, but on the way to, the same level of relief as we propose. It will be appreciated that that will be helpful, especially after the enormous increases in the business rate last year. Its main benefit may be stopping some small businesses going to the wall, but it is none the worse for that and I am glad that it was included in the Budget.

It was useful to have some first steps on the problem of small and large business debts. That issue may have to be reconsidered in the context of the charging of interest.

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

I broadly accept that there was a strong argument for some measures to be taken for the car industry, although the Government did not choose to do so in an environmentally helpful way. They halved the special car tax, so a high fuel-consuming Rolls-Royce Corniche will have £12,400 knocked off its sales price while a much more fuel-efficient Metro City with an 1,100 cc engine will be cheaper by only £482. In changing car tax, it might have been possible to send a signal in favour of more energy-efficient cars and greater fuel efficiency. The Chancellor could have taken the opportunity to use more effective environmental measures as part of such a substantial change.

The Government are increasing petrol prices through petrol tax by an average of 5·4p per gallon for unleaded and 10·4p per gallon for leaded petrol on the pump price. That means that since 1979 the Conservatives have increased petrol tax by more than 50 per cent. in real terms. According to the Automobile Association, the petrol tax will cost the average rural household more than £60 extra per year.

Conservatives often accuse Liberal Democrats of being ready to increase petrol prices; indeed, they think that we are almost keen to do so. They now find that senior Ministers are pointing out that energy prices will have to rise to deal with the environmental consequences of the way in which we use energy. The Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Energy and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster have argued publicly for higher energy prices. As that is the way things are going, it is important to consider the problems of rural areas and to look for ways of compensating rural motorists—who are not the main contributors to the pollution problem and who do not contribute at all to urban congestion—and also disabled drivers. The Government must address that issue if they are going to make steady increases in petrol prices, of which the Budget is an example.

There are disappointments in the Budget for various groups of people. It contains nothing on tax relief for child care. Many campaigners thought that, after we had pressed for that in one Finance Bill after another, we were reaching the point where it would be accepted by the Government. That has not happened this year.

The Budget contains nothing for merchant shipping. All hon. Members will be aware of the concern about the state of the merchant shipping industry and its apparently disadvantageous position compared with the shipping industries of other countries. That will cause considerable disappointment.

The real shock of the Budget was the scale of the public sector borrowing needed merely to fund the recession. The Chancellor's announcement of the figure of £28 billion was greeted with gasps from all parts of the Chamber. There were gasps from behind the Chancellor from the seat in which the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) sits and gasps from the Opposition parties.

We sat through the speech, waiting to find out how the Chancellor was going to spend the largesse. Would there be a 3p giveaway, with some additional investment spending? As the Chancellor reached the end of his speech, we realised that there was no giveaway because the £28 billion public sector borrowing requirement was necessary as a direct consequence of the recession and the resulting higher cost of benefits and lower tax revenues.

When we received a copy of the Red Book, we found that the PSBR will be £32 billion next year, all without any significant tax giveaway—or one of only 1p on income tax, or £2 billion—and without any additional investment. That was a genuine shock to most hon. Members. It was an admission by the Government that the recession is much worse and that its effects will last longer than they had previously forecast. That means that the Government have moved from forecasting that they would repay £19 billion of debt to telling us that we would be borrowing £28 billion—a pretty wide margin of error by any standard.

We must act to get out of the recession, but the Budget offers no hope of that. It is not a Budget for recovery. Perhaps it was not intended to be a Budget for recovery. There are three possible objectives for the Budget. First, it could have been intended to make voters feel better off, thus putting them in a better mood to support the Government at the election. Secondly, it could have aimed to kick-start recovery. Of course, the Chancellor said early on in his speech that he was not going to do that.

Thirdly, it could have been designed to wrong-foot the Labour party. If that is so, it is ingenious in one sense because it includes the lower rate band proposal, which is an expensive way to try to bring relief to the low-paid. I quoted the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science and who clearly ridiculed such a proposal last time round.

The lower rate band proposal is an issue on which every party has changed its mind. The Conservative party is different because it changed its mind twice during its term in office. The Conservatives abolished the band, but have now decided to restore it. It is an expensive way of helping the low paid, as the Government themselves argued previously. If there is no spare revenue for investment, now is not the time to introduce such a proposal.

The Government's image of the voter after the Budget is clearly that of the happy citizen, making his or her way to the polling station in a newly purchased British-made car, stopping on the way to buy some British-made goods from a major department store and going to vote Conservative. All that is based on a £100 tax cut, which is not even enough to buy a copy of the *Daily Mail* every day for a year. Of course, the *Daily Mail* and *The Sun* believe that this is a wonderful Budget. One could just about manage to buy a copy of *The Sun* every day for a year with the tax cut, but one could not afford the *News of the World* on Sundays as well. That would be no loss for anyone, but it reveals the limited scale of the cut.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Beith: I see an enthusiastic hon. Member leaping to his feet to defend one or both of those newspapers.

Mr. Hind: The point that the hon. Gentleman is making shows clearly that it is nonsense to suggest that the cut is a bribe because clearly it is not. The hon. Gentleman is showing that the amount that the Chancellor has pumped into the economy is fairly small. The Budget is well targeted and very prudent, which perhaps undermines some of the hon. Gentleman's arguments.

Mr. Beith: If I was Tammany hall boss and I wanted to engage someone to bribe the voters, I would not engage the Chancellor of the Exchequer because he is not very good at it although he thinks that he is. He has fallen between the devil and the deep blue sea.

The Budget will not engender recovery or make people feel that they are substantially better off. Rather than the enthusiastic driver on his way to the polling station having bought extra goods leading to a consumer recovery, the likely voter will be someone who is already unemployed, or who fears the loss of his job or who fears that someone in his family will not get a job, whose children will not receive an adequate education because of school cuts or will not get adequate training because of training cuts. People are very aware of those deficiencies in our system, just as they are aware how little they can do with £100. Indeed, the voter may not be driving a new, British-made car to the polling station but wasting hours struggling to work on an inadequate public transport system, or a pensioner just above the income support level. When Conservative hon. Members return to their constituencies to fight the election, they will meet an awful lot of pensioners just above the income support level who receive neither income support nor any of the other benefits which automatically go with it. They will tell hon. Members how hard the going is.

Investment is clearly a more appropriate subject for whatever resources can be gathered, and the Treasury model shows that. If one runs the alternatives of tax cuts and investment measures through the Treasury model, one finds that investment measures have a much more rapid effect on the economy. In addition, investment does not create a public sector borrowing requirement in subsequent years. Any tax cut must be paid for the following year and the year after. If recovery is slow, one must continue borrowing to pay current expenditure, which is no way to run the country.

If the Government invest and get a return on that investment, they can pay debts in the future. That is the Government's objective. The idea is to have a balanced Budget over the cycle, but this is the longest cycle I have ever heard of. Even if one believed the optimistic forecasts in the Red Book about the PSBR for later years, by the end of the next Government's tenure of office we would still not be at the end of this amazing cycle. We have to spend quite a few years making up for the PSBR level of the preceding years. I have heard of a stretched Mercedes, but this is the longest cycle anyone has ever attempted to describe.

Investment is best made when the construction industry is in its weakest condition—that is how one gets the most favourable prices for repairing schools and hospitals and for railway construction and work on rolling stock—not when the economy starts to heat up, which is when public expenditure has to be reined in because at that point the economy may begin to overheat and generate inflation.

We need a programme of investment in an economy that is firmly anchored with a proper anti-inflation policy, including an independent central bank, a proper commitment to Europe and entry into the single currency, a real commitment to free enterprise and the promotion of competition—not the rigged market of massive privatised monopolies that the Government have created—a Government stimulus to research and development in industry, a savings target to ensure that we rein in public expenditure when its effect would be damaging, and social justice in the tax and benefits system. Neither the voters nor I will take promises or lectures about lower taxation from the Government who gave us the poll tax and who increased VAT to 17·5 per cent. Their days are numbered.

5.58 pm

Mr. Robert Boscawen (Somerset and Frome): I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me at this early hour. The only thing that I can say about the previous speech is that the Liberal Democrats seem to be united only about one idea, and that is that they would greatly increase the public sector borrowing requirement.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) could say only that we should spend more. When he and the other Opposition parties talk about investment they should realise that what matters is the investment made five years ago, four years ago or three years ago. Investments made now, next year and the year after will not assist recovery now—it will assist the post-recovery period.

My right hon. Friend, our Chancellor, faced the most difficult and daunting task that any Chancellor has faced for a long time—a serious recession, with an election on top of it—and he has come out of it extremely skilfully and prudently.

The Budget was carefully constructive. My right hon. Friend has not given away too much; in fact he has given away far less than anybody expected. As for the public sector borrowing requirement, in my time I have listened to Labour Chancellors of the Exchequer, Labour Prime Ministers and other Labour Ministers telling us time and again their Keynesian theory that in times of high unemployment it is right to borrow, and that if one does not borrow unemployment will increase. I find it strange that the Labour party has reversed all that it tried to teach years ago.

We shall not take lessons in deficit financing from the Labour party. Labour Governments used deficit financing to purchase all the nationalised industries, and year after year those industries ran on immense deficits, which had to be taken on as part of the public sector borrowing requirement. It was not until the Conservative Government came to power in 1979 that we changed that, got to grips with the nationalised industries and started selling them off, making them into profitable companies and corporations in the private sector. So it is pretty rich to get lessons from the Labour party on high public sector borrowing requirements.

The Budget was good because it helped where the shoe pinches. Unfortunately, we have high rates of inflation, and in those circumstances the shoe pinches hard on certain groups of people. Those people have been helped by the 20 per cent. income tax band, and also by increases in income support. I find it surprising that the Labour party wants to vote against that, after all that it used to tell us about trying to increase help for those very people—the people who come to our surgeries and tell us how difficult life is. For the Labour party to oppose those measures is quite wrong, and out of character.

The Government have helped the industries in the sort of area that I represent, in southern England, where—unusually—unemployment is higher than it has been in the past. In many cases the reasons for that are not really due to the recession. Let us take the defence industry as an example. Who could have foreseen the climatic change in

[Mr. Robert Boscawen]

the world order that has taken place in the past five years? Although we shall not need so much highly sophisticated defence equipment, I am glad to say that in the past two or three years my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has been helping the defence industries in our part of the world—those industries are concentrated in southern England—by giving sensible orders for re-equipping our forces so that, although they may be smaller in the future, they will be very good, right into the next century.

That is the other side of the Budget—the public expenditure side, which I am glad to say that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor now intends to merge with the raising of the money. In future we shall be able to see at the same time how much money will have to be raised, and how it is to be spent. That change has long been needed, and I am delighted that the Chancellor has suggested it.

My right hon. Friend has helped farmers in my constituency. That is a difficult thing to do in the present uncertain times. It has been wrong to take so much capital out of farming through inheritance tax over the years—but we know that the Labour party has always hated the idea of private ownership of property. My right hon. Friend will help many owner-occupiers and tenant farmers by keeping that capital there, to enable farmers' sons and families to restock the farms—that is, perhaps, their most expensive necessity.

Many measures to help small businesses were announced in the Budget—not least the fact that money, albeit a small amount, will be put into the hands of those who need it most. Those people will spend that money quickly in local shops and businesses, where it means so much to have a little more trade. Too many shops are empty at present, and we want to see them filled.

This will certainly be the last time that I shall speak in the House. Since I have been in Parliament there have been two enormous changes. I come from the generation born within five years of the first world war; we were just old enough to be cannon fodder almost throughout the second world war. In those days, when we could find time to think about serious things, we used to ask each other, "How the devil can we ever stop this damn stupid thing from happening again?" I have always remembered those conversations. Many thousands of my contemporaries did not survive that war, and I believe that those of us who were fortunate enough to have lived happy and long lives since then owed something to them. We owed it to them to do something about trying to stop those stupid things from happening again.

The first step was that the European nations came together and realised that they had to co-operate, and trade together to improve each other's economies. During the time that I have been in Parliament we have entered the European Community, which cements the relationship between France and Germany, whose past hatred of each other was the basis for those two terrible wars.

The second thing that has happened is that while my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) was Prime Minister the Governments of this country and of the United States demonstrated to the Soviet Union that it could never win. By their firm resolve in demonstrating that, those Governments helped to bring about the most enormous change for the future better peace and prosperity of the world. Let us not forget that.

It would be churlish to say that the whole of the Labour party has been slow to come round both to Europe and to standing up to the Soviet Union, because many individual Labour Members whom I have known have taken a strong stand on both those issues. But on the whole the Labour party does not have a good record either on Europe or on standing up for the defence of the western world against the Soviet threat. Now that that threat is a thing of the past, let us be sure that it never happens again.

I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and Mr. Speaker and your two fellow Deputy Speakers for all the courtesy and kindness that you have shown me. It is greatly appreciated.

I also thank my constituents in Somerset—the lovely part of the country which I represent. I have represented two constituencies, and I thank all my constituents for having sent me here for such a long time. I am very grateful indeed to them.

6.9 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) made some pejorative remarks about the Labour party towards the end of his speech. Despite that, it is a pleasure to follow him and to record his distinguished service, about which we all know, both to his country and to the House. My right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) has also given distinguished service to his country and to the House.

The hon. Member for Somerton and Frome mentioned Europe and I have no intention of following him on that. My right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South mentioned the problems of the world slump. He may be a gloomy Celt and perhaps the Chief Secretary would endorse the view that here is another gloomy Celt speaking. However, I believe that my right hon. Friend expressed a fear that the slump, or depression, may not disappear as quickly as we think.

When I consider the Maastricht treaty, for example, I am concerned that we are enshrining or codifying certain economic principles, such as price stability, and that we may find ourselves in difficulties. It may have been Hoover or William Jennings Brian who said that we must not crucify mankind on a crock of gold. Perhaps we should not do things that may crucify mankind on price stability, as codified in the neo-European Bundesbank if it ever comes about.

My object is to consider the Budget resolutions. As we have been reminded, this debate comes almost 13 years since the forerunner of the Government came to power in 1979. I remind the House and the Financial Secretary—I am sure that he does not need reminding—that the Government were elected in 1979 preaching the virtues of sound money, of monetarism and even of a balanced budget. The image was given of the grocer from Grantham—I mean no personal disrespect—who demanded cash on the nail and who gave credit to no one. There was the image of the housewife from Grantham who managed the household finances and who looked after the pennies so that the pounds would look after themselves. It has not worked out.

Thirteen years and many Budgets later, the ideology is in tatters and with it the British economy which suffered from that ideology. The finances of the public sector are heavily in debt and the finances of the private sector, both individuals and companies, are heavily in debt. The balance of payments is heavily in the red even at a time of recession. Unemployment is rising and, if its growth next year is 1 per cent., will continue to rise. Our manufacturing base has been decimated by 30 to 35 per cent. over the past 13 years. Some £100 billion of oil money has been dissipated, swept away in a sea of imports and crushed under the mountain of debt.

The Chancellor announced yesterday a public sector borrowing requirement of £28 billion, twice what it was last year. For next year, it will be £32 billion. I should have thought that it was extremely difficult to prophesy what the PSBR would be from one month to the next. Next year's PSBR is apparently to be £32 billion on the basis of a growth in gross domestic product, for the first half of next year, of 3 per cent. I do not know whether we can go from 1 per cent. growth in the coming year to 3 per cent. growth in the first half of next year. If we cannot, the PSBR for next year will be higher than £32 billion. Such is the order of borrowing on which the Government have now embarked.

The requirement of £28 billion this year and £32 billion or more next year is the epitaph on the ideology with which the Government's predecessors were elected in 1979. Ministers are doing their best to distance themselves from that ideology and they are desperately trying to justify the claim that they are all Keynesians once more. Despite the seriousness of the economic situation, I have derived a certain amusement from the build-up to the Budget when I have listened to Ministers and especially to their apologists in the City and in the media trying to justify the massive change. It is not a U-turn but a gyration of 360 degrees in Government policy and ideology.

Some ideologists have prayed in aid Europe and the exchange rate mechanism. Others have resorted to clichés —or to clich after clich, as Ernest Bevin would have said. I will deal first with the Europe excuse. The other day, I was listening to the "Today" programme, the fount of all wisdom and knowledge. A rather teenaged pundit from one of the right-wing think tanks argued that borrowing was all right now because, as we were in the ERM, there was a bigger pool of savings from which to draw. He implied that that meant that we could borrow money without interest rates going up. The trouble is that there are piranhas in the pool which are quite as big as the British Government—one or two are bigger, believe it or not. Those piranhas will also look for some goodies out of the pool. The idea that because we are in Europe or in the ERM we can now borrow without interest rates going up is ridiculous, and the Government know it. I believe that we shall win the election. However, whichever party come to government, the cost in interest rates of borrowing for a £28 billion or more PSBR is certain to go up.

With the ERM, the poor monetarists cannot practise monetarism. The great Satan of ERM now stalks the land, so the monetarists cannot practise the old religion. I heard one argue the other day that the only thing that the monetarists could do would be to become Keynesians and to borrow money because they could not reduce interest rates. The monetarists have all gone to the Keynesian chapel next door because they cannot worship at the shrine of monetarism as a result of the terrible ERM. I suspect that, for most Conservative Members, the reason for borrowing is not to save the economy or the country, but to try to save their seats at the forthcoming general election.

Others have resorted to cliches. We heard one from the Chancellor yesterday, from the Chief Secretary today and from other hon. Members in the debate. They have found the old economic cycle. I suppose that it was somewhere in the Treasury basement in Great George street and that it has now been brought out again. It is an endearing—if one can use the word "endearing" in respect of the Chief Secretary—image to think of the Chancellor of the Exchequer practising before the Budget along the long corridors in the Treasury with the Financial Secretary watching and an officious permanent secretary ensuring that the Chancellor does not fall over. One can imagine him practising on the old economic cycle with the ghost of John Maynard Keynes keeping an eye on everything.

As has been said, the problem is that we do not know how long the life of the economic cycle is. We are told that everything will be all right over the economic cycle. What is its life? There was an economist with an unpronounceable name——

Mr. Rees: Kondratieff.

Mr. Davies: My right hon. Friend, who went to the London School of Economics, knows the name. Kondratieff thought that the economic cycle was 250 years——

Mr. Rees: Fifty years.

Mr. Davies: I thank my right hon. Friend. I did not go to the LSE. I am the product of a Welsh Sunday school and I am a great authority on the Bible, if not on Kondratieff. The bible talks about seven lean years and seven fat years, which is a kind of economic cycle. Perhaps we should settle for that. I do not know what the length of this economic cycle will be. It certainly looks more like a Tour de France than a 100m sprint. I have no idea when the balanced Budget will be balanced, and neither have the Government.

Let us move on to the next cliché, which is the automatic stabiliser, about which we have heard again today. I thought that it was something to do with motor cars, but apparently the automatic stabiliser is a higher being or higher spirit which looks over Treasury Ministers and Chancellors, keeps an eye on them and makes sure that the free market operates smoothly along the byways and the freeways. The automatic stabiliser is looking over everything.

There is nothing stabilising about a £28 billion or £32 billion PSBR. I should have thought that that would be destabilising rather than stabilising. There is nothing very automatic, either, about items of public expenditure that cause a £28 billion or £32 billion PSBR. Most of the items are as a result of Government decisions on public expenditure and taxation. I suppose that there was an element of automaticity. It is the Pavlovian automaticity which makes the Tory Chancellor instantly reach for the printing presses when the Tories look like losing an election.

The Government's ideology is in tatters. What went wrong? It is not for politicians to answer such questions; they are matters for political philosophers, historians, and perhaps even for theologians. However, I make one brief

[Mr. Davies]

suggestion. There was always an inherent—perhaps Marxian—contradiction in their ideology. In 1979, the Government came to power preaching a desire to control the money supply. However, they wanted a free market in money. I could not see how the control of money and the deregulation of money could march hand in hand for very long. To his credit, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) recognised that fact, because he gave up that practice. He left the monetarist chapel, shut the door, went off and listened to false prophets, followed false gods and started to shadow the deutschmark, and we ended up in the ERM, because the system could not work. A system that wants to control money on the one hand and wants to free everything on the other hand and treat it as any other commodity is inherently contradictory. In fact, it destroyed the Government's ideology.

All that is history. Unfortunately, the people of Britain will have to live with the consequences of much of the nonsense that occurred. At least there is one consolation. The children of the ideology of 1979—no doubt the Financial Secretary is one of them—will also have to suffer some of the consequences. Many of them will not be in the next Parliament, and those who are in the next Parliament will have the pleasure of sitting on the Opposition side of the House and watching my right hon. and hon. Friends clearing up the mess that they have created.

6.22 pm

Sir Ian Stewart (Hertfordshire, North): I compliment my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) and the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) on their speeches. They have both been Members of the House for many years longer than I have. It is sad for me that I, too, am probably making one of my last contributions to the proceedings of the House. I am profoundly grateful to the constituents of Hertfordshire, North for having returned me in five elections. I had much hoped that I should be in a position to ask them to continue to do so for at least another Parliament or two, but that was not to be. I was impressed and moved by the contributions by my hon. Friend and the right hon. Gentleman about their many years in this place.

I mention one oddity in passing, and that is the difficulty which we put in the way of retiring Members in maintaining even the most tenuous connections with this place. I am not a nostalgic person—I would not want to hang about the Lobbies and look over the shoulder of my successor—but it is an oddity that, although I have the privilege of being a Privy Councillor and have automatic right of access to listen to debates in another place, I have no such automatic right of access to the Palace of Westminster to listen to debates in this House. That seems anomalous. Not long ago, when we passed a resolution whereby right hon. and hon. Members who had been here for 15 years or more could enter the Palace of Westminster or certain parts of it as a matter of right, we attached a strange condition that they had also to be in receipt of a pension. Unfortunately, because I injured myself before I reached pensionable age, that will not apply to me. I do not want to make a personal point, but I use those examples to illustrate the strange way in which, although many of us may spend many years in the House, we find those odd and perhaps irrational obstacles to our maintaining even a tenuous connection, as we might wish to do.

My constituents will have looked at the Budget, in particular for the way in which it deals with the problem of economic recovery, and indeed the matters of unemployment which were mentioned by the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South. I assure him that many hon. Members have great concern about the situation in different parts of the country and the uneven distribution of jobs and prosperity. That is something which all Governments find it difficult to deal with, but it does not mean that we are not conscious of them. My grandfather's brother was commissioner for the distressed areas in the 1930s. It has always been a point in my family to be acutely conscious of those matters—certainly such matters have been in my mind since I have been in the House and have had to consider economic and related matters.

The most important point that the constituents in Hertfordshire, North and elsewhere will look for from the Budget and its aftermath will be a return to confidence. There is no doubt that after a period of recession there are widespread anxieties as to how the process of recovery will be generated and how the measures that Governments can take through Budgets and so on can assist the process. The measures in the Budget dealing with the uniform business rate, VAT, and inheritance tax for family businesses will contribute significantly to restoring the necessary confidence.

I do not wish to make a particularly partisan speech, but I must say that one of the factors which are retarding the recovery of confidence is the inherent belief of most people in the business community that the return of a Labour Government would mean higher taxation and higher borrowing costs. Neither of those things is needed at present. I shall leave it at that because other right hon. and hon. Members have already made those points, and no doubt many others will also do so. However, I do not underestimate the nervousness in the business community about what a Labour Government might bring, because in the past year or two Opposition Members have been expressing commitment to a substantially increased range of public expenditure without giving any clear idea of how they would finance them. The difficulty with their proposals may be made clear next Tuesday when the Budget debate is over—that is a pity—but, so far, nothing has been made clear about how that finance would be provided. Inevitably, the business community has held back on investment and increasing activity for that reason.

I am sorry that I shall not be here in the next Parliament to debate economic matters with the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies). As he and I have often faced each other on the subject, on a personal basis I sincerely hope that he will find himself on one or other of the Front Benches. His speech this afternoon was typical in that it was penetrating, witty, showed insight on several matters and was more powerful than we sometimes hear from the Opposition Front Bench.

The public sector borrowing requirement and the level of borrowing proposed in the Budget is one of the matters that has attracted the greatest attention. I shall make only two main comments because there is no point in repeating what others have said. First, the structural changes in the tax system which were introduced in the 1980s have had the practical consequence of tending to increase revenue when the economy is growing above its trend and to decrease revenue more substantially when the economy is below that trend.

I instance two factors. The first is the switch to some extent from taxes on income to taxes on spending. That tends to exaggerate the revenue in times of economic boom because of higher expenditure in the high street and so on and the greater level of activity in industry. As we now see, with retail sales depressed until the past few months, it tends to create a sharp reduction in the level of the economy as a whole.

The other factor is perhaps even stronger. The change in the structure of corporation tax from a high basic rate with a large number of allowances to a much lower basic rate with significantly fewer allowances means that the profitability of the companies sector is reflected more substantially and directly in the levels of corporation tax revenue than under the previous structure. There is a time lag of perhaps two years between the performance of a company and the time when that performance shows up in dividends and corporation tax payments. That is because a company pays tax on a basis which is calculated historically. That time lag led to an overemphasis of the amount of revenue available to the Government at the end of the 1980s. It leads now to an underestimate of the level of revenue available to the Government as the economy recovers in the next few years. The time lag factor has exaggerated the swing.

I suspect that five or 10 years ago not many people in the House or elsewhere expected that the Government would go into substantial surplus two or three years ago. We had double figure billions of pounds of surplus and a substantial level of repayment of debt. In the same way, the scale of the PSBR has caused some surprise. But I believe that those wide swings are caused by structural changes in taxation which are likely to continue to operate in the future and must therefore be taken into account in the formulation of economic and budgetary policy.

On this occasion, I cannot avoid saying something about interest rates and the exchange rate mechanism. A few years ago, I was invited by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) to speak in a debate on the European monetary system and to make my speech as boring as possible. Not long ago, I looked back at that speech. It was marvellously boring. I obviously carried out my instructions with great efficiency. At that time, my right hon. Friend was anxious that the subject should not be given too much prominence. I believe that I managed to soothe the House into a mood of almost complete disinterest in the subject. Given the attempts of some other hon. Members to do the opposite, I felt that my speech was one of the more important, if less dramatic, achievements of my time in Parliament.

As a result, I became extremely interested in the exchange rate mechanism and its interaction with monetary policy. I caution the Goverment about being over-hasty in going into the narrow band of the exchange rate mechanism. I am not one of those who are absolutely opposed to economic and monetary union, but I have a greater degree of scepticism than many others—purely because the lessons of history are not strongly supportive of monetary union when not accompanied by political union. I am far from believing that the states of Europe are prepared and ready to undertake the degree of political commitment that would be necessary to make monetary union effective in practice. I hope that we shall not take any particular further steps in that direction unless and until we are satisfied that there is the greater degree of cohesion, and political cohesion, which is necessary if the thing is not to end in serious tears.

I have once before quoted an historical example in the House to illustrate my point. I repeat it only because so many colleagues in the House have mentioned it to me as being of interest. When the Crowns of Scotland and England were united in the person of James VI at the beginning of the 17th century, the coinages of the two countries had previously been entirely separate. They were united and put on a standardised basis under James VI in 1603. Although for the most part the coinages managed to keep approximately together during the next half century, increasing strains were felt. By the end of the 17th century the currencies had significantly diverged. They were brought back together only when political union was achieved in 1707. That illustrates the fact that before the countries of Europe make any commitment to monetary union they must understand all the democratic implications of it and that it would not work, certainly in the medium and longer term, unless it was part and parcel of a much greater degree of political union than the leaders of most of the countries of Europe have yet contemplated.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Would the right hon. Gentleman care to carry that analogy further by considering the situation that arose when the Irish Republic separated from the United Kingdom? The Republic tried to keep the currencies on a par, and for many years succeeded, but eventually it had to break and the currencies diverged.

Sir Ian Stewart: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. I could draw several other analogies. The only occasions when a common currency has been applied successfully throughout Europe were under the Roman Empire, when the currency was backed by the legions of the Roman army, and 200 years later under Charlemagne when the currency was imposed by military force. No other protracted period of monetary union in Europe has worked. I offer that as a cautionary tale.

I am not absolutely opposed to proceeding in the direction of monetary union, but it is necessary for the future health of democracy and Parliament—and, indeed, of other countries in Europe—that before such steps are taken the full implications are understood. It is essential that we do not take steps in the dark, only to realise afterwards what they involved.

Clearly, membership of the ERM imposes a substantial discipline on the Government's flexibility to alter interest rates. In the past year, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has come in for considerable criticism for not having reduced interest rates more rapidly. He deserves a word of congratulation on having been cautious and responsible and not being rushed into that process. I hope that he will be able to reduce interest rates further in due course. However, given the commitment in the exchange rate mechanism, I am sure that it would do far more damage to reduce interest rates and find that they had to be raised again—the damage to confidence would be considerable—than to be more cautious in taking that step in the first place. That is my parting word to my right hon. Friend on that subject.

I must declare an interest as a director of an investment trust. I am pleased that the whole of personal equity plans

[Sir Ian Stewart]

can now be invested in investment or unit trusts. I have always believed that people beginning to invest in equities can best do so by the collective mechanism of such trusts, where expert management is available and risk is not concentrated in a small number of shares. Perhaps I may now reveal that when we were contemplating the introduction of PEPs a few Budgets ago I suggested that policy. Although it did not prevail at the time, I am delighted that it has been introduced.

Finally, on income tax, I strongly support the proposal to introduce a 20p band. I do support it not merely as a band, but because it is the first stage in moving to a substantial range of income to be taxed at 20p. There are a number of ways of moving from 25p to 20p. One way is to take 1p or 2p off across the whole band. We adopted that method to get down from 33p to 25p. In recent years, I have been of the view that the starting rate of tax—even at 25p, let alone 33p or anything in between—is too high. However, I do not consider 25p to be too high on a taxable income of £15,000. By having a wide basic rate band, the starting rate of tax is bound to be higher than it ought to be for those people at the bottom of the income tax paying scale. Therefore, I especially welcome the introduction of the 20p rate for those on the lowest levels of taxable earnings, particularly as I understand that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor intends that that band should be expanded, so that a broader range of income could be taxed at 20p rather than at 25p. That gives him greater flexibility. Whereas one needs £2 billion to take one penny off the basic rate, once one has established a 20p band, one can increase it by a greater or a lesser amount, according to available revenue. That is an important reform and I hope that it will be carried forward. I hope to be able to applaud that, albeit from a distance, in future Budgets.

6.43 pm

Sir Patrick Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): It is a personal pleasure for me to follow the right hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Sir I. Stewart). When he was a Defence Minister, I shadowed him from the Opposition Front Bench and I always found him to be effective, impressive and, in other small ways, pleasant and entirely admirable. I have no doubt that the House will be the poorer for his premature departure.

Also, it would have given me the greatest possible personal pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen), who will know that there are between 30 and 36 hon. Members who served in world war two. As far as I can estimate, there will only be five in the next Parliament. The hon. Gentleman and I were subject to the most prolonged post-war medical treatment. Although my condition was by no means as grievous as his, for as long as seven years after the war, I was classified as 100 per cent. disabled and my classification has never dropped below 30 per cent. That did not prevent me from contesting my first two parliamentary elections as early as 1950 and 1951.

I listened with interest to the hon. Gentleman's recollection of his wartime reflections. I believe that I shared them and I feel privileged—along with my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George)—to have been able to play a small part in recent years in ending confrontation in Europe, in strengthening security generally and in making new structures possible.

I feel that the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome and I have shared a special brand of comradeship through all those years, although we have never talked about it. The House will not be the same without him, and there is no one for whom I have entertained, at a distance, more respect and concern.

This time last year, the Government thought that they would be going to the polls against a background of economic recovery. Some financial gurus in the City were sitting back anticipating another five years of Tory rule. Although the recession is now an enormous embarrassment, the official line put out by No. 10 Downing street is that Britain is the victim of international recession. However, we all know, do we not, on both sides of the House that, in its origins and its severity, it is a home-grown recession, caused by the Government's mismanagement of the economy?

Policy mistakes, especially those made in 1987-88, have been the major cause of the recession. The latest figures show that the output of the British economy has been declining for six successive quarters. The latest gross domestic product figures confirm that the recession is the longest in post-war history. Last year's decline of 2·5 per cent. was the biggest annual fall since the 1930s. There has not yet been a slowdown in that decline.

For all the House knows, we may be in free fall, for economic recovery continues to be elusive. From time to time, one gets a fleeting glimpse of a speck of light trying to pierce the gloom, but then it disappears, just as hope begins to rise. The same is true in the United States of America.

Weighed down by prolonged recession, Britain's ailing economy seems unable to find that pathway to growth. Yet, in his Budget statement, the Chancellor made a virtue of not wishing to kick-start the economy. He expects growth to pick up gradually as the year goes on and to be reasonably strong by 1993, but his Treasury advisers have been disastrously wrong in recent forecasting and weighty authorities see continued depression, unless policy is changed radically.

One problem with recessions is that they do not start and finish on a particular date. The recovery is never tidy, and we are likely to get confused signals for several months after the upturn has begun.

In the United States, there have been two upturns, but they are back in a state of recession. Given previous experience, including that of post-1931—it is salutary to look at the figures—recovery from a slump of this magnitude will be delayed and prolonged and unlikely to achieve anything like full utilisation of capacity. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) reminded us, we were pulled out of the depression of the 1930s only by rearmament and the onset of war. He and I were brought up in mining communities which were plunged into debt as a result of the general strike. We knew many households that were only rescued from that debt, after many years, by the fuller employment that war produced.

Unemployment, inevitably, is still going up. Figures published yesterday show that the Government are continuing, although not maliciously, to underestimate it. An unemployment level of 3 million people is already in sight. There is little prospect of an export-led recovery, given the latest trade figures. A consumer-led alternative would risk making the trade deficit even worse.

Against that unpromising background, the Chancellor was expected to deliver not merely the Budget, but the ballot. It is too late for that. The Budget will not act as a significant stimulus to the economy—all that should have been provided for last year. The deficit is almost certainly out of control, and the prospective borrowing requirement is significantly worse than expected. The Chancellor will be lucky to see growth at half the rates he has forecast, given the form. It will be a case of hard times rather than great expectations. Companies need help as cash flow and complicated reliefs to the uniform business rate are not enough. However, that is all that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury could offer when I challenged him earlier.

It is a disappointing Budget, and the Chancellor has failed to produce the election-winning trick that everyone thought he had up his sleeve. There must be a question mark over whether the measures taken are even affordable and sustainable. We all know that the City is cautious—the PSBR has undoubtedly prompted a sense of disappointment. The evidence is there and plain to see. The policy of borrowing to finance tax cuts has already come in for much discussion in the debate, but surely that can make sense only if the borrowing Government are prepared to raise taxes later with a view to restoring the balance—assuming the economy moves on.

Borrowing to finance sound and necessary long-term public sector investment is preferable, for it should pay for itself over time. That is Labour's preference. The obvious areas for such investment are our preferred ones of infrastructure—roads and railways—and, above all, industrial efficiency, with a view to improving productivity.

The latest issue of the *National Institute Economic Review* puts the lingering adverse productivity gap between Britain and Germany down to the fact that Germany has constantly made a greater investment in its workers and factories. I can properly apply that test to the Budget, and I naturally wish to apply it first to my city of Sheffield.

Sheffield council's employment department now finds unemployment to be as high as 17 per cent., whereas the Government figure is less than 12 per cent. I am in touch with Ministers at the Department of Employment about that.

In Sheffield, the engineering industry is a mirror of the health of the city's economy. In the past year, the Engineering Employers Sheffield Association has seen its members fighting hard to survive in a hostile trading environment. It has called for all genuine investment to be made fully and immediately tax-deductible. It has pointed out that many foreign Governments provide their manufacturing industries with support for research and development. It also believes that there is ground for greater incentives to export. It believes that perhaps the most important and far-reaching area in which the Government can encourage the manufacturing industry is by providing a better education system and raising the attainment and quality of school leavers. That is another preferred Labour objective.

This is not a Budget of recovery for Sheffield; nor is it a Budget for recovery for the Yorkshire and Humberside region. Of the many complex issues and problems facing that region, three stand out as far as the regional and local authorities are concerned. One is the environment, in particular the redevelopment of the older industrial areas, which have been identified as the key to the region's future. Interestingly enough, that was the subject of my maiden speech in this place 29 years ago. I recall that my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South was kind and gracious enough to join me for that occasion.

Secondly, training is critical to the region if it is to catch up with foreign competitors' skill levels as the single market approaches and to make the best use of the declining numbers of young people who will be seeking work in the next few years. Thirdly, good communications will also be vital to the region, because they are undoubtedly a prerequisite to success as the momentum of the single market builds up.

The final judgment on the Budget must turn on competence and on how far the Government can be trusted to steer the country out of a recession, which domestic misjudgments have made uniquely severe. The Government must be found wanting in three crucial aspects. First, after 13 years of administrative responsibility, many of Britain's fundamental economic problems remain—the level of structural unemployment, especially in the Yorkshire and Humberside region, a deficiency of investment, an inadequate manufacturing base, a shrunken one in Yorkshire and Humberside, and a poorly educated work force.

Secondly, no one recalling the 1980-81 recession could really have expected that the country would ever again be called upon to go through all that. Yet we are now doing it all over again and no one can say that, as yet, it is working.

Thirdly, the cost of money is too high for an economy in recession—the single biggest factor holding back recovery. Sterling stays weak and in its turn denies the opportunity for any adjustment of interest rates, because traders believe that Britain is still prone to slipping back into the bad old days of demand management. One suspects that yesterday's Budget has confirmed their fears. A PSBR of £28 billion, rising next year to £32 billion—it will be surprising if those figures are maintained and not adjusted upwards—has wrecked the Conservative Government's claim to be the party of fiscal prudence and thereby hopes of much lower interest rates.

We not only have a deeper recession than foreseen, but a worse fiscal state than the pessimists feared.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I accept what the hon. Gentleman says about the need for lower interest rates, but I am surprised that he makes that point while extolling the virtues of ERM. Does he not agree that the Government are constrained by membership of ERM? If we had not been members, it would have been possible to reduce interest rates much earlier.

Sir Patrick Duffy: If we were within the narrow band, I would find it difficult not to agree, but there is much room for movement. The truth is that we are too low down —we are only just off the bottom. One need only look at what happened to sterling after the Budget. It made earlier gains, but lost most of them after the Budget. That was not coincidence.

We need an interest rate cut and a firm grip on public finances. What we have got, however, is a Conservative Government. That is why we are likely to have sustained

[Sir Patrick Duffy]

high interest rates and a burgeoning public sector deficit. The Chancellor has not delivered a relevant Budget, and he will not deliver the ballot.

I recall, as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South, that the experience of the great slump in the 1930s provided the first impulse towards political interest, political involvement and political activity. We both come from similar backgrounds with similar families. Our fathers were miners. They were the same kind of men—both Celts. In appearance, they could have been brothers. They had the same kind of background of bitter industrial experience, but they were never bitter men.

It was that early impulse that eventually led both of us to gain privileged membership of the House of Commons. It is poignant—perhaps worse, it is ironic—that in our final speeches we should both recall the slump of the 1930s and wonder whether we are now in a similar slump. As I said in an intervention which my right hon. Friend kindly made possible in his speech, in its present configuration and perhaps soon in its length and breadth, this recession more closely resembles the great slump of the 1930s than any recession in the past 50 years.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South and I arrived in the House at the same time. We arrived in good company, through by-elections, just after Guy Barnett as a result of a by-election in Dorset, Neil McBride as a result of a by-election in Swansea, East, John Silkin as a result of a by-election in Deptford, Brian O'Malley as a result of a by-election in Rotherham, and Gregor Mackenzie as a result of a by-election in Rutherglen. With the exception of Gregor, all the others —who were good Members of the House and became Ministers and good friends—died prematurely. I have never doubted that they were casualties of the parliamentary warfare of the 1970s. My right hon. Friend and I still grieve for them.

My right hon. Friend and I have spent most of our membership of this House on the Opposition Benches, but we feel deeply privileged to have trodden the flagstones of this historic Palace. To have moved within walls that have nurtured and inspired the history of all the peoples of these islands is the greatest privilege that the people of this country can confer on any individual.

My last words to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are that you were my Member of Parliament and my Deputy Speaker and I could not have been better served. We have both been fortunate and I thank you for all your courtesies and your friendship.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's kind remarks.

Mr. Speaker originally announced that he was imposing a cautionary limit on speeches between 7 o'clock and 9 o'clock. In view of the small number of hon. Members seeking to catch my eye, I shall withdraw Mr. Speaker's imposition of a 10-minute limit, accompanied by the request that hon. Members show restraint in the length of their speeches, to ensure that all those who wish to take part have an opportunity to do so.

7.4 pm

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Sir P. Duffy). He has had a most distinguished career here, having been president of the North Atlantic Alliance, which was a close-knit reason why we were able to communicate—I was in the Council of Europe at that time. We also had a thin wall between our two offices, so he could hear my singing and I could hear his dictating to the rest of Europe. It will be a sad day when we lose so many able people at the election.

There is not much left to say on the Budget except to point out that inflation has fallen from 11 per cent. to about 4 per cent. We have brought interest rates down from 15 per cent. to the present 10·5 per cent. and I hope, despite the exchange rate mechanism and the doom and gloom that we heard today, that there will be a decrease of at least 0·5 or even 1 per cent. to encourage everyone who has had to borrow money during these difficult times. I hope that that will be announced before the general election. The convention is that that cannot be announced during the election campaign.

One of the great lessons that I have learnt is that strikes have always been the most dangerous aspect of industrial progress. I think particularly of the port of Southampton, where a whole year passed without a single ship entering or leaving the port. There was a series of strikes, almost one after the other, by British Rail workers, crane drivers, the dock labour force and so on. Ultimately, although I love the port of Southampton, it was not pleasant to see the absolute desolation, so I was pleased when we privatised Associated British Ports. After that, there could be only one conclusion—the Government had to do away with the national dock labour scheme and all that that entailed. We were then able to compete with the new giant port of Felixstowe on the level playing field on which we all insist when dealing with Europe.

The Southampton port's growth denies Opposition claims that people are not investing. The port has just agreed to invest £15 million on improvements and business has been and is extremely buoyant. Last year, more than 400,000 container units went in and out of the port. Considering that the port has only three container-ship jetties, that is an enormous number.

We have a tremendously buoyant business in car exports and imports. In 1991, the throughput in cars amounted to 300,000 and two thirds of those were new cars leaving this country, so the port of Southampton proves conclusively that there is still life in the United Kingdom. I sometimes wonder whether those who do not look at the minutiae of industry and its problems realise the effect that their doom and gloom have on business throughout the world.

The 5 per cent. reduction in car tax means that more cars will pass through the port of Southampton. Let us hope that British and British-Japanese manufacturers in this country can still compete with all other marques of cars being imported from other parts of the world. All established dock workers, whether crane drivers, office workers or stevedores, will welcome that reduction. When the national dock labour scheme was done away with and the stevedores received their redundancy payments of about £20,000 to £25,000 if they had served a fair amount of time, 450 of them sensibly invested that money in a co-operative stevedoring business. They had the good sense to take on one of the dock managers to help and guide them, and it is now a flourishing business.

The old disputes are forgotten—even the old salaries are forgotten. Most of those in the industry are doing extremely well because they now work in partnership. They will welcome the 20p rate, even though it applies only to the first £2,000. I was wondering whether, if the other political parties had stated their polices here today, they would have kept the 25p and the 40p rates intact. I very much doubt whether they would. It is a happy Budget in that, although it does not give back a great deal, it does it in such a way that there is no increase in taxation.

If we are to go down memory lane, I point out that I am a former president of the Motor Schools Association of Great Britain. That does not seem of great rank in these illustrious circles, especially when compared to the role of president of the North Atlantic Alliance, but I felt that it was a way of involving myself in that industry's problems. For a long time, one of its problems was that when a new driving school car was purchased, the VAT could not be deducted. Now, in one fell swoop, taxi and car hire firms, and driving schools can recover the VAT on their cars. That policy will operate from 1 August, and will cost £50 million, spread over 1992-93. That is a welcome aspect of the Budget, which I do not think has yet been mentioned, and as a former president of the Motor Schools Association I am pleased to be able to state it clearly to anyone with a small business involving taxis, hire cars and so on.

Another small item in the Budget that people will tend not to mention is inheritance tax. Now, the old guvnor of a small business or small farm can sign over the business before he dies. We have long waited for that, and I am sure that no one here would wish that, every time the owner of a small business died, everything had to be sold up to pay the inheritance tax on the business. I am grateful for that aspect of the Budget. One of my constituents is a newsagent—the policy is not aimed too high—and he is worried about leaving the business to his family. Now he will have the freedom to do so.

The proposal on car tax was helpful. I had lunch with the Ford Motor Company only about three or four weeks ago—it was not a bribe. Its representatives were in the doldrums, as are those of General Motors and many other car giants in the world. We are suffering not merely a British recession, but a world recession. Suddenly, overnight, due to the imaginative 5 per cent. cut in new car tax, those businesses are beginning to take advantage of that proposal by reducing their prices, which can only be good. After a home, a car is probably the second biggest item for a family—and why not? Why should it be only Ministers who drive around in new Montegos? Why should not the average family man do so? The concession will be extremely useful.

I have talked about the port and the car industry in my constituency, and the difficulties of the system. We cannot do everything at once, but we have done a little to help many of my constituents. We have provided extra help for pensioners on income supplement. It does not involve a great deal of money—many hon. Members would think that they could not buy a meal with it, but the money must be seen in the context of those who receive it. The amounts involved are £2 for a single person and £3 for a couple, which will be welcomed by all my constituents in that category. For the over-65s, the income tax allowances have been lifted in line with inflation, which will also be welcomed.

When talking about one's own constituency, the difficulty is that one tends to become emotional. That is especially true if, like me, the Member was born in the constituency and, like me, had a grandfather who was, unfortunately, killed in the boiler room of the Titanic. I have links with my constituency, as we all do. My mother, who lived there, died only a couple of years ago. We do not normally like the carpetbaggers, but we sometimes have to put up with them. I believe that, if one is a Member of a home constituency—born, bred and educated there—one almost becomes part of it; it is a living thing.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I share the hon. Gentleman's sentiments in respect of his port and constituency in Southampton, as I have a similar constituency in Antrim, East with the second busiest ferry port at Larne. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that those who are deeply interested in the future of British shipping would have liked the Budget to contain measures to encourage British shipping and get British crews back on to British ships? Perhaps we should continue to press Governments so that, next time round, such action will be taken.

Mr. Hill: That is an interesting point. Like the hon. Gentleman, I have been to the London General Chamber of Shipping and received its information packs. I know that flagging out has depleted the British fleet. I know that, sometimes, ships are flagged out so that cheap, overseas labour can be employed. Years ago, when I was in the European Parliament, I was very much for the scrap and build policy. That was thought almost revolutionary in those days, but it would have meant that ships that did not measure up to the highest safety standards and were perhaps not governed by fuel economy could be scrapped and rebuilt. Whether it comes from Europe or the British Government, there must be more understanding of the problems of running a merchant ship.

When we consider Taiwan—soon China, too, will have one of the great fleets in the world—we can see the competition which will be difficult to beat. Those countries pay less and have new ships—some of those countries have been in the shipbuilding business for only 15 or 20 years, so they have good, modern fleets. Something must be done, whether in future by the European Commission—which we may object to—or by Governments getting together. In this country we cannot buy a ship off the rack; there is no prebuilding. We have to place an order and might receive it in three of four years. Very few can survive in that way.

If a future, successful Conservative Government are in office, perhaps we shall be able to look deeper into this matter. Flagging out brings with it many evils. I am not being sentimental; in the port of Southampton it was always the "red duster". There are evils in all our fleets, dispersed throughout the world. There are ships owned by British companies that we never see. They are flagged out, they go to Florida or on cruises in the Mediterranean, and they have their repairs done in places like Athens. All this is a problem for Governments of the future.

The day of Government intervention in shipping is over. Governments never seem to get it quite right. Keen European though I am, I would be against too much

[Mr. Hill]

intervention by the European Commission in this delicate matter. Sometimes the Commission plays a ducks and drakes game—there is not always complete fairness.

I would like to think that a successful Conservative Government of the future, well supported, I hope, by Northern Ireland Members, will examine the problem raised by the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs).

I still remember my maiden speech, although I do not suppose that anyone else does. I described everything happening around the port. Were I to make the same speech now, I would have to explain that everything has grown. The university has grown; the general hospital has grown to be the second largest in the United Kingdom. We have a first-class medical school. There are exciting high technology developments, and we have a science park. There are new marinas in the docks and—unheard of before—shopping parades in the port.

Southampton is a prosperous city which just needs a kick-start. Opposition Members do not believe that this Budget offers that kick-start. They will have to wait and see. I think that it is the beginning of the way out of the recession. Someone told me that we were last into the recession and would be first out. Actually, we were the first into it and it looks as though, with the United States, we may emerge from it last——

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hill: Let me finish what I was saying—good heavens alive, what is happening to the House?

Not all businesses go into a recession at the same time and not all of them come out of it at the same time. Some businesses are already beginning to flourish. First-time buyers of property are beginning to be active; there are "sold" boards in my constituency. As with cars, so with properties—the recovery is beginning.

Mr. Martlew: If the hon. Gentleman said, as I believe that he did, that we were first into the recession and we were going to be the last out, does he not accept some of the blame for that as a member of the Conservative party?

Mr. Hill: Recessions are a law unto themselves. Anyone who has been in business will know that everyone wants to buy certain goods but not others. I remember that I took up a Parliamentary Fellowship Trust position with a large conglomerate that owned 200 companies throughout the United Kingdom. One of those companies made giant presses. As an ordinary business man I asked about break-even figures for the company. I was told that it could sell nine presses a year. I asked about the figure for the world market, and was told that it was 17. The position was clearly impossible. People have to be alive to changes in the business world, whatever business they are in.

I am an investment manager. I know exactly what is going on in business—if I did not, I would not make any money. Investment is the right way forward, but that does not necessarily mean Government investment. It means private sector investment, and that can come from any country.

I do not know whether there was resistance in northern and southern Ireland to foreign capital arriving in years past. The Republic was given a jolly good kick-start by it. It enabled the Republic to get its accounts together so that it could join the EC. Over here, there was terrific resistance to foreign capital. The unions held talks about whether we could allow one union for one factory. I wish that we had had one union in the port of Southampton all those years ago; instead, we had about a dozen. We resisted foreign investment for as long as we could. Now, people are building on green-field sites in some parts of the country in highly successful ventures—*[Interruption.]* I do not know whether you were signalling to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or just wanting to know the time. Of course one must be obedient to Deputy Speakers, so I conclude by saying that this has been an extremely good debate so far. I am happy with the Budget. It has certainly done a power of good for my more poorly paid constituents, and I hope that when I go back to my constituency to do canvassing they will be appreciative.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. May I re-emphasise my earlier appeal for brief speeches? I had hoped that the hon. Gentleman, given the 10-minute limit that was to have been imposed, had a 10-minute speech in his hand.

7.26 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): I come to the debate with a curious mixture of happiness and sadness: happiness because the call to arms has at long last arrived; sadness because I see colleagues departing and making valedictory speeches. My right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) and my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Sir P. Duffy) both have enormous experience in the House but are retiring. It will be sad to see them go, and sad to see colleagues departing who have no intention of departing. Whether this is to be my own valedictory speech, only the good people of Walsall, South will be able to determine. I hope that they will show the same good sense this time as they did on five previous occasions.

I was fortunate enough to have the last Adjournment debate of the 1974-79 Parliament. The Minister who replied was the late Guy Barnett. The debate was about what had happened in the previous five years in my constituency. I am pleased to be able to speak again now at what I hope will prove to be the fag end of the Conservative Government. That provides me with a good perspective from which to look back on the past 13 years, and to compare the policies of those 13 years with those of the previous five—all against the background of this Budget.

When I spoke at the end of the 1974-79 Parliament I was able to mention unemployment in my constituency of 5 per cent. and council house starts at 1,000 per year. There were 12,000 crimes per year. I mentioned big companies in my constituency such as GKN, Rubery Owen and Charles Richards, which I said had fine prospects. I said that Eaton Axles and F. H. Lloyd had high investment programmes. That 1974-79 period was wrongly assessed by contemporaries and historians. It was hardly an idyllic period for government but, according to many people, Labour's defeat in 1979 ushered in a new dawn. Few Governments came into office with such advantages as the next one—the bonanza of £100 billion worth of North sea oil, the sale of much of the public sector to the private sector and higher taxation—but they blew it. I now look back 13 years later and see unemployment in my constituency not 5 per cent.

but 12 per cent. officially and, in reality, probably half as high again. In the west midlands, 40 people are chasing every job. Council house starts stand not at 1,000, but at zero, and there are 12,000 unmodernised houses with no chance of being modernised because the council has only enough money to modernise between 50 and 75 a year. The companies about which I spoke—GKN, Rubery Owen, Charles Richards, Eaton Axles, F. H. Lloyd, and many others—have all gone. Of those companies which remain, some are now in receivership, some have been rationalised and reorganised, and some are hanging on by their fingertips.

In the country, there are record bankruptcies, cripplingly high interest rates—for companies in my constituency and elsewhere, these interest rates have been killers—prices have doubled and the pound in our pocket in 1979 is now worth about 40p. There have been two recessions and growth is the lowest since the war, lower than under the 1974-79 Labour Government and much lower than under the 1964-70 Government. My constituency and elsewhere have seen manufacturing output plummet, great divisions between regions, enormous disparities of income and the creation and consolidation of a large underclass. We have seen sleaze and corruption and now a PSBR requirement of a staggering £28 billion and rising—add to that the huge trade gap, and one sees the enormous consequences of the past 13 years.

At the turn of the century, one politician called my town of Walsall the town of 100 trades. The number is now probably far less than that as a result of Conservative Governments, history and the decline of the region's fortunes. Many industries are in decline. What we have left are leather goods, metal manufacture, machine tools, iron castings, motor components and, in Willenhall, locks. It is amazing that so many industries are in severe decline. We need to sustain existing industries and to attract newer and high-tech industries to the town. I do not want the town to become nothing more than a town of warehouses, superstores, leisure complexes and what is left of the smokestack industries which have survived the crises of the past 13 years. I want to see increased investment in manufacturing industry, in equipment, in training and in marketing. We do not want simply to neglect manufacturing industry as has happened during the past 13 years.

It is essential that we have better training. It is important that local authorities are used in creating and sustaining industry, providing guidelines, investing in housing programmes and providing better and more relevant education. Those are some of the things that are needed, but above all we need the election that is about to come, which will give us a new Government, a new Budget and a new set of policies.

The industrial revolution began in the west midlands two centuries ago. Until about 20 years ago, the region was the engine of the British economy, but now we are in deep decline. We have seen two major recessions and manufacturing output has plummeted. During the past 13 years, employment in manufacturing has declined by 372,000 and an even sharper decline has taken place recently.

John Owen, president of the Engineering Employers West Midlands Association, has published his presidential review of the previous 12 months. When that gentleman's company in my constituency was desperately seeking assistance in 1980 to prevent its collapse, which eventually took place, I went with him to see the then Minister of State at the Department of Industry, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit). We asked for assistance, but we were simply told that the derelict land clearance scheme could be used to grass over the site when the factory eventually closed.

John Owen, in his report, which is worth quoting, said:

> "Now, at the end of 1991, as my Presidential term draws to a close, it is even more disappointing to record that engineering industry in the West Midlands has experienced perhaps its worse recession ever; and, significantly, there is no convincing evidence that the recession is over nor indications of impending recovery. It would be accurate to state that for many companies manufacturing output has stabilised at a very low and unacceptable level; that would account for five companies out of ten. Four out of ten continue to report a deterioration in their business trends; and only one out of ten reports an improving trend or more buoyant circumstances. Expectations for recovery extend into the second half of 1992; confidence is low and employment prospects are not good."

The Budget will not reverse that decline, nor was it intended to—it was intended as a recovery Budget for the Government rather than for the country. I note from today's *Financial Times* that the average score for the Budget from six experts was five out of 10.

I welcome some aspects of the Budget, but I warn the electorate to beware of Normans bearing gifts. The Chancellor told us yesterday that responsibility for the economy belonged to industry. It would be wrong and unfair to put all the blame for the failures of industry on the Government, but one must remember that the Government have been in office for two thirds of the past 60 years—all of the 1930s, I exclude the 1940s because of exceptional circumstances, almost all the 1950s, almost half the 1960s, just about half the 1970s and all the 1980s. During that period of tenure, our economy has declined. We have gone from being a powerful economy to being the 13th largest economy in the western world and our position is dropping.

The Conservatives have much to feel responsible for. The Budget was less than a spectacular success. The Prime Minister said that the Budget was well received and that it was a popular Budget throughout the country. That proves that life in the bunker can distort one's view of what is happening outside.

I was greatly amused yesterday to be told that interest rates might go down if interest rates go down in Spain. It is one thing to have to kow-tow to Germany, but now we are looking for straws in the wind in Madrid. That is a sign of how we have declined as a nation. We heard this afternoon the argument that it was wrong to attack Japanese investment, and I welcome Japanese investment, but it is unfortunate that there is not enough indigenous investment. The reasons for Japanese investment in Britain are complicated. One is clearly the desire to slip into a country so as to circumvent the restrictions of 1992. Secondly, the Government are receptive to inward investment. Thirdly, the Japanese are attracted by low wages. That is why there is so much inward investment. I do not want to take the argument to an extreme, but in the same way one would invest in a third world country where labour costs are relatively low. Fourthly, the Japanese are keen to invest in this country because, like us, they know about suicidal tendencies, and perhaps they recognise the same tendencies in us.

As a west midlands Member, I welcome the limited assistance that has been provided for the motor vehicle

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industry—although, as a certain rugby commentator would say, they must be ringing the bells in Paris, Milan, Tokyo, Taipei, Seoul and almost everywhere else tonight. Clearly, the boost to the British motor vehicle industry will give a boost to the motor vehicle industry of every other country.

My constituency contains much small industry, and I feel that some benefits have been conferred on small manufacturers; but I do not believe that the Budget will increase confidence. The economic advantage is marginal, and what is really crushing is the unacceptably high level of interest rates.

Over the past 13 years, a number of myths have been destroyed. One is the myth that the Conservative party is the party of fiscal responsibility, efficiency, competence, law and order, and defence. This is not the occasion on which to discuss the way in which the Government have perceived issues affecting defence and national security, and have acted on those perceptions; but I should like an opportunity to discuss that with any hon. Member who argues that the present Government are fiscally responsible, efficient, competent or preservers of law and order—and I hope that I shall have such an opportunity.

As for my colleagues who are going their separate ways after the general election, I wish them well. Whatever happens, the new Parliament will be very different from the one that I entered in the early 1970s. I know that, as with the world of football and the theatre, the old guys who were around when one first arrived are always more significant than the present generation, but I see in the departure of many of my colleagues the departure of men and women who are highly competent. We can only hope that a future generation of politicians will be able to perform as ethically and, to an extent, as honestly and competently as some of their predecessors.

We now depart for the pre-election campaign. The judgment of the Budget will be set against judgments about the competence of Government and Opposition, and I trust that the people will see that the time for change has come.

7.42 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): This is a rather sad debate, because we are losing a number of right hon. and hon. Members at the election. Four or five have spoken today. I pay special tribute to two Opposition Members —the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) and the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Sir P. Duffy), two fellow Yorkshire Members. They have been highly respected by Conservative Members, and I, as a Yorkshire Member, have always been shown personal kindness and consideration by them. They were particularly helpful when I first entered the House. In my opinion, those two Members epitomise the best in the Houses of Parliament: Members on opposite sides treating each other with respect. Although we disagree about politics, I thank them both for the help that they have given me. They will be a loss to the House.

I am also sad that my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Sir I. Stewart) is leaving. He was a Treasury Minister in the golden era of monetarism, between 1983 and 1987, when he played a distinguished role. He will be sadly missed, as will my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen): he, too, has played a significant part in the House.

In reply to the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George), let me say that it is not really the Opposition's place to criticise the decline of manufacturing industry when referring to the automobile industry, or to express regret about Japanese investment. The British car industry was in a very strong position at the end of the war; it later destroyed itself with inferior management, militant trade unions, restrictive practices, too many unions, go-slows and a refusal to accept new technology and new machinery. If the British car manufacturers had been able to secure the same deals from the trade unions that the unions, in desperation, gave the Japanese, we would have a much stronger car industry today.

One of the Government's great achievements was their introduction of a new industrial environment. They did that by reforming the trade unions and encouraging investment, and as a result most Japanese investment in Europe came to this country. Over the next few years, we shall be able to re-conquer the motor car markets of Europe through those Japanese companies.

Let me say to those who criticise Japanese companies that, in my view, they are no different from the American Ford and General Motors, or from the French Peugeot. We all regret the fact that they are not British companies, but it is better to have 80 per cent. of the cake than no cake at all. It is interesting to note that the Italians and the French are petrified by the onslaught on their car markets that they envisage over the next four or five years. That is why they have gone to such lengths to ensure that cars produced in the Japanese-owned British factories are not classed as Common Market cars.

I support what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) about the Government's great achievements in the industrial resuscitation of our great ports. My constituency borders Hull, which, when I was a boy, was the third port of this country. The dockers went on strike, and engaged in go-slows and demarcation disputes; the port went from third to fourth and, eventually, to 15th. Along with my hon. Friend the Member for Test and others, I urged the Government to grasp the nettle and abolish the national dock labour scheme. After many years, they did so, and the port has now begun to prosper again. My hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis), who is now sitting on the Front Bench, also played his part. Trade to the port is now up by 40 per cent. A container terminal that was lying idle because a decent manning agreement could not be secured has reopened, as has Alexandra dock, which has been shut for three or four years.

I strongly welcome the move in the Budget to bring together decisions on public spending, Government borrowing and taxation. The Treasury Select Committee, on which I am privileged to serve, has urged such a move for some time. I believe that that will prove a real advantage, and that it will help the Treasury to control spending Ministers. Throughout my time in the House, I have felt that one of our great problems is controlling spending Ministers, whichever party is in government.

That move will bring the Government much more into line with industry. Our way of hanging on to traditions really is archaic. Who in industry would consider producing an annual financial budget for the expenditure side of a profit-and-loss account, and then deal with the sales side six months later?

We face a world recession, whatever anyone says. America is in a deeper recession than we are; Australia is worse off than us; France is heading for a worse position than us, and has probably already got there. Even the great economic powers—Japan and Germany—are moving into recession.

In my northern constituency, male unemployment is at 21·5 per cent.: I know what recession means. Our economy needs a stimulus. My first choice, of course, would be a monetary stimulus, but I accept that the Chancellor's hands have been shackled by membership of the exchange rate mechanism, and that he cannot drop interest rates by 2·5 per cent. None the less, it ill behoves Opposition Members to criticise the Government for the level of interest rates, given that, month after month, they called for us to join the ERM. In view of those restrictions, the Chancellor has produced a very well drafted Budget. As he could not give a monetary stimulus, his only alternative was to give a fiscal stimulus to help the recovery, and he has done that to the extent of £2 billion.

It has been said today that that is not enough to provide a stimulus. It must be considered in the context of the increases in public expenditure announced in the autumn statement. Spending in the coming year will increase by no less than £22 billion—10 per cent.—which is double the rate of inflation. Expenditure on the health service in the past two years—from last year to next year—will increase by no less than £5·2 billion.

We are all seeing the benefit of that in our constituencies. In my constituency, there was a very old hospital. Government after Government have promised since way before the war to rebuild it. This Government have done that, and it is now one of the finest community hospitals in the country. It does not end there. There was another old hospital, the Alfred Bean hospital, in Driffield in my constituency. That has been completely renovated and had many new additions. Now we have two of the finest community hospitals in the country, with dedicated staff providing a service that is better than ever.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's contribution, and I am following his speech carefully. He said that some of the money that has been spent on the health service has been used in his constituency to provide two new hospitals. Imagine what we could have done with the £14·5 billion that the Government used to prop up the poll tax. Surely the hon. Gentleman should take into account the money that was wasted on the poll tax and the way in which that could have been channelled into building hospitals, schools and so on. Will he comment on that?

Mr. Townend: I find that incredible. Every year, Opposition Members call for more support for local government. Local government spending, financed by the Government, has increased by about £14 billion. If we suggested taking that away from local government and spending it on the health service, Opposition Members would complain bitterly. Our increase in expenditure on the health service has been massive, and everybody knows it.

I find it strange that Opposition Members should criticise the level of the PSBR this year. It has increased partly because of all the extra expenditure. If the Opposition did not want it to increase, they should have opposed the expenditure. Far from opposing it, they have proposals to spend more. Whenever Labour representatives appear on the television, whether they are dealing with education, pensions, health, overseas aid or whatever, they have one answer—more expenditure. That expenditure totals £37·5 billion. Opposition Members cannot get away from that. They have either lied to the public or they will have to borrow that money or put up the standard rate of tax by 10p.

Mr. O'Brien: The hon. Gentleman is misguided, particularly when he refers to local government. I remind him that, in 1979, rate support grant to local government was 67 per cent. This year, it is 25 per cent. The reduction in the amount that has been pumped into local government is substantial. The £14·5 billion had to be used for the poll tax because so much money has been taken from local government previously. Will the hon. Gentleman accept that, under this Government, local government has had a rough time and that there is no future for it if they are re-elected?

Mr. Townend: I have probably had far more experience of local government than the hon. Gentleman. I was leader of a county council. As always, the Labour party never gets its figures right. The correct figures, on page 61 of the public expenditure White Paper, show that Government support for local authorities in 1991 was £42·5 billion; in 1991-92, it was £53·3 billion, an increase of 40 per cent.; and in 1992-93, it will be £58·5 billion. We have lavished money on local authorities. Unfortunately, many Labour authorities have wasted that money.

I want to look at the proposals for small businesses, as I have the honour to be the chairman of our Back-Bench committee for small businesses. The Government have done more than any other in history to help small businesses. As a result, more small businesses have been created since 1979 than at any other time. We accept that small businesses have suffered under the recession. I made representations to the Treasury on behalf of small businesses, and I am delighted that my right hon. and hon. Friends have listened. Perhaps the most significant proposal for small businesses in the long term—I have heard no comment on this from the Opposition, and I am interested to know whether they would implement it—is to exempt most business assets from inheritance tax. That will be of enormous help to family farms and businesses and will affect the regions tremendously.

We need more control over the destiny of our businesses in the regions. That is what family firms do. In the past, because of excessively high rates of inheritance tax, and before that of capital transfer tax or death duties, when somebody died, particularly if they died out of turn, many good local firms had to sell. They always sold to a bigger firm or a national or multinational firm. The decision making and reinvestment go from the area and, as soon as there is a slump, it is the branch factory that is closed.

I have faced that in my constituency over the past three weeks. In my constitutency is a firm called Bridport Engineering. It was bought out years ago and is now a subsidiary of an American company with another factory in Leicester. The machine tool business is bad, and the Bridlington factory has been closed down, and all the

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production transferred to Leicester. If that had been a locally-owned company with the management living in the town, I accept that there would have been redundancies, but the factory would have been kept open, and after the recovery the men would have been taken back. My right hon. Friend's proposals are the most historically significant help that small businesses have had this century. I challenge Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen to say whether they will oppose them.

I am delighted with the other measures taken to reduce VAT penalties, particularly for minor mistakes. The level of penalties for what were often arithmetical mistakes was farcical. I strongly welcome the requirement for contractors to pay their bill from suppliers promptly and for larger companies to state in their annual report how quickly they pay their bills.

I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench will take note of the fact that I do not think that that will be as effective as they hope. The large suppliers of large companies are equally powerful, and they will probably have to be paid on time. If small suppliers are not paid on time, it will probably show in the figures, because the figure in the annual accounts will be an average.

I am delighted with the easing of the burden of the uniform business rate. For my constituency, I am particularly pleased that the transitional relief can be transferred to a new occupier. The fact that the transitional relief stopped on change of ownership meant that many shops and warehouses were left empty. That is bad for an area: it gives it a dilapidated appearance, and people will not look at those properties. That will no longer be the case. Does the Labour party support those proposals?

I strongly support the 20 per cent. rate of income tax. It helps the low paid and is a signal of the Government's intention progressively to bring down the standard rate to 20p. I find it strange that the Labour party is so paranoid about tax cuts. It seems to hate the idea of giving the people a little more of their own money to spend as they wish. The Labour party likes bureaucracy. It thinks that the man in Whitehall knows best. Is there anybody in the country who really believes that, if we had had a Labour Government since 1979, the standard rate would now be 25p? Most people believe that it would still be 33p or more.

I represent a constituency with many old-age pensioners. The £3 a week for married couples on low incomes will be welcomed.

We need to reduce interest rates, even within the ERM. As soon as the election is over and the fear of a Labour Government has disappeared, there might be scope to reduce interest rates. It is highly important that we do so.

I strongly support the Government's policy of a balanced budget. I accept what table 5.1 says, but I have been a member of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee for many years and have seen slippage year after year. A balance will not be achieved by 1994, but when Treasury Ministers are re-elected they will have to keep a tight control on public sector spending, especially public sector wages. One reason why our public sector borrowing requirement is so high is that many public sector wage settlements have been higher than inflation, and considerably higher than those in the private sector.

I believe that this first-class Budget will win us the election and that I shall again be here, with my 17,000 majority, chivvying Treasury Ministers to continue good, sound monetary policies.

8 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): At times, this has been a rather noisy day in the House. It then became sleepy, but the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) livened things up somewhat.

It has been a day of some sadness. At least four speeches have been made by right hon. and hon. Members who will leave the House after the election, two of whom served in the Northern Ireland Office. The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) made a most powerful and moving speech about the conditions in his constituency, which he became a Member of Parliament to correct. I have no doubt that when the right hon. Gentleman became a Northern Ireland Minister he discovered that, although political divisions in Ulster ran rather differently from those in Leeds, South, many of the same problems existed in many parts of the Province. As his career in the Northern Ireland Office progressed, I know that, being a Celt, he became steadily more Unionist in his view, no doubt believing that that was the best way to protect the interests of the people of Ulster.

The debate has been interesting in a number of ways. We are discussing the last Budget before the general election—the launching pad for the election—and it would be difficult to think of a Chancellor who had been handed a worse hand of cards to play. However, he made the most of that poor hand. We could debate at length whose fault it was that he had a hard hand but I shall try to express my view on that before I sit down.

The new Budget date seems sensible. All hon. Members will welcome that because at least we shall know where we are at the beginning of the year. I regret that more was not done to increase industrial output, because although service industry is valuable, real wealth is created by manufacturing industry. The hon. Member for Bridlington was happy about Japanese investment, but I am not happy about the ownership of industry not being in the hands of citizens of the United Kingdom because our own people should reap the benefit of the brains and skills that they bring to bear on any industrial problem. That is a sore point with me, so I regret that more help was not given to increasing industrial production and bringing new products to market.

The new tax band may complicate matters. It will certainly ease the burden on many of the most poorly paid people but, like all tax changes to the lower end of the scale, to some extent it will be self-financing because there will be a change from social security benefits to earned income. Therefore, many people will not be much better off. None the less, it is welcome. I hope that we shall widen the 20 per cent. band and drop the start point of the 40 per cent. tax band to a lower level.

We welcome the halving of car tax, which will help many workers in the car industry. But against that we must set another burden that is inadvertently placed on the poorer section of community who buy second-hand cars which cannot be converted to run on unleaded petrol. They must now bear the extra cost of leaded petrol. The help with rates for business will be welcome.

As a farmer in Northern Ireland, where farmers are owner-occupiers, I give a particular welcome to the inheritance tax changes. They offer real relief to everyone in small business and the farming community. The Government are to be praised for making that change, especially as in the 1970s we had to live with the capital transfer tax introduced by the previous Labour Administration, to which many hon. Members objected. This is one of the best things that has happened to the farming industry in many years. It is welcome and the Chancellor is to be congratulated on that aspect of the Budget.

What causes everyone who thinks for a moment the deepest concern, however, is a PSBR of £28 billion, or 4·5 per cent. of gross domestic product. We are returning to the situation that prevailed in the dying years of the Labour Administration. I well understand that some Government expenditure is not easily reduced, especially social expenditure. In the past, it was possible for a Chancellor to cut capital expenditure, not least on construction works. As unemployment is so bad, it has been decided that that is not possible.

The deficit also reveals another sad tale. Not only will revenues fall but unemployment will continue to rise for quite a long time. Huge sums must be hidden in those figures to cover the cost of that unemployment. The Government will undoubtedly be hoping for recovery and for the business cycle to turn upwards yet again. There are signs that that is happening in the United States, which has experienced a W-type recession rather than a U-type. We hope that there will not be a third dip before the recession finishes.

In 1980-81, the PSBR was 5·3 per cent. of gross domestic product—13·2 per cent. of revenue. We shall return to those levels next year or the year after. We went from a PSBR of 5·3 per cent. of GDP in 1980-81 to a surplus of £14·5 billion in 1988-89. That shows what good housekeeping can do, albeit at some cost. In the coming year, the deficit will be £28·5 billion. According to the Revenue, by the end of 1995-96 we shall have accumulated an extra debt of £104 billion, and in the year after that it will rise to £110 billion. A debt of that magnitude is very serious and is bound to have the most dreadful consequences for the years in which the debt is run up to those astronomical levels, but it will also influence what the country can do in the years after that.

Time and again, we have heard the Prime Minister and the Chancellor talk about the balance in the business cycle, but it has already been drawn to the House's attention that no one can judge the length of that cycle in years. I suppose that it is as long as a piece of string, and can vary as much as the lengths of various pieces of string. At best, the Government expect an improvement by the late 1990s, but that is a very long cycle from the previous peak in 1988. Whenever the business cycle turns, with the best will in the world it will be a lot harder to climb the financial stairs down which the Government tripped so eagerly in the past few months and getting back on level ground will be a very painful operation. And even when we get there, how long will it take us to repay the £104 billion?

The lower inflation is, the more real that £104 billion becomes. I hope that we are not going to get out of this situation by using inflation. Surely, whatever Government are in power, we shall make an effort to keep sound money. Therefore, we are talking about a real £104 billion, not a £104 billion which is halved or quartered by allowing inflation to soar.

In an intervention, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) drew attention to the straitjacket of the 3 per cent. of gross domestic product contained in the Maastricht agreement. Only one hon. Member said, "Hear, hear" to his conclusion, and that Member was me. The right hon. Gentleman did not get much support from his colleagues or from Conservative hon. Members, for the good and simple reason that he spoke of something about which neither Front Bench wanted to hear. He uttered words which both Front Benches want to sweep under the carpet until the election is safely over and until the country has been sold out and is so deeply enmeshed in the Common Market that it will never have any freedom of action.

In recent weeks, the Chancellor has made it clear—this was thrown at him across the Dispatch Box yesterday—that, even if he had known the exact course of the recession, he would not have behaved any differently. As we are in the exchange rate mechanism, surely he should have said that he could not have behaved any differently and that he merely had to defend the value of sterling within its band, come what may. We are now back where we were a long time ago—a point that I had hoped that we had finally left behind us—and constantly trying to rig the exchange rate to buck the market. It did not work before and I cannot see it working this time.

If the Chancellor had thought about it—I am sure that he has because he is a fairly canny lad—I am sure that he now wishes that he had had the power to lower interest rates in the past 18 months for the benefit of British industry, for the recovery, and for the Conservative's electoral prospects. If we could go back a year or so, would there still be a cry to go into the ERM if the Government could have accurately forecast how the recession would develop? Would not that reduction of interest rates have been a far wiser way to spend the time, rather than wrestling in these past weeks with how to rig the exchange rate? The Chancellor could have dropped interest rates and we would not have been in such a deep recession because the recovery would have started a great deal earlier.

Would the Chancellor have introduced this Budget if the election were a month behind him rather than a month ahead? The answer must be no, absolutely not. He would have behaved very differently. Would he not have taken the type of action taken by the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) whenever he found himself in the same circumstances in the early 1980s?

If the Labour party wins the election, when will it introduce its Budget proposals? What will its different and extra expenditure be? I cannot see any means by which it can easily cut that which has already been decided. If the Government win the election, will we have another Budget before the year's end which will be more in keeping with the canny Scot who gave us the Budget yesterday, or at any rate the canny Scot standing behind him like a shadow as he uttered his words? I believe that that prudent man will have to tax or cut to balance the books. He will have to find where he can tax and cut because, come what may, the books must be balanced at some time.

Whichever party wins—whether the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) changes place with the hon.

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Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) after 9 April—one group of people will still be in the House, and they are those who sit here. Nobody will be able to call "Labour gain" as we walk out to supper this evening because there ain't going to be any Labour gains from the Ulster Unionist party or any gains for any other party from the Ulster Unionist party.

8.15 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): There have been so many metaphorical handkerchiefs on display this afternoon that one almost feels that one must apologise to the House if one is seeking to be a Member of the next Parliament. However, I associate myself with the comments already made about right hon. and hon. Members who are leaving us after distinguished service. Without being unduly discriminatory, may I remark especially on my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Sir I. Stewart), who is a neighbour of mine and who, during his time here, has been a model of the efficient, courteous, effective and highly capable Minister and Member of the House. He will be missed, especially as he is leaving prematurely because of ill health. He has been a very good Member of Parliament and a good neighbour.

Most of us can feel at ease with the general tone of the Budget. It seems to have hit the right spot in terms of national needs. I begin by commenting favourably on the Budget's green tinges. I follow in part what the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) said. I was pleased that the Chancellor widened the gap between the duty on leaded and unleaded petrol. It was entirely right to give a further push to unleaded petrol, although I know that that causes problems for some people. However, if people are encouraged by the difference in duty and by the reduction in the car tax to buy new cars, most of which are now fitted with catalytic converters—in parenthesis, I declare an interest—that must be good for the environment.

Although it did not please everyone, I also welcome the extra duty on cigarettes. I listened to a number of people commenting on the radio last night about how that would offset any gains from the cut in taxation. One must emphasise that it is their choice to smoke. The evidence is now conclusive that they are not doing themselves any good. They do not have to spend that money and should make more of an effort not to spend it in that way.

There is a whole raft of measures that are helpful to business. I am delighted that many people in the business community have expressed their satisfaction at what the Chancellor has done. It seems that the totality of those measures will sustain and create jobs in the business and commercial sector. Taken with the boost to consumer spending, they should also help the economy.

An especially welcome feature of the tax changes was that they have been tilted to those on low incomes. Surely the rationale is that people on low incomes are more likely to spend any extra money that comes their way. I therefore found it strange—for two reasons—that the Leader of the Opposition said that much of what he is pleased to call the borrowing giveaway would be spent on imports.

One reason is that the Opposition have already justified their intention to increase pensions and child benefit on the precise ground that they believe that the money would be recycled in the economy, through extra purchasing power, and would therefore be used. Do they think that that money would be used on imports? It is rather improbable, is it not?

My second comment on the Leader of the Opposition's criticism is that it seems rather fanciful to say that lots of grey-haired members of our community, when extra money is available to them, will be responsible for a surge in imports of video recorders, CD players or karaoke machines. The fact is that, as any sensible person must recognise, extra money in the hands of the elderly and low paid is likely to be spent on many of the routine, ordinary necessities of life, providing a helpful boost to the economy.

The debate is a tale of two Budgets—the actual Budget so capably placed before us by my right hon. Friend yesterday, and the shadow Budget, which is haunting the debate. We occasionally see glimpses of the shadow Budget, but it has never materialised before us. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary said, it is not here to be debated and scrutinised.

Because of the evanescent nature of the alternative Budget, I cannot help feeling that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) may be termed not so much the shadow Chancellor as the phantom of the Treasury, in whose mouth the words of the theme song, "All I ask of you", might take on a note of menace rather than endearment, if he ever got the chance to control our finances.

The Leader of the Opposition told us yesterday that the shadow Budget—or the alternative Budget, or the phantom Budget—has not appeared because the Opposition need more time. They have had every bit as long to prepare their measures as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has had to prepare his. The Leader of the Opposition says that they need another six days. As far as I am concerned—I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends would agree—they can have another six years, if they want, to mull over what they might do.

Mr. Oppenheim: As long as they need.

Mr. Haselhurst: As my hon. Friend says, they can have as long as they need.

The Leader of the Opposition majored heavily—no pun intended—on the size of the public sector borrowing requirement. Apparently £28 billion was too much for him. He held it up as an example of irresponsible finances. If he deprecates the tax reduction, which amounts to about £2 billion, and would cancel it, the PSBR would come down to £26 billion. We should like to know whether £26 billion would be acceptable to him, or whether he considers it too high. If he thinks that the PSBR should be lower, what does he think should happen? Should there be a commensurate increase in tax to bring the PSBR down to the level that he finds acceptable? Yesterday he said:

> "if there is to be borrowed money available, it must be invested in industry, construction, capital works, transport and other essential services."

What on earth does the right hon. Gentleman think that the bulk of the PSBR is being spent on? It is being spent on precisely such developments as those for which he calls.

If the Leader of the Opposition says that the PSBR should be reduced, there could certainly be no tax cuts. There would have to be either substantial tax increases or substantial cuts in the very public services which he says should be expanded. What he says does not make sense. Yesterday the right hon. Gentleman sought to contrast the "borrowed giveaway", which he said might be spent on imports, with borrowing for investment.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East also referred, in a critical tone, to the fact that the trade deficit next year might be as much as £9 billion. We should all recognise that if there is to be a recovery in this country, with a recovery in investment, that, too, would have implications for imports. If substantial extra investments are made, more raw materials will come into the country, and so will more machine tools and capital goods. That will be a necessary part of a recovery in investment. Whatever course we take, be it further investment or an increase in consumer spending, there will be balance of payments implications.

The Leader of the Opposition said that all that would have to be paid for in the end, and that it was a

> "basic truth that money borrowed for tax cutting would soon have to be repaid by tax raising".—[*Official Report*, 10 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 767.]

He insisted that that must be true, and *Hansard* records that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor shook his head. Well he might. The Leader of the Opposition continually makes the mistake of failing to understand that there is a difference between tax rates and tax revenues. As was repeatedly demonstrated in the 1980s, lower tax rates can, in the right conditions, succeed in producing higher revenue. In the end, the way in which the budget will be balanced is that if the policies are right the economy will expand, and that is how the extra resources will be produced.

There is a much greater chance of that happening under the formula employed by my right hon. Friend than by using some of the Opposition's strategy and those of their ideas that we have glimpsed. The mechanism for recovery is now largely in place. The question is whether that recovery will be assisted more by my right hon. Friend's Budget or by the Opposition's phantom Budget, which has not yet been fully substantiated before us. For all that we can tell, that will be a cocktail of high borrowing and high taxes. If the Opposition wish to deny that, it is incumbent on them to be much more specific about their spending promises, both explicit and implicit.

The Labour party has placed an advertisement about the NHS in the national press today, in which they imply the tragic death of one child would not have happened if they were in power. That would have huge cost implications, and if they say that they will fund the NHS so that not one single person's life will ever be lost unnecessarily they should tell us how much that would cost, and how they would fund it. If they cannot put up the funds and tell us how they would raise them, they should give up that nauseating line in tear-jerking advertising, which seems wholly hypocritical.

I believe that Labour's plans would snuff out rather than encourage recovery. Probably the only blockage to recovery, now that the right mechanistic steps have been taken to enable it to take place, is the worry that a Labour Government might be elected. On 9 April the electorate can remove that doubt from everyone's mind. For their own sake, and for the sake of the country, I hope that the electorate will clearly do their duty.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Unless speeches are briefer I am afraid that one or two hon. Members who wish to speak may be disappointed.

8.28 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I shall try to be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) talked about how the Government had helped the health service. I do not know how they can have done that, when they have put up prescription charges. Yesterday, in the Budget debate, the Minister of State and her right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer claimed that they were giving working people and the lower-paid a better deal. How can they say that when, only a few weeks ago, they increased prescription charges? Conservative Members know that nowadays a doctor may specify not one but several items on a prescription, and they all have to be paid for separately.

No one in my community or in my hon. Friends' communities will be kidded by the Budget yesterday.

I was concerned by the talk at Question Time today about Britain being a trading nation. I am the son of a merchant seaman who, like my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden), had a career in the merchant navy during the war. Many of his friends were lost in shipwrecks then. My late father always hoped that there would always be work for seafarers in the fleet. As a result of the taxation system and the lack of incentive, shipowners have been forced to go abroad to find foreign seamen to man our navy, and they are sometimes badly trained.

Hon. Members have referred to our bad industrial relations and strikes. My father was a seaman all his life, as were many men in the community in Glasgow in which I was brought up. There were few strikes by the National Union of Seamen. A strike was planned in 1938, but because war was imminent, the seafarers did not go on strike for better conditions. They put aside their demands on conditions and wages because they knew that the country needed them. It is a pity that the Budget did nothing for our seafarers.

Something could have been done about the building industry. Any hon. Member who was served in local government knows that, the minute a housing contract goes into the system, bricklayers, plumbers and joiners are taken off the dole. I know that the Government say that bricklayers, plumbers, joiners and electricians should be self-employed. Many of them are. They have severe difficulties when big companies do not pay them for six or seven months after the contracts are completed. A self-employed journeyman cannot stand that, because it means that he has to go to the banks, which charge rates that could put him out of business.

The Chancellor said yesterday that the increase in duty on beer was small and was in line with inflation. The Minister knows that the brewing industry is an excellent employer of labour. The Tennants Caledonian brewery is in my constituency. The men and women employed in the industry enjoy reasonable rates of pay and a good pension scheme. If we keep putting up the price and the duty on such commodities, we are in danger of losing. The Treasury gets a great deal of money. The Minister must know that people are moving away from beer to wine because of the duty. We are in danger of overkill.

We could have done more for the whisky industry. The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), who has now left the Chamber, talked about farming. It is not widely appreciated that farmers in the north-east of

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Scotland depend greatly on the whisky industry because they sell barley to that industry. It takes good farmers to produce barley for the whisky industry. If the industry is damaged, there is a knock-on effect, not only for people in constituencies such as mine, but for farmers in the rural areas. Farming communities in England also depend on the whisky industry. The industry buys at home rather than abroad.

We face the prospect of harmonisation. The French do not care too much about cognac, because the cognac owners also own the vineyards. As long as they do all right in terms of taxation on wine, they are prepared to throw the cognac industry away. We cannot do that in Scotland, because we produce a distilled product. Other Community countries, such as Spain, Italy and France, will gang up against the whisky industry if the Minister of State does not watch out. I think that she is well aware of that.

I have been in the House for almost 13 years. I have served in opposition, so I hope that after 9 April I will sit on the Government Benches as a Back-Bench Member supporting Labour Ministers. It looks good. I have seen many sad faces among Conservative Members. I do not mean hon. Members who are retiring, some of whom I am sorry to see going because I have had a good relationship with them through the British-Italian group and through the Christian Parliamentary group. There are some long faces: Tory Members know that they will lose because they have taken the people of Britain for granted for too long. Many issues will come home to roost on 9 April. I shall be pleased to sit on the other side of the Chamber next month; it will make a change.

Mr. Oppenheim: Don't hold your breath.

Mr. Martin: Despite what the hon. Gentleman says, I am willing to put a bet on it, although I am not a gambling man.

In 13 years of Tory Government, I have seen terrible unemployment in my constituency. I cannot remember the great depression, but I was brought up in a home in which my father was forced to be a seaman because he could not get work in Glasgow. My mother brought us up to appreciate what happened with the means test during the great depression. In my constituency, I see men and women who are now married and have never had decent jobs. The Chancellor could have done something for them.

The Chancellor could have given incentives to employers to take on adult apprentices. I have never heard Tory Members mention adult apprenticeships. A young man who has missed out because he has never been able to get an apprenticeship as a carpenter or as an electrician must still want an apprenticeship. They must want a trade. I had the chance of a trade when I left school in 1960. Why did not the Government bring in incentives and say to employers, "Take on a man or woman of 30 or 32 as well as a youngster—give them a decent wage and we will subsidise you to get skilled labour into the market"?

One problem is that, if we ever have an upturn in the economy, the scream will go up that there are no skilled workers. I was a trained sheet metal worker. Many of my colleagues who have jobs tell me that the average age of those skilled men is getting higher, because no youngsters are coming in to take their place. I could not do heavy plating or climb as high as I did when I was 22. No incentive has been given.

I watched the Kilroy-Silk programme this morning and saw that the Minister had a rough time. It is all credit to her that she handled herself well. She must have done it for Lent; her penance must have been to go on "Kilroy". Hardly a friendly voice spoke in favour of the Budget——

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): BBC bias.

Mr. Martin: The hon. Gentleman talks about BBC bias. The BBC is not noted for being friendly towards the Labour party.

There has been much tub thumping about how the extra money will help the poor. The Minister knows that there are many hidden costs that people in our communities must bear. Scotland has had an extra year of the poll tax. VAT is up to 17 per cent. The hon. Lady says, "You cannot have it every way. We have cut the poll tax, and that is why VAT had to go up to 17 per cent." But it was her fault that we had the poll tax. She went into the Division Lobby to vote for the poll tax, which, in the end, brought down the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). Conservative Members blamed her, yet they cheered her when she brought the poll tax into Scotland.

Now there are rent rises. The Government will say that Labour-controlled authorities are bringing in rent rises. They cannot say that about Scottish Homes. One of my constituents is to pay £25 a month extra in rent. By the way, she lives in a tenement. Seven of her neighbours will not suffer that rise because of special legislation. Those who came late into local housing associations are in the same situation as the previous deregulated tenants. Is the Minister telling me that that lady is better off with this Budget when she gets a bit of a tax cut working in a local hospital but will be hit for £25 a month more than her neighbours?

It will not stop there. The housing association has told her that her rent will go up another £25 a month next year. That is Tory control. Hand-picked Tory lackeys have been put into Scottish Homes. I hope that I receive a commitment from the Government that the placemen and women who have been put into quangos will be dumped.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I heard the Minister's rather quiet remark about the BBC packing the "Kilroy" show this morning. That is entirely mistaken. The "PM" radio programme has not had a single letter or telephone message of support for the Budget. If Ministers try to get around that, they are saying that the BBC is trying to pack the nation, which is hardly the case—the nation rejects the Budget.

Mr. Martin: I agree with my hon. Friend.

What about the hidden costs for the elderly? Conservative Members have tears in their eyes when they talk about the elderly. One could not find a more responsible local authority than Strathclyde regional council. It is not packed with lunatic left nutcases—it has traditional Labour party men and women such as those who are present this evening. They have been screwed into the ground so hard that they have been forced to take away warden schemes and the sheltered housing complex. The Secretary of State for Scotland has done nothing to ease the situation. Those are the hidden costs that nobody beats a drum about when we talk about the Budget.

When there was a decline in traditional Scottish industries, Tory Ministers said, "We cannot interfere in business." However, they give ammunition to the nationalists to say to the people of Scotland, "Break away." That is the last thing that I want. I want constitutional change, but I do not want to break away from the men and women—my brothers and sisters—in England and in Wales. Scottish nationalist Members appear to be respectable men and women, but there is a fascist element within the nationalist movement. I have seen them at polling stations during by-elections bullying old men and women who are handing out leaflets for other parties. I have seen them let down tyres. I have heard of them putting bricks through shop windows and those of opposition parties.

I am proud of my heritage and of my roots in Scotland, and I am ashamed when people behave in that manner. The Conservatives give them ammunition when they denude our railway industry and places such as Ravenscraig, acting like Pontius Pilate and washing their hands of them.

I look forward to a Labour victory and to a more caring society than we have had in the past 13 years. I want to be on the Government side of the Chamber.

8.45 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin). He mentioned that Conservative Members do not have a policy of intervening to save old and dying industries. He should address his remarks to his own Front Bench because Opposition Front-Bench Members have had many opportunities in the past two months to commit themselves unequivocally to save Ravenscraig if Labour comes to power, but they have never once committed themselves to doing that.

It saddens me that two of my colleagues from Derbyshire have decided to stand down at the election. One is my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost). He has always been a very kind and decent neighbour. I inherited part of his previous constituency. The other is my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) whose trenchant economic views in the Tea Room and Smoking Room I have enjoyed over the past nine years. Over that period, my hon. Friend has moved from what has sometimes misleadingly been called the wet wing of the party to the rather drier wing of the party. I welcome that move. Perhaps it is a good thing that he is standing down because he might be tempted to go the full circle in the next Parliament. I regret that he is standing down. I shall miss his company and his fine economic mind.

Over the past day or so, there has been much comment that somehow the Budget signals the end of monetarism or Thatcherism. Some pundits and journalists sometimes confuse monetary policy with fiscal policy. There can seldom have been any time in recent history when monetary policy, which controls the supply of money—which, of course, is monetarism—has been so tight. In fact, supposedly in the heyday of Thatcherism or monetarism between 1983 and 1989, broad money in Britain rose by a massive 150 per cent. At the same time, the rise in broad money in France was only a third of that. There is a little irony there. Under the nominally socialist Government of President Mitterrand, monetary policy was far tighter in France in the mid-1980s than it was under the nominally monetarist Government of my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) in Britain. As a leader in the *Financial Times* pointed out a couple of years ago, Mitterrandism was perhaps more Thatcherite than Thatcherism. I do not accept that the Budget represents a retreat from monetarism, for the very reason that monetary policy is extremely tight at the moment. Of course, fiscal policy is looser.

Once again, let us cast our minds back to 1981, to the previous recession, and consider the PSBR then. Public borrowing in 1981 was higher as a proportion of GDP than it is projected to be next year. Certainly, next year's projected PSBR is far lower than it ever was on average under Labour in the 1970s. Another important point to remember is that public sector debt has been halved over the past 13 years, which puts us in a far stronger position to borrow when necessary during a recession, which we are doing at the moment.

However, we must remind ourselves of the disadvantages of too much dependence on state borrowing. For one thing, the state is competing with private industry in the capital market and has a tendency to push up interest rates at the expense of private industry in raising capital. That is the crowding-out effect. It is important that my hon. Friends should remember that. So long as we have a firm commitment to bringing the budget back into balance over the economic cycle, state borrowing should not be detrimental to the economy. It is obviously right and proper that we should borrow during a recession.

Opposition Members have a cheek to criticise the Government for the public sector borrowing requirement, not only because their record in government was one of massively greater PSBRs in real terms than we have now or will have under the projected PSBR next year, but because every time in the past few years a Labour spokesman has gone on tour around the country and has been asked what might be the spending commitments of a future Labour Government, he or she has committed the party to extra spending, whether on overseas aid, education, health, the railways, or whatever, and, when pressed, have stated that that extra spending would be the priority of a future Labour Government. So Opposition Members have no right whatever to criticise the PSBR projected for next year by the Government.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) said, there is a deep dishonesty in Labour's current advertising campaign. It says that a child died as a result of lack of funding in the national health service. Under no Government ever has the NHS been able to guarantee immediate help or medical aid on the spot for everyone who has ever required it. If Opposition Members suggest that a future Labour Government could guarantee that, they are leading the electorate up the garden path in an unpleasant and irresponsible way. They are taking advantage of the sick and vulnerable for political ends.

In their heart of hearts, Opposition Members know that no Government can fund the NHS up to the level where it can guarantee immediate and full medical treatment for any condition that anyone might have. They should admit it. If any Opposition Member wants to challenge that and say that a future Labour Government would commit themselves to a policy of treating everyone absolutely on demand, regardless, I will happily give way. Will the Front

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Bench spokesman commit himself to that? If not, the Labour party should drop its demeaning and sick advertising campaign.

I also find Labour's position on tax somewhat odd and unsatisfactory. For one thing, Labour was in favour of a low base rate. It originally had a lower base rate. All its policy documents speak of the need for a lower 20p band for the low paid. In the past 24 hours, several Opposition Members of Parliament have expressed their support for a lower tax band. Yet the Opposition Front Bench spokesman said today that the Labour party would vote against that in the Lobby.

The Labour party's argument for voting against the lower tax band is that public spending is more important than tax cuts and we must use public borrowing to fund improvements in the infrastructure. To an extent, I agree. But what do Labour Members think the autumn statement last year was all about? It signalled massive increases in public investment and public spending. That was part of a long line of significant increases in public spending under the Conservative Government. We have seen huge rises in funding for the NHS, education and, particularly in the past year, the railways.

The amount of money that has gone into public investment as a result of the autumn statement outweighs by a factor of about 10 to one the amount of money that has gone into tax cuts. It is astonishing that Opposition Members should begrudge tax cuts to the lower paid. It shows a strange attitude. Labour Members seem to believe that somehow people owe their money to the state and if the state allows them to keep a little, that is very nice. Tax cuts for the lower paid and increases in support for pensioners have been widely welcomed in my constituency.

Time and again, Opposition Members call for investment in industry. I agree with them. We need more investment in industry. But they know that savings and investment are closely linked. To have people saving large amounts of money in an economy not only makes a pool of capital available to industry but tends to bear down on both inflation and interest rates. Everyone knows that savings rates and investment are closely linked.

So the best that one can do is to lower taxes for savers. That is what the Government have done. The worst that one can do is to clobber savers with an investment income surcharge. Above all, Labour's proposal to return to the investment income surcharge of the 1970s shows how little it has learnt in the past 13 years and how shallow is its commitment to getting investment going in Britain.

It is worth reminding Labour Members that, under the Conservative Government in the past 13 years, investment in manufacturing industry has been significantly higher in real terms. Manufacturing output is significantly higher. It fell under the last Labour Government. Productivity in manufacturing industry is 50 per cent. higher that it was in 1979—it rose faster than in any other major economy during the 1980s—and our exports of manufactures have increased by about a quarter during the past three years.

I would be the first to admit that we have problems in my constituency of Amber Valley. Certainly, the recession has caused problems. But it is worth hon. Members casting their minds back to the 1970s, when areas such as mine were dependent on largely low-paid jobs in the coal industry. Now the constituency enjoys a diverse manufacturing base. There are many companies in my constituency, covering a wide range of manufacturing activities from repairing turbine blades and making chemicals used in the manufacture of semi-conductors to making carpets, making chocolates and engineering. Many of those companies are flourishing despite the recession, and many have done very well indeed.

To flourish further, however, the companies in my constituency need, first, steady non-inflationary conditions. Our monetary policy is delivering and will deliver that. Secondly, they need ready availability of capital. The economy is going through a fundamental shift from over-consumption as a result of a reduction in tax breaks on consumption. Less tax on savings will also increase the availability of capital for industry.

Thirdly, companies need pro-business attitudes. Conservative Members have such attitudes, but I am afraid that great hostility to business, enterprise and industry still manifests itself among Opposition Members.

Fourthly—and perhaps most importantly—industry needs a well-educated population to provide the skilled, sophisticated work force required in a modern economy. Our reforms are delivering that.

Fifthly, industry needs incentives in the form of lower taxation. Labour would tax savings, it would tax business, it would tax individuals, and it would end our education reforms. All those policies would do tremendous harm to business and would mean that our industry would be less likely to create the wealth required to pay for the higher living standards and improved public services that we all want, regardless of party.

At a time when socialism is being rejected all over the world, in virtually every country except Cuba and North Korea, I find it extraordinary that Opposition Members are proposing the policies of renationalisation and higher taxation which have been so resoundingly rejected. I admit that mistakes have been made, but they should not obscure the significant progress made by our economy since 1979. In my area industry, and especially manufacturing, is far better off than it was in 1979. The Budget will help the lower-paid, it will help business and it will help us to resume the growth that we enjoyed in the 1980s.

8.59 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I noted the length of time that the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) took over his speech. He has denied his hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) the opportunity to make a contribution. If I spoke for the same amount of time as the hon. Member for Amber Valley, we would be into the winding-up speeches. He has demonstrated the way in which the Conservative party works and the selfishness in its make-up.

The hon. Member for Amber Valley referred to income tax reductions. Someone has already asked, "Who gains most from the reduction to a 20p tax band, a Member of Parliament or a person earning £70 a week?" That is the crux of the issue of tax reductions. It is not the poorest members of society who will gain most from the Budget, but the wealthiest. That is typical of what Tory Chancellors do at Budget time, but it is significant because this is a Budget for the general election and not for the general well-being of the country.

Neither the Chancellor nor any Conservative Member has referred to the need for housing. The housing situation has created a social problem and further resources must be used to build affordable houses for people to rent, especially in rural areas where there is a massive shortage of such housing, yet little has been done in the Budget to provide facilities for building those houses.

If local authorities were given the opportunity to use their resources to provide council houses, it would resolve a social need and generate employment in areas where there is massive unemployment in the construction industry. If the Chancellor had made any suggestions in the Budget to help areas with housing shortages, it would have helped those communities in many other ways. No provision is made in the Budget to solve that social problem—the housing problem.

When I hear Conservative Members talking about the necessity of resolving the economic problem facing this country, I wonder who created that problem. For 13 years we have been hearing about what the Government intend to do to put the country right. Yet tonight we are being told of the necessity for certain action to arrest the decline in the economy. That decline has been brought about by Conservative Members pursuing and voting for policies which have created the slump and the decline of manufacturing and other major industries in this country. Those problems have been created by the Conservatives.

When Conservatives talk about what the Labour party is offering to the nation, they should hang their heads in shame because they have made such a mess of the economy. They have created greater hardship for people. The policies of the Government and of Conservative Members have created 3 million unemployed.

We have been advised that there will be a reduction in car tax, and that that will help to stimulate the car industry. I welcome the fact that there has been some suggestion that manufacturing industry should be helped, but it stops there. That reduction will not do a great deal for other industries that depend upon the car industry to generate employment. It will not do much for a factory in my constituency, Woodhead, which manufactures hydraulics for the car industry. A great deal of money and energy have been spent trying to defend jobs at the factory and to keep it together. The reduction will not offer much help to those workers. The Government could have announced greater investment and more schemes designed to help industries, such as Woodhead, in my constituency. In turn, that would generate further wealth for the local community in particular as well as for the country.

The Chancellor would prefer to give money in tax handouts to Members of Parliament and other wealthy earners than to channel available national resources into the provision of employment in engineering and other manufacturing industries. That demonstrates the difference between the Labour party and the Conservative party. We want resources to be channeled into generating wealth, which, in turn, could generate more resources to provide better facilities to help people.

The VAT increases imposed by the Government have not helped engineering industries and factories such as Woodhead. The constant increases in VAT have not helped to generate employment. Yesterday the Chancellor said that the Government had no plans to increase VAT. He was asked for how long we could be assured of no such increase—he refused to answer.

I put the same question to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, because there is a fear and suspicion that a further increase in VAT will soon be announced. We all remember how, in 1982, the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) said that the Government had no plans to increase VAT. However, it was then increased from 8 to 15 per cent. Therefore, the people cannot trust the Tories when they make such promises. Perhaps we can have some suggestion about what the Chancellor means when he says that the Government have no plans to increase VAT.

I welcome the fact that the uniform business rate has been frozen. After all, for the past 18 months the Labour party has said that something must be done to help businesses, particularly small ones. The Chancellor has taken some action, but it is too little, too late. If the general election had not been arranged for 9 April I wonder whether such a freeze would have been introduced.

The local authorities have already set their budgets for next year. They have set the uniform business rate and the bills have been sent out. If changes have to be made as a result of the Chancellor's announcement, will local authorities be reimbursed the full cost of those changes? Will the Minister assure me that there will be no loss to local authorities because of the Government's lame declaration that action had to be taken to help small businesses? I welcome such action. Indeed, I wrote to the Prime Minister saying that something should be done in the interest of small businesses. But I want an assurance that local authorities that have notified businesses of their charges for rates under the uniform business rate for the coming year will be reimbursed fully. I am afraid that local authorities will have to find additional resources to meet the late changes which the Government have made.

Other people also rely on local services and many people want their local authorities to provide a better quality service, but the Budget gives no assistance for that. Why did not the Chancellor take the opportunity to abolish the 20 per cent. contribution paid by old-age pensioners, people on income support and those on low incomes? Opposition Members have often pushed for action to be taken to reduce the problems faced by local authorities in collecting the poll tax from people who are charged that 20 per cent. Will the Minister think about that matter carefully, because it has a bearing on local authorities' activities and work?

Had the decision on the uniform business rate been taken a year ago, 50,000 businesses that have gone bankrupt in the past year would have had an opportunity to take advantage of the proposals. Some of them might have been in business today if the Government had heeded our request that more should be done to help small businesses. Had action been taken a year ago, some 100,000 families who have now lost their homes because of the Government's policies would still be in their homes. Conservative Members say that something must be done to get the country out of that mess, but they created the mess.

A further issue that is causing great concern, in Yorkshire and Humberside in particular but in the country in general, is the increase in crime, yet the Budget provides nothing to help stop that increase and the suffering that it causes to communities. The resources for preventing and combating crime—funding to the police authorities—have been capped, but the means for committing crime are left to free market forces, which is the Government's philosophy. Again, the Government have missed an opportunity.

[Mr. William O'Brien]

West Yorkshire police have made it abundantly clear what they want in their area to combat crime. All they need are the resources to be able to do that. But Conservative Members and Ministers restrict police forces' ability to combat crime. There is the issue of reducing taxes to be considered before they allow those services to be provided.

With reference to the increase in pensions of people on income support, can we be assured that, as income support is means tested, people who receive housing benefit or poll tax refunds, or people from the mining districts of West Yorkshire who receive fuel allowances because they or their husbands have worked in the mining industry, will not lose out? When the Minister winds up, will he address that issue, as it means a great deal to many people in coal mining districts? Housing benefit and poll tax rebate apply to every community in the country. Therefore, we make a plea for some assurance that those people will not lose out due to the hidden agenda within the Budget.

The Budget contains no provision for new housing, new hospitals, new schools, new sheltered schemes and all the facilities that people need. Consequently, people cannot wait for 9 April, when they can change the Government and ensure that some of the social provisions necessary to sustain a reasonable standard of life are introduced.

9.16 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Today's debate has been marked by a number of speeches from retiring Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Sir P. Duffy), the right hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Sir I. Stewart) and the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) gave gentle and considered speeches, and we shall miss them greatly.

The most abiding memory that I shall take away from this debate is that of the moving contribution of my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), who spoke of the impact of unemployment on his constituency. He described how his district had been devastated and was no longer a proud manufacturing area. The concern with which he spoke rang true to many Labour Members. He has had a distinguished career in the House, and has contributed greatly to the business, both of the House and of the Government. We shall sorely miss his wise counsels.

Speaking as he did about the scale of manufacturing decline in his constituency, my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South highlighted the background against which we must examine the Budget. When the Chancellor stood up on 19 March last year to deliver his Budget speech, he said:

> "To sum up, the prospect for the year ahead is for an end to the recession, growth of about 2 per cent. in the 12 months to the first half of 1992 . . . This does not seem to me an unpromising outlook."—[*Official Report*, 19 March 1991; Vol. 188, c. 166.]

What has happened since? We now know—the Chancellor confirmed it in his speech yesterday—that in the past calendar year, growth fell by 2·5 percentage points. We are still deeply enmeshed in the recession. Indeed, the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) gave the game away. In recent weeks and months, we have heard a great deal from the Government about how we are in a world recession and about why the Government should not be blamed for it. The hon. Member for Test gave the lie to that when he said—when challenged, he repeated it—that we had been the first country into recession and were likely to be the last country out.

Unemployment is still rising steeply, and it has risen for 22 consecutive months, during which there has been a cumulative increase of 1 million people out of jobs. Growth has been poor. Not only did our economy shrink last year by 2·5 percentage points, but between 1979 and 1991 the average annual growth rate was 1·7 per cent., the lowest achieved by any post-war Government.

Britain is the only European Community country in which manufacturing investment is lower than it was in 1979. The average interest rate under the Tories has been 12·4 per cent.; under Labour in the 1970s, it was 10·7 per cent. We have the highest number of business failures on record. In 1991, there were 47,800 of them. There were 75,000 house reposssessions in 1991. Those figures show the scale of the difficulties facing our economy.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that only 2·3 per cent. of all mortgagees are over six months in arrears and therefore liable to repossession; and that the additional measures for the business expansion scheme announced in the Budget will go a long way towards remedying that? The problem is much smaller than he would have us believe.

Mr. Smith: I am surprised to hear the hon. Lady write off the problems of 270,000 home owners so lightly. Thousands of families are falling victim to repossession or are struggling to make their mortgage payments—as a direct result of the interest rate decisions taken by the Government.

Every working day in Britain, 3,000 people lose their jobs, 200 businesses go bust and 300 homes are repossessed. That is what life is like in Conservative Britain after 13 years.

The Budget revealed the extent of the difficulty that our economy is in. What emerged eventually from what the Chancellor said in giving that £28 billion PSBR figure and then revealing that he was only giving a stimulus of about £1·5 billion within that figure was that the underlying PSBR, the one that existed even before he got to his feet yesterday, was £26·5 billion. That was a much worse figure than any commentator, anyone in the City, any of the analysts, had been expecting, and it revealed the sheer extent of the difficulty that faces us in our economy.

In such circumstances the overwhelming, overriding priority should have been a Budget for recovery, a Budget to build our way out of recession. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Sir P. Duffy) in his fine speech focused on the issue of what the Budget should have done. When he introduced it, the Chancellor said that it was a Budget for recovery, and the Chief Secretary repeated that this afternoon, but, of course, it was not a Budget for recovery. Against the test of whether the Budget will help to provide an engine for economic recovery, it fails miserably to live up to the task.

Mr. John Garrett: Is my hon. Friend aware that, after I left the Chamber this afternoon, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury implied—said, I believe—that I was partial to a 20p tax band? He was joined in that contention by the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), whose sole purpose in the House, as far as I can tell, is to make his colleagues feel dynamic. I have since checked with the journalist to whom I gave the interview, and what I said was that a lower tax band was a good idea. Who would disagree with that? It was a good idea in principle, but my constituents will not benefit from the palliative, given the depth of the recession that has hit my constituency for the last 18 months, the prospect of which is never ending.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend makes a valid point and usefully puts on the record a correction of the misinterpretation which has been placed on his supposed remarks by some Conservative Members.

The Budget will not be of any real help to the 3,000 people who will have lost their jobs today. I doubt whether many of them will find that their jobs have been saved by what the Chancellor did yesterday. Of course the Budget offered a little help to business. The measures on the uniform business rate, for example—deferring increases which will none the less subsequently be levied, so it is a deferral rather than a cancellation of uniform business rate levies—are welcome. But we must point out that it was the Government who invented the uniform business rate in the first place and who forced it in along with the poll tax, and now they expect us to cheer because they have had to sweep up some of the debris that has resulted from it.

The car tax measure is also welcome for the motor industry. It is not particularly well targeted, because it applies to foreign-made cars every bit as much as it applies to British-made cars. None the less, it is a welcome measure, as the car industry has been suffering grievously over recent months. Apart, however, from those measures and a few bits and pieces relating to value added tax—most of which are indeed welcome—the Budget contained little for business, industry, investment and recovery.

Many things that should have been done in the Budget were totally ignored, or in some cases rejected, by the Chancellor. He could have used it to provide improved first-year capital allowances for investment in manufacturing industry. Many people up and down the country have called for such an improvement, and a Labour Government will wish to provide it. The Government could have used the business expansion scheme, rather than cancelling it completely, as they have now decided to do in two years' time: they could have switched it into support for growing businesses, especially in manufacturing industry.

I must say that it was a bit rich for the Chancellor to say that nowadays only a small part of the total invested in the business expansion scheme goes to small businesses. Who is responsible for that? It was the present Government who brought in provision for BES investment in private rented housing; it was the present Government who gave it a £5 million limit, as opposed to the general limit of £500,000 for BES investment. It was the present Government who threw the direction of BES completely out of kilter. Now, having realised some of their mistakes—about which we have been telling them for years—they say that they will cancel the scheme completely.

The Budget could have included incentives for investment in research and development. It could have made real provision for the imposition of penalties for late payment of bills by firms to other firms. It could have set out a national programme of training and work experience to get some of our young people back to work and to give them the skills that they need to compete in the modern industrial world.

The Budget could have provided a real deal for pensioners, rather than a restricted deal aimed only at those receiving income support, and ignoring the genuine difficulties experienced by pensioners who are just above the income support level and who are suffering very much at present. It could have included a programme of phased release of capital receipts, as my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) suggested. Such a programme would not only provide the construction industry with a much needed boost: it would help to house some of our homeless families. All that would have been a real agenda for a Budget for recovery, but none of it was done.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) said that the Budget would not reverse the decline of our economy. He was absolutely right: the Budget represents a savagely wasted opportunity. Some measures in it, most of them small, are welcome none the less, the first and most important being the combining of tax and spending decisions in a single exercise. We have called for that for years, but the Government have hitherto rejected it totally; now they have seen the light.

There is also some welcome help for the film industry. Although I note that the comments this morning by some people in the industry have not been ecstatic, they welcome the fact that their position has been eased somewhat.

The Budget rightly recognises the need to use a scale other than engine size for company car scales of benefit. There is also a welcome indication of a preference for diesel over leaded petrol, along with the introduction of a wider differential between leaded and unleaded petrol, and the welcome removal of the VAT that is levied when a choice is offered between a company car and salary.

There is the removal of the £3,000 limit on the amount that can be invested in a personal equity plan via unit trusts and investment trusts.

We have been advocating all those measures for a substantial time, and we are pleased that the Government recognise the need for them.

Mr. John Townend *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I will not give way because time is short. An element of choice is introduced into the distribution of the married couple's allowance. We have been asking for that change ever since the allowance was invented by the previous Chancellor in 1988. Every year we have advocated it, and every year the Government have said that it was impossible. Now, they say that they will do it, and that is welcome.

We need to lay to rest a few Government myths about the Budget. First, the Conservatives claim that theirs is the party of low taxation. It is not. The Red Book gives it away. It shows that the overall tax burden as a percentage of GDP has increased from 34·75 per cent. in 1979 to 37·25 per cent. last year and 36·75 per cent. this year. We have known that for some time.

The Red Book also reveals that, in 1996-97, the proportion of national wealth taken by the tax burden is scheduled to increase to 38 per cent. The Government have not only put up the overall tax burden, but it is scheduled to go up even further during the next few years if they remain in office.

[Mr. Smith]

Secondly, the Government claim that they are giving special help to the low-paid by the tax measures in the Budget. The 20 per cent. band will apply to everyone, not just to the low-paid. For people at the very bottom of the income scale, there is a real and devastating tax and benefit trap. Those on family credit, housing benefit and poll tax benefit and those facing rent rises such as those described by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) will find that virtually all the trumpeted tax reduction will be gobbled up by their loss of benefit entitlement.

Hundreds of thousands of people will be cruelly deceived by the Government saying that the tax change will be an enormous benefit to them. It will not. Some people are likely to be worse off after the change than they are now. Taking account of the spending tax increase that the Government are introducing, 250,000 taxpayers could be up to 76p a week worse off after the Budget.

Thirdly, the Government claim that they will balance the budget over the cycle. I shall repeat the question that I asked the Chief Secretary earlier: what precisely do the Government mean by "the cycle"? The Red Book shows that public sector finances are scheduled to be in deficit by £28 billion this year, by £32 billion next year, by £25 billion the year after, by £19 billion the year after that, and by £6 billion the year after that. All that assumes a 3 per cent. rate of growth, and I shall be surprised if the Government achieve that. Where does the cycle end? It is off the scale. The Government predict that, in five years, the public sector will still be in deficit.

Perhaps that is what the Chief Secretary meant in evidence before the Select Committee on 25 November, when he said:

> "If you are asking me to say how long the next cycle is, I am not being perverse when I say I do not know, because we do not know."

That is revealed by the borrowing figures in the Red Book.

The essential priority of the Budget should have been the building of economic recovery from recession. It should have been the restoration of our public services. It should have been investment in industry. It should have been ensuring that our young people can get the training and jobs that they need. It should have been the ending of the nightmare of repossession and homelessness. It should have been paying attention, just for once and just for a change, to the needs of manufacturing industry, which were so eloquently identified by my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South.

Those are the choices that should have been made. Instead, the Chancellor chose the route of tax cuts, and of borrowing to finance them. That is not sensible economics and it will prove not to be sensible politics.

The Budget was best summed up this morning by a business man on Radio 4, who said that the

> "economy was in a mess before the Budget. It's still in a mess after the Budget."

That will be the verdict of the voters in four weeks' time. A Labour Government will then take over and begin to sort out the mess and set us firmly on the road to recovery.

9.41 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Francis Maude): This has been a fascinating day's debate, not always perhaps at fever pitch, but one has sensed that much of the drama has been going on elsewhere than in the Chamber.

It has been notable for a number of splendid speeches. My hon. Friends the Members for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) and for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) and many others made fine fighting speeches. It has been notable also, as the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said, because a number of right hon. and hon. Members made what they predicted were their final speeches in the Chamber. I join the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury in paying tribute to them, particularly to my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Sir I. Stewart) and to my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen). I had the privilege of serving in the Whips' Office with my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome, and I count it a great honour to have had him as a colleague and friend. The House will miss him, my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North and the other right hon. and hon. Members who are leaving the House at the election.

It may be helpful briefly to set out how the Government propose to handle the Finance Bill in the light of today's announcement. We propose to introduce a short Finance Bill with 11 clauses containing the Budget measures that we judge essential to become law before Parliament is dissolved. Principally, they are the Chancellor's proposals for excise duties, most of which were implemented at 6 pm yesterday, and for income tax, including the provision of a lower rate of 20p. In any case, income tax requires renewal before 5 May each year.

Mr. Beith: Will all stages of the Finance Bill be taken on Friday?

Mr. Maude: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will make a further business statement to set out the arrangements.

The Budget contains a number of measures to help business. It has rightly been described as a Budget for the recovery not only by my right hon. Friends but by many others. Rather than rely on the words of politicians, perhaps we should consider what business people have said. For example, the chief executive of the Weir Group said:

> "I think the general conditions of the economy are absolutely right for recovery. Perhaps the thing we need most is to get the election out of the way."

The chairman of Williams Holdings said of the Chancellor:

> "He was right not to attempt to stimulate the economy too much, because I think we are coming out of the recession anyway."

Of course, there are a number of measures already in the pipeline which will have substantial benefits for business in the coming year: the reductions and changes to corporation tax in last year's Budget will come through this year in the shape of reductions worth in the region of £1 billion to businesses, which is a substantial benefit; the changes to the uniform business rate, which have been widely welcomed, will benefit no fewer than 900,000 business properties and that, again, has been widely welcomed; allowing more businesses to make quarterly payments of tax deducted under the pay-as-you-earn scheme so that now 750,000 businesses are able to do that; the four measures that we announced to encourage prompt payment of debts, another long-running problem to which we are bringing the possibility of a solution; and the changes to inheritance tax will enable those who work hard to create businesses to feel able to hand them down to their families. We have heard very little from the Opposition about that, and it would be interesting to hear whether they propose to support the measure which has been widely welcomed by the business community as one that would be of great benefit. I do not know whether any Opposition spokesman wishes to say whether the Opposition support that measure. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] Perhaps they are dithering on that as on so many of the important economic issues that face us.

Let me say a word about the motor industry in this country. It has made many substantial advances in recent years. There has been a lot of inward investment, and Nissan recently announced that it is to begin exporting engines from its car factory in Sunderland for the first time this year, in addition to exporting cars.

A lot of the changes that have occurred are revealed in the fact that our motor industry became a net exporter in the last quarter of 1991. Last year, exports of cars went up by 20 per cent. and imports went down by 29 per cent. That shows a very good story, but we recognise that, due to the recession, the car industry has been under pressure so we have taken some measures to assist which have been widely welcomed: the changes in car tax and in capital allowances and some VAT changes add up to a major boost, as the car industry has recognised.

The chief executive of Peugeot said:

> "The car industry employs 1 million people in this country and they will benefit one way or another from this cut in car tax. It is going to be a real boom for the whole economy. This Budget is good for our industry."

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said:

> "We believe that about 70,000 extra sales should result, with all the implications this has for employment."

Therefore, we have introduced a worthwhile package of measures which will be of substantial benefit.

The same is true for the film industry, which has many merits. We have one of the finest film industries in the world but it has been going through a difficult period. Clearly, the long-term future of the industry depends on the industry's talents being fully and productively used, but there is one issue where the Government have decided that it is right to act. Therefore, we have announced a substantial package to boost incentives for the United Kingdom film industry: relief for all pre-production expenditure and the writing off over three years of production expenditure from the time of completion of a film. Those measures offer substantial assistance, especially to smaller companies but also to the British film industry, and the film industry in general has warmly welcomed them overall.

The Budget has been good for business, and that has been recognised by what businesses have said rather than the self-styled experts in the Opposition—people who actually run businesses have said how much they welcome the Budget. The president of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce—never an organisation to support the Government slavishly, but ready to be critical when it thinks right—said:

> "The combined effect of these measures will provide considerable assistance for businesses fighting their way out of recession. United Kingdom business believe the Chancellor is wholly justified in his continuing priority of defeating inflation. The Chancellor has the full support of British firms".

The country is entitled to place some reliance on words such as those. The truth is that Britain is now a very good place in which to do business—in particular, it has increasingly become a good place in which to manufacture.

Let us look at the figures for inward investment. In 1988-89 the United Kingdom accounted for 39 per cent. of total inward investment by OECD countries in the European Community. Much of that investment came from Japan. We welcome that. Not for us is the knee-jerk reaction of the TUC, which describes such investment as "alien". We have constantly and continually invited Labour Front-Bench spokesmen to dissociate themselves from those extraordinarily offensive and damaging remarks, but on every occasion they have chosen to remain silent—craven in the face of those disgraceful remarks; craven and afraid to dissociate themselves from the words of their paymasters.

The benefits of that inward investment can be seen, for example, in the fact that we are now a net exporter of television sets. The trade balance in cars is set to be in surplus by the mid-1990s.

What do investors see? They have a free choice to go wherever they choose. What do they see that makes it so worth while to come to Britain? First, they see the transformation of Britain as a workplace. It used to be a country riddled with ailments, restrictive practices, red tape and market distortions. But it has now transformed itself.

The twin symptoms that most people saw were the strike record and the poor productivity. Now we have a record on both which is the envy of the world. In the past 10 years, productivity has grown by more than half. In the 1980s, our growth in productivity was the fastest of all the G7 countries, whereas in the previous two decades Britain had the slowest growth. That, and our natural skills base, explains why people who have to make choices about where to manufacture goods choose to do so in Britain.

What would happen under Labour? Would those who have that choice still freely elect to manufacture in Britain? What would they face? They would face a strikers charter, which would blow away our new record in industrial relations which is, as I have said, the envy of the world. They would face a minimum wage, adding endlessly to business costs, and a Government committed to the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty, which would impose on businesses huge additional costs about which businesses in Europe are just beginning to become alarmed. They would face all the red tape of the 283 quangos that the Labour party proposes to set up—and all those disadvantages come well before we have even considered the question of taxation.

What does business think of that? It is worth finding out what those who make the decisions say. Not the Government, but a City firm—no doubt one that has had the benefit of the attentions of the Labour Front-Bench spokesmen—asked 105 people who take decisions in large and important businesses what they thought. One of the questions was:

> "Do you think a victory by Labour would be good for the economy?"

I have to give credit where credit is due, and admit that 5 per cent. thought that it would be good, and that 9 per

[Mr. Maude]

cent. had no view. However, 86 per cent. thought that a Labour victory would be bad for the economy. The next question was:

> "Do you think a victory by Labour would be good for your business?"

Again, to give all due credit, the results there were better for the Labour party. Sixteen per cent. thought that a Labour victory would be good for their business, and 21 per cent. had no view. Only 63 per cent. thought that it would be bad for their business.

The respondents were than asked:

> "under a Labour Government . . . would you be more or less optimistic on the outlook for"

a number of matters. Labour came closest to getting a positive result in the area on which the party majors—on the question whether people would be more or less optimistic about the outlook for investment spending. But even there, more people thought that a Labour Government would be bad for investment spending.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: Would the Minister be prepared to do a survey on all the companies that have gone bust in 13 years of Tory Government? Would he ask them what they think about the Tory Government?

Mr. Maude: The number of businesses is, after all, at an all-time record. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, with his notorious gloom, talked about the record number of business failures. He failed to talk about the record number of business successes. There are one third more businesses in existence and flourishing today than has ever been the case—certainly more than was the case when we came to office. There is a good record.

Those surveyed were also asked what they thought about Labour's plans to introduce tax incentives to encourage investment spending. They were asked whether that would encourage them to invest more. Some 17 per cent. said yes and 68 per cent. said no. We know that a case has been made for additional capital allowances and for speeded-up capital allowances. The system is already generous. Obviously, many people want to be enabled to pay less tax, but all the evidence shows that faster write-off of investment and capital allowances would not generate significant extra investment.

If one is talking about ways in which to encourage investment, one cannot think of a better way in which to discourage it than to introduce extra taxes on savings, because savings are needed to provide investment. What is Labour's answer? It is to increase the tax on savings. That is the worst discouragement to investment of which one can think.

Labour talks as if investment is its own property and its own strong suit. It talks as if it is the party of investment. Incredibly, Labour claims to be the party of private investment as well as of public investment. A brief look at the facts is worthwhile.

In the three years to 1989, business investment rose by 45 per cent., the fastest ever such rise over such a period. Even last year, a recession year for investment, we still devoted more than 14 per cent. of our total resources to business investment, compared with under 13 per cent. in the best year under the previous Labour Government. Even in a poor recession year, investment was higher as a proportion of GDP than it was in the best year that Labour could manage. The case is clearly proven. There is more investment under a Conservative Government than there ever was under a Labour Government.

One might think that public sector spending should be good ground for Labour, but when one studies the matter it begins to look a bit different. General Government capital spending fell by 45 per cent. under the previous Labour Government—an average of 11 per cent. a year. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury is avid for news. I tell him that general Government capital spending fell under this Government—by less than 1 per cent. a year compared with Labour's average of 11 per cent. The reason is that privatisation has transferred much previous public sector investment into the private sector. Investment in public services is up under this Government compared with the record under Labour, when it was slashed.

It is revealing to consider one or two specific areas. In education, real capital spending per pupil fell by 60 per cent. under the Labour Government. It has risen by a total of 13 per cent.—1 per cent. a year—under this Government. There is the same story in the health service. We see the same story in infrastructure, roads and transport. There were falls under Labour and rises under the Conservatives. On virtually every measure, investment has been down under Labour and up under the Conservative Government.

The Labour party says that it is okay to borrow for investment. Let us consider Labour's investment plans. What Labour means by investment is not investment at all; it is spending. It means spending other people's money. It does not mean spending money on building the future, as Labour claims. Let us not buy that rubbish. It means spending taxpayers' money on swelling the pay packets of the public sector trade unions. Labour speaks about £1 billion extra on the health service, yet not a penny would go to extra patient care because of the effects of introducing the minimum wage, of scrapping competitive tendering and of scrapping charges. Some £1 billion extra would be spent on the health service before a single pound would be spent on improving patient care.

Let us consider income tax. The Leader of the Opposition dithered yesterday about what stance the party would take on our new lower rate band of 20p. There has been disarray today.

The hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett), who has prudently left the Chamber, made a valiant attempt to safeguard his position. It is clear that many members of the Labour party support what we are doing—indeed, the Labour party's own policy document supports it. Pride of place in its pocket guide is a move towards a starting income tax rate of 20 per cent. What will we see? Will it be an erratum slip inserting "not", or an apology stating, "We may have inadvertently given the impression that we thought that this was a good idea. It is a jolly good idea, but we are going to vote against it. This is a really respectable position"? If they think that it is a good idea, when will they do it? Will they do it when a Labour Government have the Budget in balance, as if that could ever happen under a Labour Government? If they do not mean it, they are conducting a deliberate fraud on the British people, and they should apologise for it.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

PETITIONS

A1

10 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I come to the House with the hon. Members for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), and in association with my hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson), to present petitions calling for the upgrading of the A1 road. The petitions bear about 40,000 signatures from both sides of the border. I pay a special tribute to Lothian regional council, East Lothian district council, the Edinburgh *Evening News* and the local press for their vigorous support and assistance in mounting this important petition.

The Government held a press conference about the A1 last week, but the people who signed the petition want action not words. The petition states:

> The Humble Petition of road users and other citizens in Scotland and England,
>
> Sheweth that the A1 trunk road between Musselburgh and Morpeth is intolerably dangerous with an average toll of one death each month; and seriously congested, to the detriment of the interests of local communities and other travellers.
>
> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House should:—
>
> Deplore the loss of 133 lives in ten years on the single carriageway section of the A1 between Edinburgh and Newcastle and Demand that Her Majesty's Government should implement a programme to improve the whole of the A1 between Edinburgh and Newcastle to dual carriageway standard as soon as possible.
>
> And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray &c.

I notice that the top two signatures on one sheet of the petition are those of my constituents Mr. and Mrs. Bell of East Linton, whose daughter was killed on the A1 in 1985. That is what the petition is all about.

To lie upon the Table.

10.1 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): It is my privilege to present 20,000 signatures of the same petition relating to the A1 road, which have been gathered in co-operation with local authorities on both sides of the border, the Members of Parliament on both sides of the border and the people who live along and use the A1 road. Also, 4,450 of the signatures were collected by *The Journal*, a Newcastle newspaper which has fought a vigorous campaign, and other local newspapers have been closely involved. The petition deplores

> the loss of 133 lives in ten years on the single carriageway section of the A1 between Edinburgh and Newcastle.

Since the petition was printed and distributed, more lives have been lost on the single carriageway section of road. Announcements have been made about the desirability of dualling it, but no commitment at all has been made to that dualling. Therefore, the allegations in the petition remain true—that highly dangerous single carriageway on an important strategic road should not be allowed to continue.

Many of my constituents and people from neighbouring areas have added their names to the petition, and I strongly support their plea that that road should be brought to a reasonable dual carriageway standard.

To lie upon the Table.

10.3 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): It is my privilege to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) in respect of the A1 trunk road petition. I, too, have a number of constituents who have lost members of their families. Some of my own friends have been injured or killed in the recent past on the stretch of the A1 that passes through my constituency. Therefore, it is with that aspect in the background that I

> Deplore the loss of 133 lives in ten years on the single carriageway section of the A1 between Edinburgh and Newcastle,

20 or 30 miles of which run through my constituency. Like the hon. Member for East Lothian, I pay tribute to the cross-community support that the petition has received and in particular to the professional support that has been given by the relevant roads authorities to the efforts of those who organised the petition in each of our parliamentary constituencies.

Therefore, I subscribe these extra few signatures gathered in my constituency, to add to the demand that Her Majesty's Government should implement a programme to improve the whole of the A1 between Edinburgh and Newcastle to dual carriageway standard as soon as possible.

To lie upon the Table.

Sunday Trading

10.5 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): It is my pleasure to present a petition about Sunday trading. The petition has been signed by a substantial number of Christian citizens of Swansea who are worried by the decision of the Attorney-General to take no action on illegal Sunday trading. They say that that amounts to a licence for the law to be ignored with impunity by those who wish to do so. It is also their view that the decision puts pressure on retailers who wish to obey the law to open on Sundays or suffer an unfair loss of their market share. They beieve that the decision of some major retailers to continue to defy the law constitutes a challenge to the rule of law, which the Government are wilfully ignoring.

Hence the petition calls on the House to take notice of the case urged by me and by other hon. Members from all parties and to require that the law be enforced until amended. The petitioners urge that it should be amended on the basis of the REST principles—that is, the principles advocated by the "Keep Sunday Special" campaign.

To lie upon the Table.

Mifegyne

10.6 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I have the privilege of presenting a petition of approximately 100 of my constituents who are worried that a product licence has been given to the drug Mifegyne, known as RU486. This is one of several similar petitions which have been presented from many parts of the United Kingdom.

[Mr. James Wallace]

My constituents deplore the fact that the drug causes the death of unborn human beings. The petition prays that the House,

which is committed to upholding respect for human life and protection of the weak and vulnerable, will do everything possible to prevent the distribution and use of Mifegyne (known as RU486) and any other drugs which, like it, are produced with the deliberate intention of destroying innocent human life.

To lie upon the Table.

Insurance Companies (Supervision)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

10.7 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): We shall need a bigger petition bag, Mr. Speaker. You were in the Chair when I made my maiden speech many years ago and it is my singular pleasure that you are in the Chair for the Adjournment debate this evening. I am sure that the House will join me in wishing you well in your retirement. You have fulfilled your office with great distinction over the years.

The subject that I wish to raise is the supervision by the Department of Trade and Industry of insurance companies, particularly in relation to home equity schemes. I shall keep my remarks brief as the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) hopes to catch your eye later, Mr. Speaker, and both I and my hon. Friend the Minister for Corporate Affairs, who is to respond to the debate, hope that she will succeed.

In two sectors of finance—pensions and insurance—the Financial Services Act 1986 provides for self-regulation. Neither I nor the thousands of people—many of them pensioners—who have lost money and are at risk of losing their homes because of home equity schemes believe that the system of self-regulation is working as it was intended.

Originally the home equity scheme was based on a mortgage with a fixed rate of interest. The money borrowed was invested in an annuity to produce a fixed return for the rest of the pensioner's life. Such schemes enabled pensioners who were just managing to survive on their state pensions to release the capital tied up in their homes to provide extra income. The problem was that the rules on annuities ruled out those people between retirement age and 70, so the alternative investment bond scheme was devised, enabling money to be raised on remortgage and reinvested in a unit-linked investment bond—in other words, in the stock market.

Following the Wall street crash on black Monday in October 1987, high interest rates, falling stock markets and the collapse of the property market have meant that those stock market bonds were bound to be unable to provide the income to cover the costs of the mortgages. The result was that pensioners needed to use their capital to make the necessary payments. That compounded the problem. It ate up the capital and reduced the income in a rapidly increasing spiral which could exhaust funds within three or four years. Very often the client had no idea what was happening because of the inadequate information.

The schemes were designed not by rogue high pressure salesmen or by dubious companies, but by household names such as Royal Life, Guardian Royal Exchange, Norwich Union and Cheltenham and Gloucester, to name a few.

Throughout the late 1980s insurance companies increasingly deployed high pressure salesmen on a naive and financially unsophisticated public. The salesmen were given intensive courses in sales techniques, but little instruction in the intricacies of the financial services industry. Business cards and letter headings which pronounced them to be financial advisers and representatives of leading insurance companies gave them a cloak of respectability, which made the public trust them, and they were set loose to earn their living on a commission-only basis.

When some turned out to be rogues, the insurance industry sought to hide behind the Financial Services Act 1986, arguing that the salesmen were not giving financial advice within the terms of the Act, or selling the companies' product. When the advice was bad or negligent, they argued that clients—financially unsophisticated pensioners, in the main—knew and understood the risks. They seriously suggested that pensioners would gamble their homes and risk losing all they possessed for £100 a month or less.

The failure of the schemes is leading to untold misery for tens of thousands of people who may lose their homes. I know of one person who committed suicide.

Following the Financial Services Act, the regulatory bodies, the Life Insurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation and Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association—LAUTRO and FIMBRA—controlled by the Securities and Investments Board, and under the direction of the Department of Trade and Industry, were set up to prevent such problems and to ensure that when they occurred compensation could be paid without the need for expensive and prolonged litigation.

As recently as 6 March, the SIB announced new proposals for a common approach, involving FIMBRA, the solicitors indemnity fund, the insurance ombudsman and the building societies ombudsman. However, that approach does not apply to LAUTRO, which covers insurance company cases, and the proposals were unclear.

I have read the SIB's press release on its scheme and have discussed it with interested parties. No one understands it. It is unclear whether all the bodies would work together on FIMBRA's arbitration scheme or the ombudsman scheme, or whether it is merely an extension of the complaints system. That needs clarification.

Many of my constituents are affected by Royal Life and other hon. Members have informed me of similar problems among their constituents, especially in the south of Hampshire. I have met with those clients and with the group executive of Royal Life and the lawyers involved. I have arranged for leading lawyers in the field to meet my hon. Friend the Minister to explain their concerns, which I believe led to the SIB proposals. However, I regret that the problems with Royal Life remain unresolved some 16 months after my first involvement.

The Royal Life case involves investment bond schemes, based on the guarantee that people would not lose their homes but would have sufficient income to pay the mortgage and to produce an income. The schemes, which were also sold to people below retirement age, simply did not work. I do not believe that they ever could have worked. That must have been known to the companies and the lenders involved but, because of the misleading financial forecasts, investors did not see the inevitable high risks. Even though the schemes arose during the infancy of the Financial Services Act, the problems must have been detectable.

We now know that many of the advisers and salesmen were dishonest and have been sent to prison or await trial for fraud. How could those people have been allowed by the companies concerned to compound their fraud under a regulated system?

In the Royal Life case, I have evidence that, even after complaints and compliance checks by Royal Life, the problems remained undetected. The complaints were sent by the company to the adviser for him to check. The compliance checks gave him the opportunity to choose the clients to be examined and even allowed him to sit in and prompt answers to difficult questions. The cavalier attitude adopted by large companies defeats the whole object of the Financial Services Act—that of protection—and leads to problems not becoming public until too late.

LAUTRO and FIMBRA are the main regulators—the former for company representatives and the latter for independent representatives. LAUTRO has issued an enforcement bulletin, No. 11, which laid out recommendations for compensation. However, on 31 May 1991, Royal Life responded through its solicitors as follows:

> "EB 11 does not support your client claims in the way you contend and we think it would be unfortunate if you were to raise your clients' expectations unfairly in this regard."

In other words, it was a brush-off.

In an example involving the Guardian Royal Exchange, the company even failed to have contracts of employment with its tied agents. It described that as "a technical offence." How can companies be allowed to take that cavalier and complacent attitude? It can only be supposed that it has something to do with the fact that the major insurance companies fund the regulators and also sit on their boards.

Although one might expect problems to arise in the early years of self-regulation, I am alarmed that they appear to be continuing. The claims against companies running "failed equity schemes" amount to hundreds of millions of pounds. Insurance companies and the lenders involved have followed a policy of delaying compensation or under-compensating in order, I believe, to avoid having to meet their liabilities. The regulators should have the power to order companies, including the lenders, to compensate fully and quickly. One company stands out as an example—Norwich Union, which has swiftly compensated nearly every victim. I am amazed that other companies have not followed its lead.

The solicitor handling most of the claims against Royal Life has obtained counsel's advice. I am satisfied that, in law, those claimants should have been compensated by being returned to the situation they were in prior to their dealings with the salesman. However, if writs are involved, an unholy war will break out between the lender, the insurance company, the salesman, solicitors and others as to who is liable. The only people to lose will be the innocent. LAUTRO has, once again, made recommendations that the insurance companies should compensate and claim any contribution from others later.

This whole sorry tale raises three questions. First, how could such schemes ever have been permitted to be sold? Secondly, under a regulated system, how can complaints be ignored and compliance fail? Thirdly, can multinational companies—household names—disregard regulatory bodies and fail to compensate adequately?

The Department of Trade and Industry has responded in part to FIMBRA problems, as evidenced by the SIB on March. I now want my hon. Friend to take urgent steps to ensure that all victims are compensated in accordance with the law and, further, that the whole system which allowed those problems to occur in the first place is reviewed to prevent a repeat.

[Mr. Michael Colvin]

I understand that a report on self-regulatory organisations, SROs, by Sir Kenneth Clucas, is due soon. If his report recommends a merger of FIMBRA and LAUTRO, or perhaps a super SRO, will the SIB be able to implement those recommendations or will that require legislation? I should like the Minister's opinion on that.

Suggested further action should include the compulsory raising of compensation funds for LAUTRO and FIMBRA through a levy on each policy written or upon premiums, backed up by compulsory indemnity insurance for salesmen. Secondly, a totally independent regulating authority should be set up with compulsory membership. Thirdly, although this is not a big problem, I should like my hon. Friend to consult with the Inland Revenue on the question of tax indemnities from the insurance companies in respect of compensation payments made to bond holders.

I pay tribute to Nigel Hodkinson and Neil Stevens, the solicitors at the centre of this tragedy, and to Mrs. Jan Prowting, the secretary of Action Group South. They have done, and continue to do, much to help those who have suffered; I now want the Government to help, too.

10.20 pm

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): I am glad that I have managed to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker. I have been here for a shorter time than the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), but I wish you and your wife well in your retirement at the end of this term.

I shall be brief because the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside has explained clearly not only the failure of the present regulatory system but also the origins of the problem in relation to home equity income plans, which is now well known. I should add that the numbers involved have been grossly underestimated. Age Concern England now estimates that the figure is about 40,000, and some specialist financial journalists such as Paul Cooper think that it is closer to 100,000. The stream of letters that I receive from pensioners who feel that they have been neglected shows that the figure is larger than we think.

I wish to add four questions to those asked by the hon. Member for Romsey annd Waterside. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the liaison committee of regulators of the Securities and Investments Board—the one-stop procedure for registering complaints. We welcome that, but it does not amount to a solution. When will the liaison committee reach decisions on the individual cases about which it now has information? We should like the Minister to answer that, for the simple and crude reason that many of the victims are elderly and cannot wait much longer.

Secondly, how far is it proposed that victims should be compensated? Are we looking at full restitution or the limits of the investors' compensation scheme? Thirdly, has the Minister any proposals to deal with the sharks operating schemes towards the end of their existence? Some of them had a history of dubious business deals and, although they are now banned from membership of FIMBRA, many still operate on a tied basis through some of the insurance brokers.

Finally, has the Minister any plans to resolve uncertainties about FIMBRA's financial viability? This is the flip side of the question asked by the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside. If many of those cases are resolved through the investors' compensation scheme, FIMBRA may be in danger of terminal financial problems, as we have seen in the past.

10.22 pm

The Minister for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): I too would like to add my best wishes for your retirement, Mr. Speaker, and my thanks for the courtesies that you have shown me and my hon. Friends over the years that I have been in this House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) raises some important issues. I am grateful to him for coming to my Department a little while ago to stress the urgency of the matter. As he knows, I then discussed it with the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board, and I am pleased that the SIB is taking the lead in bringing the regulators together to see how best those problems can be tackled. I also wrote recently to all hon. Members detailing the measures that are now being taken, and I hope that that was helpful.

Procedures for dealing with complaints about those schemes are already in operation. Both FIMBRA, which regulates independent financial advisers, and LAUTRO, which regulates the marketing of life offices and their tied agents, have effectively prohibited further unsuitable sales of investment-bond-based home income schemes to prevent recurrence.

The Financial Services Act regulators have also been working to secure redress, where appropriate, for investors who took up such schemes as a result of unsuitable advice. They are in contact with the building societies Commission, the building societies ombudsmanan and other bodies. Following my discussions with the chairman of SIB, they are making progress in bringing together those regulators and ensuring that there is effective co-ordination. I shall ensure that my hon. Friend's comments and those of the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) about the liaison committee and the need for it to come to rapid decisions on how those matters will be handled are brought to the attention of Sir David Walker at the SIB following this debate, because I share their concern that justice should be seen to be done, and be done speedily, in those important cases.

Those investors who are facing difficulties with mortgage repayments as a result of investments in home income schemes no longer meeting all their requirements to service the debt should contact their building societies immediately, if they have not already done so, to discuss interest and repayment arrangements. I am sure that hon. Members will give that advice to their constituents when asked. The societies have stated that they are anxious to avoid repossession, and I renew the Government's plea to the societies that they should consider the cases sympathetically, understanding the background to them.

Those who invested through a reputable firm, such as a life office, and think that they should be compensated should in the first instance apply to that office, and to the regulator—LAUTRO, in the case of life offices, or their tied agents—if they are not satisfied with the result. My hon. Friend is right to say that the Norwich Union has led the way in giving compensation in many cases, which I also welcome.

Some firms selling home income plans have been declared in default by the investors compensation scheme —ICS—and in such cases investors may be eligible for compensation through that scheme. Aylesbury Associates and Fisher Prew-Smith fall into that category. The relevant regulatory body will advise the customers of those former businesses, or hon. Members taking up their cases, if a claim on the ICS can be made and how to make one.

The hon. Member for Redcar asked how much compensation we are talking about. That depends on the procedure being followed and the case of individual constituents. If it is a claim on the ICS, it will be governed by the ICS rules and the maximum limits of the ICS scheme—the £48,000 allowed against the £50,000 claim. If the individual is seeking redress from the investing institution—the insurance company—different levels of compensation will be appropriate, depending on the agreement reached between the customer and his representative, and the company.

Some investors may not have been subject to gross misselling, but may have bought a product whose value has gone down, leading them to embarrassment. It may be that those values are only temporarily depressed, and such investors should seek specialist investment advice as to whether their investment value could increase again, thereby removing the problem, or whether they need to change the investment to try to recoup some of their losses or ensure that they do not have further losses. It is important that those investments that have been made and are still there should be well looked after, as the main solution for those customers would be for their money to be well looked after and therefore grow in the future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside mentioned a case involving Royal Life. I am advised that Royal Life has already made compensation following a number of claims, some of them involving substantial amounts. I am told that Royal is anxious to deal with all the outstanding cases as quickly as possible, and is devoting considerable resources to the matter. However, it has apparently experienced some difficulty in obtaining all the information it needs to deal with the claims.

LAUTRO has met, and is continuing to meet, both Royal and the solicitors acting for the investors to discuss progress. LAUTRO will continue to use its good offices to ensure a satisfactory outcome. Like my hon. Friend, I wish to see a prompt conclusion after all these months, and will ensure that LAUTRO sees a copy of the report of tonight's debate so that my hon. Friend's sense of urgency can be communicated to LAUTRO, which is trying to intermediate in those cases.

Mr. Colvin: I am told that Royal Life has set aside a large amount of money—£12 million—for payments, and has so far paid out £3·5 million. In the southern group, which involves my constituents, there have been 270 claims, only 39 of which have been fully settled. I think that there is some dragging of feet.

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful for that information, which was why I worded my answer cautiously and said that I associated myself with my hon. Friend's wish to see matters dealt with as expeditiously as possible. I will, of course, ask LAUTRO to take account of that information, following tonight's important debate, as it is necessary that justice is dispensed with reasonable speed.

If investors remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their claim after Royal has dealt with it, they can raise the matter with the Insurance Ombudsman Bureau—a recognised complaints authority for LAUTRO. The bureau provides an independent and impartial method of resolving disputes between insurers and complainants, and its services are free to the complainant. The ombudsman's decision is binding on the insurer but not on the complainant, and it does not affect the latter's right to take legal action afterwards. I believe that some complainants have already approached the ombudsman in this matter. It provides a safety valve if things have gone wrong in the preferred method of settling directly with the company.

My hon. Friend mentioned another case, involving a representative of Guardian Royal Exchange, and I know that other hon. Members are also interested in it. LAUTRO is looking into this case, and has been in touch with GRE. Some investors have already been compensated by the insurer, and other claims are being considered. I understand that LAUTRO's chief executive will be meeting investors' representatives next week to discuss the next steps. I repeat that I will ensure that LAUTRO sees the report of this debate; this matter too should be governed by the wish of the House that it should be dealt with expeditiously and fairly.

My hon. Friend said that he thought that some of these difficulties arise because we have a system of self-regulation. I cannot entirely agree. We do not have a system of self-regulation: we have a system of professional regulation under statute. There is practitioner involvement at board level, but the people doing the day-to-day regulation—those who have to go out and interrogate, investigate and bring suspicious circumstances to the public eye—are all full-time paid professionals who do this work and nothing else. *[Interruption.]* I do not know whether the hon. Member for Redcar wants to intervene. She seems to find this funny; it is not—it is a serious matter.

Ms. Mowlam: I was not amused by the subject matter. We have had correspondence from many people who are suffering as a result of all this. I am amused only by the change in the Minister's language since a year ago, when he upheld the idea of self-regulation. Now that all these problems for individual and corporate investors have emerged, he has changed his language—another example of the shifts in Government language that we have heard more and more as the election nears.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Lady is absurd. I have used the same language on this matter throughout my time in the DTI. I have always characterised what we have as professional regulation with practitioner involvement. I will look out speeches and press releases on the subject if the hon. Lady wants to challenge me further. We are talking about a group of professional regulators trying to do a difficult job and needing the support of those who want an honest market.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside asked why such schemes were permitted in the first place. With the benefit of hindsight, that is a good question, but there was a legitimate purpose to many of the schemes—to enhance pensioners' incomes by pledging their assets. The problem was that bad investment advice was given to some, and things were even worse in some cases. Action is being taken to root out those abuses. In the interests of caution, regulators have now decided that many of the schemes are unsuitable, and they have learnt from what has happened in the past.

[Mr. Redwood]

I do not believe that all the complaints were ignored. I do not believe that all the major companies are failing to compensate. My hon. Friend has mentioned one that has compensated reasonably quickly, and I have mentioned two others which will compensate or which have started to compensate. It is important that these steps be followed up.

I was asked whether the Kenneth Clucas report will require legislation. None of us knows what the report will recommend, but, as some press rumours suggest, were it to recommend mergers between the regulatory bodies, I understand that we are unlikely to require primary legislation to achieve that end. Two regulatory bodies recently merged without the need for statutory changes.

The hon. Member for Redcar asked me what action would be taken to deal with what she called sharks. She should well know by now that, if cases are established of malpractice, of criminal action or of abuse of the system, they will be pursued by the prosecuting authorities in the usual way. If she has evidence that will help the prosecuting authorities in their task, she should send it to them immediately, so that the right action can be taken. My hon. Friend, who is well informed in these matters, told the House that some action has already been taken against some of these people, and rightly so. We want these problems to be dealt with in the right way.

Finally, the hon. Lady asked me about the future of FIMBRA and its financing. I suggest that she awaits, as I do, the final outcome of the Clucas review, but I know of no current financial embarrassments of FIMBRA, and I trust that the hon. Lady is not trying to create problems where there are no immediate problems on my desk.

There are a number of tragedies here which we have discussed tonight. Of course I wish to see action taken. I am grateful for the work that my hon. Friend has put into exposing the issue and his arguments on behalf of the many customers who have been upset by such schemes, particularly his constituents. I shall ensure that the content of the debate is relayed to the Securities and Investments Board and to LAUTRO so that they see the urgency of the problem and the wish of Members from both sides of the House who are here tonight, and who I think are representative of many others who are not here, to see solutions as soon as possible.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-five minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 12 March 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

Midland Metro Bill

Midland Metro (No. 2) Bill

Lords amendments agreed to.

Mersey Docks and Harbour Bill *[Lords]*

(By Order)

Order for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time on Thursday 19 March.

Alliance and Leicester (Girobank) Bill

(By Order)

British Railways (No. 4) Bill *(By Order)*

Crossrail Bill *(By Order)*

East Coast Main Line Safety Bill *(By Order)*

King's Cross Railways (No. 2) Bill *(By Order)*

London Underground (Green Park) Bill

(By Order)

London Underground (Jubilee) Bill *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 19 March.

PRIVATE BILLS (SUSPENSION)

Ordered,

That—

(1) the Promoters of every Private Bill which has originated in this House or has been brought from the House of Lords in the present Session of Parliament shall have leave to suspend any further proceeding thereon in order to proceed with that Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session;

(2) the Agent for the Promoters of any such Bill intending to suspend any further proceeding thereon shall give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than five o'clock on Monday next of their intention to suspend further proceeding thereon, or, if the Bill, having passed this House, is then pending in the House of Lords, of their intention to proceed with the same Bill in this House in the next Session: provided that all fees due upon any such Bill up to that day be paid;

(3) a list of all such Bills, with a statement of the stage at which they have been suspended, shall be prepared by the Clerks in the Private Bill Office and printed;

(4) every such Bill which has originated in this House shall be presented to the House not later than the third day on which the House sits after the next meeting of Parliament;

(5) there shall be deposited with every Bill so presented a declaration signed by the Agent for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill with respect to which proceedings have been suspended at the last stage of its proceeding in this House in the present Session;

(6) every Bill so presented shall be laid by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the Table of the House on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the causes of Her Majesty's calling the Parliament have been declared thereunto;

(7) every Bill so laid on the Table shall be deemed to have been read the first time and (if the Bill has been read a second time before its suspension) to have been read a second time and—

- (i) if such Bill has been referred to the Committee on Unopposed Bills in the present Session, it shall stand so referred;
- (ii) if such Bill has been referred to a Committee during the present Session and not reported by that Committee to the House, the Bill shall be committed and—
  - (a) all Petitions against the Bill which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session; and
  - (b) any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;
- (iii) if such Bill has been reported by any Committee, it shall be ordered to be read the third time unless it has been reported with Amendments in the present Session and has not been considered as so amended, in which case it shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;
- (iv) if such Bill has been read the third time before its suspension, it shall be deemed to have been read the third time;

(8) paragraph (2) of Standing Order 166 relating to Private Business (First reading) shall not apply to any Bill brought from the House of Lords in the next Session and upon which the proceedings have been suspended in this House in the present Session;

(9) when any Bill which has been brought from the House of Lords in the present Session, and upon which the proceedings have been suspended in this House, is brought from the House of Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration, signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the House of Lords in the present Session and, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office that such a declaration has been so deposited has been laid upon the Table of the House

- (i) unless the Examiner has reported pursuant to Standing Order 74 relating to Private Business (Examination of bills brought from the House of Lords, etc.), the Bill shall stand referred to the Examiners;
- (ii) if the Examiner has so reported, the Bill shall be ordered to be read a second time, or, if it has been read a second time, it shall be read a second time and committed; but
- (iii) if the Bill has been reported by a Committee with Amendments in the present Session it shall be committed to the Chairman of Ways and Means who shall make only such Amendments to the Bill as have been made thereto by the Committee in the present Session, and shall report the Bill to the House forthwith, and the Bill shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

(10) where a Bill has been brought from the House of Lords in the present Session and the period prescribed by paragraph (1) of Standing Order 171A relating to Private Busineses (Petitions against private bills) has not elapsed before Monday next, any Petition presented during the present Session in pursuance of that Standing Order shall be void, and the period of time prescribed by that Standing Order shall apply to any Bill brought from the Lords in the next Session in pursuance of this Order;

(11) any Bill which under the provisions of this Order is deemed to have been read the first time, or the first and second time or the first, second and third time, shall be recorded in the Journal of the House as having been so read;

(12) without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph (7) of this Order, only those Petitions against any Bill which stood referred to the Committee on the Bill and which have not been withdrawn or have been deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)*

of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business (Reference to committee of petitions against bill) shall stand referred to the Committee on the same Bill in the next Session;

(13) in relation to any Bill to which this Order applies Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business (Right of audience before committees on opposed bills) shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against bill)" were omitted;

(14) where any Standing Orders have been disposed with in respect of any private Bill in the present Session or in the last Session, those Standing Orders shall be deemed to have been ordered to be dispensed with in respect of any such Bill presented or brought from the Lords in pursuance of this Order;

(15) any Standing Orders compiled with in respect of any Bill originating in the House of Lords upon which the proceedings have been suspended in that House shall be deemed to have been complied with in respect of such Bill if the same is brought from the House of Lords in the next Session, and any notices published or given and any deposits made in respect of such Bill for the present Session shall be held to have been published, given and made, respectively, for the Bill so brought from the House of Lords in the next Session;

(16) no further fees shall be charged in respect of proceedings on a Bill in respect of which fees have been incurred in the present Session.

That this Order be a Standing Order of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

To be communicated to the Lords.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inflation

1. **Sir David Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast of United Kingdom inflation in 1992.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Maples): The Budget forecast is for retail prices index inflation to be down to 3¾ per cent. in the fourth quarter of 1992 and 3¼ per cent. by mid-1993.

Sir David Mitchell: Can my hon. Friend say what the figure is likely to be next year and what it would become under the Labour party's spending plans?

Mr. Maples: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Anybody who listened to last week's debate on inflation will have realised that the Labour party has no policy on it. Labour Members do not believe in the exchange rate mechanism—they are always calling for low interest rates —and when Labour were in government average inflation was 15½ per cent., whereas under the Conservative Government it has been 7½ per cent. Labour's lowest rate was never as low as our average.

Manufacturing Industry

2. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had from manufacturing industry in respect of his Budget proposals.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Francis Maude): Businesses of all sizes have welcomed the reduction in the burden of business rates next year by £480 million. The car industry—at the heart of the manufacturing sector—has said that the Budget measures should boost sales by 70,000. The director general of the Confederation of British Industry has said:

> "This is a prudent and positive Budget".

Mr. Winterton: I warmly welcome the bringing forward of the benefit of the uniform business rate, and the measures announced in the Budget for small business and especially for the car industry. Does my hon. Friend accept that the two strongest economies in the world—Japan and Germany—are built on broad and substantial manufacturing bases? Will he consider sympathetically further measures to regenerate our manufacturing base, should such measures prove necessary?

Mr. Maude: One is always especially grateful for the steadfast support of my hon. Friend. I am familiar with his longstanding concern for the health of the manufacturing sector—the Government share that concern. My hon. Friend will be glad to note that the share of gross domestic product deriving from manufacturing is greater in this country than in even the United States and France. There have been substantial improvements in investment. Indeed, investment in plant and machinery in this country —the most important measure that there is—has risen dramatically over the past decade. Of course, we shall continue to consider carefully measures that could improve the lot of manufacturing industry. The one thing that manufacturers say that they want above all is a firm commitment to driving inflation down, so that they can continue to compete effectively in an ever more competitive world.

Mr. Pike: Although the Minister had the nerve to say what he just said, I do not think that he can really believe it. Many industrialists in key manufacturing regions such as the north-west and Lancashire believe that the Budget has done nothing to overcome the havoc that the Tory party has wrought on manufacturing industry over the past 13 years. They will be glad to see the back of this Tory Government.

Mr. Maude: Rather than relying on the hon. Gentleman's synthetic assertions, one ought to place more reliance on what business people say. They are the ones who really know. When a reputable City firm asked a number of finance directors of large and important companies what they thought of Labour's proposals, 5 per cent.—to give the good news first—thought that a Labour victory would be good for the economy. The bad news is that 86 per cent. thought that a Labour victory would be bad for the economy.

Mr. John Townend: Is my hon. Friend aware that family-owned manufacturing businesses—indeed, all family-owned businesses—are delighted at his inheritance tax proposals? They will prevent businesses from being sold or closed because of debts—factors that are devastating the many family businesses in the north. Has my hon. Friend ascertained whether the Opposition support the proposals?

Mr. Maude: The House—indeed, the nation—is waiting on tenterhooks for Opposition Front-Bench Members to vouchsafe to the country whether they intend to support this important measure, which has been warmly welcomed, particularly by the small business sector.

However, so far we have waited in vain. No doubt, the Opposition will let us know this afternoon what their attitude is, or perhaps they are still dithering.

Manufacturing Investment

3. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average level of manufacturing investment between 1974 and 1979 and between 1979 and 1991.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. David Mellor): The average level was £9·8 billion at constant prices, in both periods. Between the same two periods, total plant and machinery investment at constant prices rose by more than 38 per cent.

Mr. Williams: As investment in manufacturing industry was slashed by 14 per cent. during the past year and as Britain is the only country in the European Community where investment is lower than it was in 1979, why did the Budget provide nothing to encourage investment, upon which industry could build, rather than bribing the electorate?

Mr. Mellor: There are two points to make about that. First, it would be more reliable as a criticism of the Budget, from the point of view of business, to listen to what representatives of business and industry have said rather than to the hon. Gentleman's somewhat partial account. They have been extremely supportive. Secondly, Labour always concentrates on manufacturing investment because it thinks that that is the one that allows it to see that figures are not so good. *[Interruption.]* Oh, yes.

If we look at total business investment in the economy, we find that in 1990 it was 55 per cent. higher, in real terms, than it was in 1979 and that, even in 1991, it was 37 per cent. higher. If we look at investment in plant and machinery, where the definition has not changed, as it has for manufacturing investment, we find that in 1990 the increase in real terms over 1979 was 65 per cent. and that even in 1991, a year of recession, the improvement in investment in our economy was such that it was nearly 50 per cent. higher than it was in 1979. That is the whole economy picture on which the hon. Gentleman should focus.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that when setting up businesses in a capitalist society there will always be failures and that at a time of worldwide recession there will be more failures than usual? Is not it a fact, however, that there are still 1·2 million more people registered as VAT traders in industry and all commerce than there were when we came to office? Is not that what really matters—people can still venture and they can still prosper?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There are many more businesses in this country today than there were in 1979. There are over 1 million more jobs in the British economy today than there were in 1979. A greater proportion of adults in the United Kingdom are in employment than in any other European Community country, except Denmark. That is the reality of our position today.

Mr. John Smith: However the Chief Secretary handles the figures, is not it remarkable that investment in the manufacturing sector is less now than it was in 1979? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Oh, I see; it is not remarkable! If the Chief Secretary looks at the economy all around, can he explain why, in the past 13 years, with a growth record of 1·7 per cent. a year, this Administration has the worst growth record of any Government of any party since the war?

Mr. Mellor: The right hon. and learned Gentleman's statistics are dodgy—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Oh, yes. He knows only too well that the proper comparison is with the growth in non-oil GDP, which has been substantially higher under this Government. *[Interruption.]* The right hon. and learned Gentleman now says GDP. When he is trying to make the point that the country has been in recession for six successive quarters, he says that one cannot include the oil industry when looking at economic growth. When he wants his growth statistics to be right, he thinks it is right to do the opposite and stand on his head. It does not work like that.

Mrs. Peacock: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that even in the past few years when there have been some problems, even in places such as Yorkshire, we still have entrepreneurs who are investing in manufacturing, new processes and new technology to equip them to have confidence in the future and to compete not only in this country and Europe but worldwide?

Mr. Mellor: The Labour party's constant belittling of the manufacturing sector will not do. The Labour party might like to bear in mind the massive investment from Britain in manufacturing as well as the massive investment from overseas. A total of 50 per cent. of the inward investment from the United States and Japan into the European Community comes to Britain. The Labour party might also like to know how much more effectively that investment is being used in the Britain of the 1990s than in the Britain of the 1970s. Manufacturing output since the election of the Conservative Government has increased by more than 25 per cent. Under Labour, it fell by 2½ per cent.

Value Added Tax

4. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cash amount paid in value added tax by a family with two children on average earnings in 1979; and what is his latest estimate for the amount at the present time.

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): At today's prices, such a family would have paid approximately £340 in VAT in the financial year 1978-79, compared with £985 in 1991-92. Over the same period, this family will have enjoyed a 35 per cent. rise in real take-home pay.

Mr. Cox: One can say only that that is a dodgy reply. There has been an increase of some £15 a week in VAT. Against that background and the background of other indirect taxes that ordinary families have had to experience, is not it clear that on 9 April the British people will not be taken in by promises but will be persuaded by the income tax and VAT changes which they have seen from the Government over the past 13 years?

Mrs. Shephard: What matters is real take-home pay and that is what people will take into account on 9 April.

The 35 per cent. increase in real take-home pay amounts to £78 per week. That is what people will be concerned about. If the Labour party is so concerned about the tax burden, why is it proposing to vote against tax cuts twice in the next 24 hours?

Mr. Watts: Will my hon. Friend tell the House how much of that £78 increase in take-home pay is attributable to the reduction in the basic rate of income tax from 33p to 25p and, now, the lower band of 20p and the over-indexation of personal allowances introduced by the Government?

Mrs. Shephard: Perhaps my hon. Friend would be interested in the fact that the indexation of allowances has taken 2 million people out of tax compared with what happened under the Labour Government's regime. The tax cuts announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his Budget on Tuesday, against which the Labour party will vote twice in the next 24 hours, will take a further 380,000 individuals out of tax.

Mrs. Beckett: Has not the Government's consistent record over the years been one of balancing cuts in taxes on income by increases in other taxes? Therefore, are not people eminently justified in fearing that the Government's long-term plan is to pay for the cuts in tax, of which the Government boast so proudly, by widening the scope of VAT and by increasing the other charges and taxes that people have to pay?

Mrs. Shephard: We have given categorical pledges that there will be no rise in the standard rate of value added tax either before or after the election. I wonder whether the hon. Lady would like to give such a categorical pledge. What is certain is that two parties are going into the election with pledges to increase taxation and one is going into the election with a pledge to decrease it—the Conservative party.

Mr. Summerson: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Government have no intention whatever of increasing VAT on televisions to 25 per cent., as was done by the previous Labour Government?

Mrs. Shephard: I am happy to repeat the categorical pledges given by my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Chancellor that there will be no increase in the standard rate of VAT either before or after the election. We have no need and have no plans to extend the standard rate or to put up other taxes.

Taxation

6. **Sir John Hunt:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people have been relieved of liability to direct taxation as a result of his recent Budget proposals.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): About 380,000, and nearly 4 million will pay tax at only 20 per cent.

Sir John Hunt: Is not it clear that for those lower-paid people and for those whose basic tax rate has been cut to 20p in the pound, only the threat of a Labour Government stands between them and the better deal that they can expect from a continuing Conservative Government?

Mr. Lamont: The tax changes in the Budget, as my hon. Friend said, were worth £100 a year to 21 million taxpayers. A key point is that 75 per cent. of the benefit will go to those who receive below average earnings. One would have thought that the Labour party might welcome that. It is absolutely extraordinary that the Labour party is so determined to vote against that, given that it issued a policy document only a few weeks ago in February that said that that was its policy. What is also astonishing is that one would have thought that when the Leader of the Opposition rose to reply to the Budget he might know that that was his party's policy.

Mr. Beith: What leads the Chancellor of the Exchequer to believe that the prospect of £100 a year or less,which, in some cases, will be offset against family credit—will send everyone running to the shops to spend large amounts of money and bring about a consumer-led recovery? Does not he realise that £2 billion, if invested, could bring about the recovery more quickly?

Mr. Lamont: The tax cut was never presented and justified in the way that the hon. Gentleman seeks to put it. We believe in low taxes because they are good for incentives. It is good that people should keep money that they earn and right that they should have the choice. That logic should apply to low-paid people as much as to anyone else.

Mr. Nicholls: What does my right hon. Friend think that the working poor will make of Labour's plans to increase the tax on them? Is not this the message as far as the Labour party is concerned: one is never too poor to pay more tax?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend might observe, however, that it is clear that the Labour party wants to increase taxes on those who earn above average earnings—anyone on more than £20,000—and on the poor and on savings.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Will the Chancellor confirm that the past three Conservative party manifestos contain stern injunctions against borrowing, let alone borrowing billions to bribe millions with their own money? Will he also confirm that he justified that policy by saying:

> "The objective of fiscal policy remains to balance the budget over the medium term"? [*Official Report*, 10 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 749.]

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that in the Red Book, for which he has some responsibility, on page 17 in table 2A.5 the Government confirm that not only will they not balance the public sector borrowing requirement over the cycle but that there is no scope for tax reductions either?

Mr. Lamont: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman reads table 2A.5 wrongly, perhaps because he does not have a copy in front of him. If he looks at it, he will see a fiscal adjustment of £1 million in the past two years, so what he says is totally wrong. It is a bit rich for the hon. Gentleman to lecture us on borrowing. The fact is that the PSBR that we have projected for next year is well below the average for the entire period of the past Labour Government and it is half that which was reached in the peak year, when the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) had to go off to the International Monetary Fund and he had a PSBR of 9 per cent. of gross domestic product. I remind the hon. Gentleman that not so long ago the Leader of the

Opposition used to say that he could not understand why we did not borrow more and that borrowing was not a sin. That used to be his attitude.

Pensioners' Incomes

7. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the impact of tax on pensioners' incomes.

Mr. Maples: About three quarters of pensioners will pay no income tax at all in 1992-93. The rest will gain up to £3·37 a week from the new lower rate and increases in allowances announced in my right hon. Friend's Budget.

Mr. Arnold: My hon. Friend will know that many pensioners are very worried by Labour's taxation proposals. Will he quantify the pensioners who will be helped by the reduction in the first rate band to 20 per cent. and tell us how many pensioners in receipt of income support will benefit from the further increases announced last Tuesday?

Mr. Maples: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. Among the 4 million people who will have a marginal rate of income tax of 20p in the pound are 1,330,000 pensioners, for whom the Labour party apparently plans to raise taxes from 20p to 25p in the pound. The total number of people helped by the measures in the Budget, through the increases in income support payments for pensioners and the ancillary benefits that go with that, is 5 million.

Ms. Armstrong: Pensioners continue to have to pay the 17·5 per cent. levied on value added tax last year. What would the Minister say to the constituent who came to my surgery last week, bewildered by the fact that the Government, having raised VAT for the specific purpose of paying for the poll tax bribe last year, are not proposing to reduce it to 15 per cent. as they are not reducing the poll tax again this year? Why are not the Government reducing VAT?

Mr. Maples: VAT was raised last year for the specific purpose of reducing everyone's community charge by £140. The idea that the Budget does nothing for pensioners is absolutely ludicrous. It reduces the marginal tax rate for 1·33 million and increases benefits for 5 million. While the Conservatives have been in office, the real incomes of pensioners have risen faster than those of people in work. If the hon. Lady does not believe me, perhaps she will believe the director of Help the Aged, who said:

> "It is a positive Budget that will make a positive difference to older people."

Savings

8. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures the Government have taken to assist the growth of savings since 1987.

10. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures the Government have taken to assist the growth of savings since 1979.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have encouraged private saving by cutting income tax rates, implementing independent taxation, which has allowed married women to use their own tax allowance against their investment income, abolishing the composite rate tax which forced non-taxpayers to pay tax on their savings, extending personal equity plans and introducing tax-exempt special savings accounts.

Mr. Stewart: In my constituency, more than 3,000 miners took early retirement and invested their money in savings schemes. Only this week I received a letter from a miner in Clipstone who wanted to know what would happen to his capital and income if the Labour party's savings tax were ever implemented. Will my hon. Friend tell me, my constituency and the country what a Labour Government would cost us?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend raises a good point. In the unlikely event of a Labour Government being elected, they would impose national insurance contributions on income from savings above £3,000 a year, neatly targeting the group described by my hon. Friend. That would hit almost 250,000 people with gross incomes of less than £10,000 a year. Of course, Labour also proposes to vote against the tax cuts for people on lower incomes and, according to financial analysts, its policies would increase inflation, which would further erode the income that that group of people could expect to get from their savings.

Mr. David Martin: Will my hon. Friend continue to make it clear that we believe in people keeping more of their money to spend or to save, in stark contrast to the Opposition whose attack on savings and so-called unearned income would prejudice pensioners in particular who, if they have any sense, will vote Conservative on 9 April?

Mrs. Shephard: The Labour party has always sought to tax savings. Under the last Labour Government someone on the top level of tax and paying investment income surcharge was paying tax at the rate of 98 per cent.

Mr. Trimble: What does the Minister think the impact will be on savings and interest rates of the 100 per cent. increase in Government borrowing?

Mrs. Shephard: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the increase in borrowing is almost entirely accounted for by the effects of the recession. There will be no effects.

Mr. Tony Banks: A lot of people thought that their savings were safe in the houses that they were trying to buy. What does the Minister have to say about savings to the 85,000 people who had their houses repossessed last year?

Mrs. Shephard: Repossession is extremely sad, and disastrous for the families concerned. With the inflationary policies and disastrous taxation policies likely to be pursued by a Labour Government, if ever one were elected, people would see a disastrous erosion in all their capital assets.

Treasury Income

9. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the income to the Treasury since May 1979 from *(a)* privatisation and *(b)* North sea oil revenues.

Mr. Maples: Between 1979-80 and 1991-92, privatisation proceeds are expected to amount to about £42 billion, and North sea oil revenues to £71 billion.

Mr. Canavan: Will the Minister have the decency to admit that the true answer to my question is that at today's prices the Tories have taken more than £100 billion in North sea oil revenues and more than £50 billion from selling the family silver? Does he seriously think that the British people will be conned by a party that has squandered more than £150 billion of public money and is now hell bent on trying to borrow an additional £28 billion in a desperate but vain attempt to buy success at the general election?

Mr. Maples: Our attempts to borrow have certainly been nothing like so desperate as those of the Labour Government. Privatisation proceeds and North sea oil revenues have reduced the levels of public sector debt from 50 per cent. of our national income to about 27½ per cent. If they were still at 50 per cent., which was the level that we inherited from the Labour Government, they would be £140 billion higher.

Sir William Clark: Does my hon. Friend agree that apart from the capital receipts from privatisation the amount of income given to the Exchequer has been much increased because most of the nationalised industries that have been privatised are now making profits, whereas previously many of them made losses? Consequently, the Exchequer benefits not only from the capital receipts, but from revenue receipts, corporation tax and tax on dividends.

Mr. Maples: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. Privatisation has been an enormous success. Anybody who seriously thinks that British Airways or British Telecom were better run businesses when they were in the public sector must be going round with their eyes shut. What is amazing is that the Opposition still plan to renationalise the water industry and large bits of the electricity industry.

Dr. Marek: Can the Minister explain how it is that in the 13 years when the Conservatives have received either £71 billion or more than £100 billion in North sea oil revenues and nearly £50 billion from selling the family silver, and when the taxation is higher now—with VAT, a regressive tax, at 17·5 per cent. compared with 8 per cent. in 1979—our trains do not run on time, or at all, more people live in poverty, national health service waiting lists are at their highest levels ever and we are borrowing £28 billion this year, with public debt rapidly increasing? Where has the money gone?

Mr. Maples: It is interesting that all the examples that the hon. Gentleman picks of bad services are not among businesses that have been privatised. I give him the answer that I gave to his hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Canavan). One thing that the money has done is to reduce the level of public sector debt from 50 to 27½ per cent. of national income. That is equivalent to £140 billion, which would involve interest of £14 billion or £15 billion per year. That is one of the differences. The Labour party apparently plans to reverse that.

Sir John Hannam: Will my hon. Friend confirm that over the next two years the Revenue will expect some £13·5 billion from privatisation proceeds? A Labour Government who do not pursue that privatisation policy will find that the £13·5 billion will have to be raised from an increase in the public sector borrowing requirement.

Mr. Maples: My hon. Friend raises an extremely interesting point. Labour has £37 billion of public spending plans to finance and it will not receive £13 billion of privatisation revenues. It will also have the cost of privatising the water industry, although the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said that Labour would do that without compensation, so it may not cost Labour anything.

Taxation

11. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the overall tax burden for a married man with two children on 75 per cent. of male average earnings in 1978-79; and what it was in 1990-91.

14. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the overall tax burden for a married man with two children on 100 per cent. of male average earnings in 1978-79; and what it was in 1990-91.

Mr. Maude: The tax burden is estimated to have moved from 27½ to 28½ per cent. for a man on three quarters of average earnings and from 32 to 33½ per cent. for average earnings. That compares with increases of 32·2 and 35·5 per cent.—about 3 per cent. higher—if Labour's 1978 regime had been indexed. During the same period, real take-home pay for a man on three quarters of average earnings has risen by £45 per week and at average earnings by no less than £60 per week. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to listen to questions in silence because it is difficult to hear at this end of the Chamber.

Dr. Howells: In 1980, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe), abolished the reduced rate band by saying, and I quote——

Hon. Members: Reading.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman should not quote. Please paraphrase.

Dr. Howells: I will paraphrase. The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that the case for the reduced rate band was never at all clear. Why have the Government suddenly found a clear case for it? Is it not because they hope to use it to bribe the electorate?

Mr. Maude: It is extraordinarily offensive to people who work hard for their income for the Labour party to talk about that income as though it belonged to the Government and not to those people. It is their money, for which they have worked hard, and the Government believe in leaving more of it—and especially more of the money that the lower paid earn—with them. It is extraordinary that, although this is explicit Labour party policy, the Labour party has decided to vote against the proposal and to increase tax by 5p in the pound for some of the lowest paid in our country.

Mr. Speaker: Dr. Norman Godman.

Dr. Godman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and all the very best.

Is it not the case that the overall tax burden has increased? I remind the Financial Secretary that in Scotland, gross domestic product stands at 93·2 per cent.

of the United Kingdom average, when as recently as 1984 it was 97·4 per cent. Is it not the case, therefore, that, despite the fantastical riches given to the Government by the revenues from offshore oil and gas, for the people of Scotland things have got worse and worse? It is no wonder that the Government are slipping down the political plughole in Scotland: they are down to 18 per cent. in the opinion polls, and they have further to go.

Mr. Maude: If the tax burden has gone up by so much, and if that is such a bad thing, why does the hon. Gentleman want to increase it further? Does he really want to increase the tax burden on the lowest paid in our society by voting against the Government's measure to reduce the tax for the lowest paid by 5p in the pound?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does the Minister agree that families in the lower income brackets will benefit from the Government's success in maintaining the zero rate for food? Does he further agree that those families and pensioners in particular spend an above average amount of their incomes on zero-rated food?

Mr. Maude: That is so, and people right across the income spectrum have seen their real take-home pay increase dramatically while we have been in power. As I said, the real take-home pay today of average earners is no less than £60 per week higher than it was in 1979.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: Is it not a fact that the average family man can rely on us for continuity when it comes to income tax? *[Interruption.]* We have brought income tax down from 33p to 25p and it is now going down to 20p. Does my hon. Friend agree that whereas we shall continue to reduce income tax, Labour would insist on increasing it?

Mr. Maude: It is a constant feature of history that Conservative Governments like to bring tax down— *[Interruption.]* so as to leave more of people's hard-earned money with them, whereas every Labour Government, apart from the first Ramsay MacDonald Government, increased the basic rate of tax. *[Interruption.]* All history is against the Labour party. I look forward to seeing my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) back here in April.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is a great deal of excitement this afternoon. I hope that the House will settle down.

Mr. Boateng: In relation to family income, what comfort does the Budget bring to the working woman, or the woman who wants to work? It contains nothing on child care or child benefit. Is it not clear that this cynical and incompetent Government put women and children last?

Mr. Maude: Not only is child benefit going up already, as the hon. Gentleman would know if he had done his research, but the lower rate 20p income tax band will particularly help working women. The hon. Gentleman would also know, if he had done his research, that a great many of the groups concerned with children urged us not to go ahead with a move on tax relief for child care.

Share Ownership

12. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the change in the number of persons owning shares in the past five years.

Mr. Mellor: The number of adults in Great Britain owning shares has increased from about 8½ million in 1987 to almost 10 million in 1992.

Sir John Farr: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that that transformation to share and home ownership under successive Conservative Governments has put us well on course to becoming a property and share-owning democracy?

Mr. Mellor: Yes. This major extension in popular capitalism has been one of our greatest achievements.

Sir Patrick Duffy: Did the Chief Secretary note that share and bond prices fell sharply following the presentation of the Budget? Has he also noted that the market is off a further 25 points this morning? Does not that first opinion poll suggest the thumbs down for the Budget?

Mr. Mellor: I think that the hon. Gentleman will find that all that is troubling the stock market is the thought of a Labour Government—a fear which we shall be in a position to put out of their heads quite quickly.

Taxation

13. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a further statement about his long-term objectives for income tax.

Mr. Maples: Our objective is to reduce the basic rate of income tax to 20p in the pound when it is prudent to do so.

Mr. Mitchell: Is it not clear while the Budget has cut the marginal rate of tax from 25p to 20p for 4 million people on modest incomes, the Labour party would cut their take-home pay and threaten their jobs by its absurd minimum wage proposals?

Mr. Maples: My hon. Friend is right. The Budget will help to reduce the marginal rate of tax immediately to 20p in the pound for those 4 million people. The Labour party may not have seen today's Gallup poll, which says that 71 per cent. of those questioned supported and approved of the 20p band.

Mr. Chris Smith: While we are on the subject of long-term objectives, will the Economic Secretary confirm that the Red Book shows clearly that the overall tax burden within our economy has risen in the past 13 years and, moreover, is set to rise further in the next four or five years? The Government have not cut the tax burden—they have raised it.

Mr. Maples: If the hon. Gentleman believes that, why is he about to vote, tonight and tomorrow, to raise the tax burden?

Demand

17. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the level of total demand in the economy.

Mr. Mellor: Domestic demand fell by 3 per cent. in real terms in 1991. In my right hon. Friend's Budget forecast, it is projected to rise by 1¼ per cent. in 1992 and by 3¼ per cent. in the year to the first half of 1993.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the tax cuts in the Budget will help to restore consumer demand, which is much in need of a boost?

Mr. Mellor: Indeed, and my hon. Friend will know only too well that since October 1990 the income of the average wage earner has increased by 15 per cent. in real terms as a result of real growth in earnings and the continuing fall in mortgage interest rates. That is the basis for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's forecast that the economy will pick up in line with his Budget statement.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 12 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a Cabinet meeting and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall have further meetings later today.

Mr. Livingstone: Does the Prime Minister agree that the forthcoming election will be won by the party that can best convince the British people that it can end the recession, reverse the catastrophic decline in investment, and modernise our industry? Does he agree that those issues cannot be debated by sound bites and photo opportunities, but require the party leaders to meet and debate intelligently? As the leaders of the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties are prepared to take part in that debate, is the Prime Minister also prepared to do so—or has he lost the confidence to defend his own economic record?

The Prime Minister: I agree with the hypothesis about leading the country out of recession. The Conservative party will lead the country out of recession and will sit on the Government Benches after the general election. As the hon. Gentleman knows, every party politician who expects to lose tries the debate trick, and every politician who expects to win says no.

Q2. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 12 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Coombs: Which does my right hon. Friend think will do more for low-paid people in Swindon—tax cuts, which will increase their earnings and their incentive to work, or a national minimum wage, which will soon strip them of their jobs?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. The Labour party now opposes measures to help the low paid and puts forward policies that would force low-paid people and others out of work. It is now official: the Labour party wants to put up taxes not only for those on high incomes, but for those with low incomes, too. It strikes oddly against Labour's proposals for a minimum wage, which was allegedly meant to help the low paid. We now know that Labour does not want to help them but wants to force them out of work and increase their tax by one quarter.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister has given a pathetic excuse for not engaging in a televised debate. Since he has been Prime Minister, 50,000 companies have gone out of business, 75,000 families have lost their homes and 800,000 people have lost their jobs. Why will he not debate that record? Is it because he is ashamed of it, or because he is afraid of it?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman tries to whip a little fervour into this old chestnut. Bearing in mind how long it takes the right hon. Gentleman to answer a question, the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and I would be lucky to get a word in edgeways. We have set in place the foundation for recovery, the Budget builds on them and, after the election, we shall carry through our policies.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Ralph Howell.

Mr. Kinnock *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry—that was entirely my fault.

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful Mr. Speaker. This is obviously a day for novelties. Whipped chestnuts are a new one on me, but we heard it from the right hon. Gentleman. As he believes that his only difficulty would be getting a word in, I give him an undertaking that I would give him plenty of time. Why does he not join me and the leader of the Liberals and say to the broadcasting organisations, "We have nothing to fear from the British people. Let's have a debate. Let's fix a date. Let's get on with it"?

The Prime Minister: We have better than a debate—we have a general election, at which the case can be taken to the people. If I accurately recall my Shakespeare:

> "He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument."

Appropriately, that quote comes from "Love's Labour's Lost"—and Labour will lose—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is the public debate.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister reads quotations from Shakespeare. Let me give him one from the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher): he is frit.

The Prime Minister: Let me remind the right hon. Gentleman of something else. Throughout this campaign, I shall be holding daily press conferences at which I shall face the national press. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will this year face the national press, unlike his action during the last general election, when he hid from them.

Mr. Ralph Howell: I congratulate my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Chancellor on their excellent, responsible and far-reaching Budget. I am pleased that maximum help has been concentrated on the low paid, low-income pensioners and small businesses. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, by resisting those changes, the Labour party has proved that it is the party of high taxation of the poor and is unfit to govern?

The Prime Minister: That is undoubtedly my view today, and it will be the country's view by 9 April. At least we now know what the Labour party stands for: tax rises for the rich and tax rises for the poor as well. On Tuesday, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) seemed to have doubts—until the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) prompted him with the answer that he was proposing to put taxes back up for the poor. The right hon. Gentleman would abolish the 20p tax band, tax savings more heavily, raise national insurance contributions, and raise tax for 25 million people. He has changed his mind on everything, but the public will not change their mind about him: the right hon. Gentleman sits on the Opposition Bench, and there he will stay.

Mr. Ashdown: Has the Prime Minister noted the reactions of the markets to Tuesday's Budget—the worst fall since the Soviet coup? If he will not tell us in a television debate, will he tell us now why the Prime Minister does not know what every business man knows —that to borrow to invest is the route to success, but that to borrow to spend is the road to ruin?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, no party in history has as good a fiscal record as ours has had in office. Nothing in my right hon. Friend's Budget will not bring the budget back to balance.

Mr. Atkinson: May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to a letter that I received recently from the managing director of a major retail firm, Beale's, in my constituency, telling me that if a national minimum wage of £3·40 per hour were introduced he would be obliged to consider dismissing about 5 per cent. of his work force —27 of my constituents? Is that not further proof, on top of the disastrous experience of the last two Labour Governments, that the Labour party is no longer the party of the working man?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the Labour party has no solid basis of support anywhere in the country, and there is no doubt about the impact that the minimum wage would have. Everyone in this country knows that, except Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. It would cost jobs —the jobs of people on low incomes—just as Labour's increased taxation policies would.

Q3. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 12 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cohen: If the Budget was such a success, why have not interest rates been cut immediately, instead of the Chancellor reserving his right to lower them during the general election when the polls go against him? Is not that ploy as bent as a £28 billion coin?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, interest rates have been reduced by 4½ per cent. in the past 16 months; as and when it is right to do so, we will reduce them further. For the first time in a generation, our interest rates are almost down to German levels because of the successful manner in which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has managed our affairs.

Q4. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 12 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dykes: Does my right hon. Friend accept that my constituents will warmly welcome the remarkable cut in income tax and the resulting increase in money, particularly for the less well-off pensioners? Does he agree that our money increases will go to those who need the help most, while Labour's would be dissipated hypocritically, thinly spread and eliminated by inflation?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right about that. Once the increases announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor have been carried through, we shall be spending nearly £700 million a year more than in 1989, over and above inflation, on the less well-off pensioners. Pensioners, too, care about inflation. They know that we are in pursuit of stable prices; Labour would be in pursuit of higher inflation.

Mr. Clelland: If neither the Prime Minister nor the Chancellor is responsible for the recession, and if the Secretary of State for Health is not responsible for the deterioration in our health services, the Secretary of State for Education and Science is not responsible for the underfunding of our schools, the Secretary of State for Transport is not responsible for the deplorable state of our public transport, and the Secretary of State for Employment is not responsible for high and rising unemployment, who is running the country?

The Prime Minister: In almost every area of endeavour in the past few years, there has been an improvement in services, an improvement in prosperity, an improvement in net disposable income, an improvement in educational opportunity and an improvement in the number of people treated in health care. If the hon. Gentleman has not noticed that, where has he been for the past 12 years?

Q5. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 12 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Shaw: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the people of Dover and Deal who fought alongside America in world war 2 share the view of President Bush that my right hon. Friend provides superb leadership in an uncertain and dangerous world? Will he also accept that my constituents are concerned that, in this general election campaign, people should be aware that the Leader of the Opposition wanted to pull us out of NATO, to abandon our nuclear deterrent and to destroy—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: If we had followed the advice of the Labour party and the Leader of the Opposition, we would be out of Europe, out of NATO, and out of respect. We would be living in an underprotected, overtaxed socialist backwater on the edge of Europe. The Leader of the Opposition has been wrong on every substantial issue in recent years. Once upon a time he wanted to tax the rich to help the poor—now he proposes to tax the rich and tax the poor.

Q6. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 12 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Beith: What would it take to get the Prime Minister to revert to the view that he once held about the advantages of a fair voting system—more careful study of countries that have prospered by it, or the prospect of a spell on the Opposition Benches?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows my view on the voting system. The advocates of proportional representation should understand that it leads to weak Government and spawns faction and minority parties. The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), with his international pretensions, knows the damage that it has caused overseas. For all his high mindedness, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) argues that case for his own partisan party advantage and not for the advantage of the constitution, and he knows that that is the case.

Mr. Speaker (Retirement)

3.30 pm

Mr. Speaker: I have a brief statement to make of a valedictory kind. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Now that the date for the general election is known, I hope that the House will allow me to end my Speakership by expressing, briefly, a word of appreciation and thanks. It goes, first, to all hon. Members for their consideration and kindness to me, and also for their support. I am well aware that a good Speaker is a Speaker who called you today; a bad Speaker is a Speaker who did not call you today; and a very bad Speaker is one who did not call you yesterday. When I was rechosen as Speaker in 1987, the Leader of the Opposition came to my rescue by saying that, sadly, no hon. Member can be expected to be called on the day that he wants at the time that he wants and on the subject that he wants. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that today. *[Interruption.]* I think that the public should know about it.

They should also know that it is a sad fact that, given the arithmetic, no hon. Member can fairly expect to be called more than four times a year in a major debate. All I can say is that I have endeavoured to be even-handed and fair. Some hon. Members will know that, if I feel that I have not been entirely just, I have sent them a little note saying, "What about a free kick on the next debate or during Prime Minister's Question Time?", and that happened today.

The Speaker carries a heavy burden and I shall always be in debt to my admirable deputies—the Chairman of Ways and Means, Harold Walker, Sir Paul Dean and Betty Boothroyd—for their loyalty, dedication and friendship. The House should know that Sir Paul Dean has served as Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means and Deputy Speaker for longer than any of his predecessors since the post was created in 1902.

I must also thank my personal staff—Mr. Bill Beaumont, who was my first secretary, and Mr. Peter Kitcatt, who is my secretary now—and all who serve so loyally in the Speaker's House. I thank them all for their support and assistance throughout the nine years that I have been privileged to occupy the Chair.

My thanks go also to the Clerks of the House, especially Sir Charles Gordon for his kindness and advice when I first stepped into the Chair in 1983, to Sir Kenneth Bradshaw and now to Sir Clifford Boulton, who I believe history will record as one of the great Clerks of the House. The Clerks serve not only Mr. Speaker, but every Member of the House. I thank them all for their help to me and to us all.

I am sure that the House would wish me to express also our gratitude to those who serve us here so faithfully. About 4,800 people work in the Palace of Westminster daily. On behalf of the whole House, I send my thanks to them all: to the Serjeant at Arms and his staff, to the police and the custodians, to the Library, to the Vote Office, to *Hansard*—as I have often said in the House, *Hansard* makes our speeches seem perhaps even better in print than they sound in the Chamber—to the Finance and Administration Department, to the Fees Office, to the Parliamentary Works Office, and not least to the Refreshment Department, whose members arrive early in the morning to give us breakfast and leave late at night long after we have departed.

Finally, I hope that I may be allowed to express my deep gratitude to my wife, Lyn. The House will know that she is the first "Mrs. Speaker" for 20 years. Without her support and assistance in my duties, I could not have carried the burdens of the Speakership, which are not confined to the Chamber. Together we have endeavoured to make the neutral territory of Speaker's House a place where party controversy is put aside and friendship is encouraged. In achieving that, we owe a great debt of gratitude to Mr. Speaker's Chaplain, the admirable Donald Gray, who in a very real sense has made the Palace of Westminster his parish.

I hope that all of us who are leaving the House at this election will reflect that, however modest our achievements may have been, it has been an immense privilege to be a Member of Parliament. I firmly believe that Mr. Speaker should always be elected for a constituency, as other hon. Members are. In that way, he is kept in day-to-day touch with the people who really matter, those who put us here to represent their interests. I am deeply grateful to my constituents in Croydon, North-East, who have elected me to serve them in Parliament on eight occasions since 1964.

After the general election, others will take our places and we shall soon be forgotten, but I hope that no Government in future will ever forget or resent the fact that, although they may have a right to get their business, if they have a majority, they must submit their policies to a group of elected representatives, many of whom will not agree with them. It is and will be Mr. Speaker's first duty in that process to ensure fair play. It has not always been easy, but it is an historic role on which rests the very foundations of our parliamentary democracy.

So I take my leave. In doing so, I express again my thanks to the whole House and to the staff of the House for nine busy and happy years, years during which I have consistently endeavoured to uphold the dignity of Parliament and the rights and the privileges of Members to represent the interests of their constituents here in the forum of the nation.

3.34 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With the permission of the House, I beg to move.

> "That this House tenders its warmest thanks to the right hon. Bruce Bernard Weatherill for the skill and distinction with which he has maintained the traditions of the Speakership through momentous changes in the practices of the House; thanks him for the genial and wise exercise of his authority; records its appreciation of his fairness and tolerance in dealing with all Members; and unites in wishing him a long and happy retirement upon his departure from the Chair and from this House."

For almost the last eight years, Mr. Speaker, every formal speech or intervention which each of us has made in the House has been directed to you. In many of those cases, you have been the innocent medium for a message targeted elsewhere. On this occasion, however, I—and I know others if they are fortunate enough to catch your eye—wish to speak to you directly and personally.

The end of this Parliament is an especially momentous one, marked as it is by the departure of so many distinguished right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. It is made all the more momentous by the departure of our Speaker.

There is no office within the House more important than yours, Mr. Speaker. It is an august and ancient role. You are, I understand, the 154th Speaker. More than 600

[The Prime Minister Mr. John Major]

years of history loom at your back—at your back, but never on your back. That sense of the past could easily have overwhelmed a lesser man. However, we in the House know that it has not done that to you. It has not prevented you from developing your historic position to respond to the conditions of the present, and you have always done so in your own very individual way.

As no one knows better than you, Mr. Speaker, you have to govern the House in accordance with a host of rules, some laid down in the minutest detail, some apparently set in stone. But so much of the smooth running of the House depends on a wise interpretation of those rules. You have provided, over many years, the necessary wisdom to keep the House on the right path.

You have known when to turn a blind eye and when to be eagle-eyed. You have known when to be stone deaf and when to swoop on a muttered sedentary interjection at 50 yards. You have known when to exercise a short rein and when to use a long lead.

Above all, Mr. Speaker, of vital importance to the House, you have preserved the rights of the individual Member, however new, however junior, and from whatever party. Your impartiality has shown that, despite your long and honourable service in the Whips Office—an institution for which I retain the greatest affection—you have shown that one need not be terminally tainted by that pit of partisans when one leaves it.

When you were first elected, Mr. Speaker, my noble Friend Lord Colnbrook, then the hon. Member for Spelthorne, said of you as Deputy Chief Whip:

> "never . . . did I hear him get angry, lose his temper, or even raise his voice, even though sometimes the provocation was great".—[*Official Report*, 15 June 1983; Vol. 44, c. 3.]

I think that even after eight years, Mr. Speaker, I can say the same: you never got angry, never raised your voice and never lost your temper—well, as W. S. Gilbert might have put it, hardly ever.

It has been your privilege, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps sometimes your penance, to preside over our first televised proceedings. You were the first television Speaker and, as a result, you have become a star—if not of stage, certainly of screen. Your appearance, your voice, are known throughout the world, and in wig and knee breeches you are recognised from Perth to Patagonia, from Teesside to Tuvalu. Most tellingly, not only are you known: you have become respected all over the world as well.

The arrival of television must have added immeasurably to your responsibilities, but you have borne them lightly and with dignity. I believe that your performance has enhanced the reputation of the Mother of Parliaments in scores of countries and among hundreds of millions of people around the globe.

The job of Speaker is a lonely one. You have had to shun the camaraderie of the Tea Room and the Smoking Room in almost monastic fashion, and it must therefore have been all the more important that you had the active support of Lyn, "Mrs. Speaker." Your joint hospitality in Mr. Speaker's Apartments has been a notable feature of your time in residence here, bringing immeasurable pleasure to all of your many guests. May I, Mr. Speaker, through you, tender our thanks to Lyn as well as to yourself?

Closer to home, it is not only we who will miss you, but your constituents in Croydon, North-East, whom you have served loyally since 1964. Despite the pressing demands of your Speakership, I know that your constituents have had no cause to feel neglected.

In future, you will have more time to spend on the good works that you support, on your favourite golf and tennis, and on the hobby that you list in "Who's Who"—playing with your grandchildren. I know how much you must look forward to that. None the less, I suspect that you will be sad as you prepare to lay down the Speakership. We, too, regret your going—but you have made your decision and we must respect it. As you depart, I hope that you know that you do so with our respect, admiration and affection. You, Mr. Speaker, may miss the House; we, Mr. Speaker, shall certainly miss you.

3.45 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Five years ago, Mr. Speaker, I was happy to congratulate you on your re-election to the Chair. Now it is my privilege to second the motion thanking you for your impeccable service to the House, and wishing you a long and happy retirement with your beloved family.

In the past five momentous years, the House and the office of Speaker have seen historic changes, including, as the Prime Minister has said, the welcome decision to televise our proceedings. I know that you, Mr. Speaker, in the most fittingly non-partisan way, worked for that decision yourself. You did so because of your strong commitment to democracy, your faith in the qualities of the House of Commons and your determination that our proceedings should be seen as well as heard.

There were some who warned that television would merely increase the House's ability to make a scene and to act like a herd, but—thanks in large part to your authority and the gracefulness with which you have exercised it—the transition to television has been achieved successfully. Indeed, so successfully has that transition been achieved that the House of Commons has changed neither for the better nor for the worse—that is the greatest accolade that could possibly be offered.

As an added bonus, Mr. Speaker, you have become transatlantically illustrious and a television star whose ratings in the United States, according to one of our newspapers, are better than those of "Dallas". From Croydon, North-East to South Fork is one small step for man, but one great step for mankind.

We all have cause to be grateful for the great qualities that you have brought to the Chair: a necessary sternness, mixed with essential good humour, dignity of presence combined with a complete lack of self-importance, and briskness coupled with sometimes superhuman patience. During the years of your Speakership, I have not had to jostle much in order to catch your eye, so perhaps I can say without fear of being contentious that the House congratulates you on your selection throughout the years of hon. Members to speak.

That selection depends on a computer, which is inanimate and fallible, and on an instinct for fairness, which is humane and, although not completely infallible, like democracy, is the best system we have. Any rare feelings that may exist among hon. Members that, as you yourself have acknowledged, your selection might on occasion have been marginally less than perfect must surely—like some economic forecasts—be blamed on the computer.

Like many Members of the House, I have valued your personal friendship and generosity of spirit. We also cherish the resilience of a Speaker who draws public attention as frequently as he can to his conviction that, in your own words,

> "behaviour in this House is better than it's ever been in history and we must never perpetuate the dangerous myth that it has got worse".

When the House has such a stout defender, the least we can do is always to ensure that that dangerous myth never becomes an even more dangerous truth.

You have brought unique distinction to your office, Mr. Speaker. In time, there will probably be other Speakers of the House of Commons who are vegetarians; it is likely that there will be other good tennis players and other good golfers; but it is stretching imagination a little too far to think that there will be another Speaker who will combine those characteristics with a capacity for meditation, the ability to speak Urdu fluently and the talent to measure, cut and run up a suit for any poorly clad Member—truly a Jack of many trades and master of all that really matter.

You will shortly take your leave of us. Our sadness at your departure is mitigated only by the knowledge that you will derive huge enjoyment from having more time for yourself and for your interests and particularly from having more time to spend with your grandchildren. The real trouble is that you do not go alone. You take from this place "Mrs. Speaker", your beloved wife Lyn, who has shown such qualities of tolerance and kindness that she has won the affection and admiration of all who have come to know her. You and she are true partners, and this generation of parliamentarians is fortunate indeed to have had the benefit of knowing two such very fine people.

The Prime Minister said that the office of Speaker is a lonely position. I think that that may be less the case in your Speakership because of the relationship that you have with your wife. A previous Speaker, who shall remain utterly anonymous, had been in office but a few weeks when a faithful old friend of his, a long-time journalist in the House, visited him for supper. There were just the two of them. This nameless Speaker, who was teetotal, said to the journalist, "Well, there you are, Ian"—I call him Ian for want of a better name—"there's the cabinet; you know more about these things than I do." Naturally, I am faking his accent completely. Ian said to him, "Is it the case, Mr. Speaker, that, even after these weeks of pressure and loneliness in this place, you still haven't been tempted, as other Speakers may have been, to try a little tipple yourself?" The anonymous Speaker said, "Well, do you know, I've once or twice taken a little drop of whisky with a little hot water and a bit of sugar and, you know—I like it."

We say thank you, Mr. Speaker, to you and your wife. We say thank you to a very distinguished Speaker and a very good man. We wish you many years of active and fulfilling retirement. The whole House will agree with me when I say that you have most certainly earned it.

3.52 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I need add very little to what has already been said by the Prime Minister and the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock). They have said much of what I should have liked to say. Therefore, I can restrain myself and merely say that I wish to associate myself and my right hon. and hon. Friends on this Bench with all that they said.

There is, however, one matter to which I believe I ought to draw attention. One of the jobs of the Speaker is to ensure that, between the two great juggernauts that we often believe conspire to dominate matters in this House, the voices of Back Benchers, especially independent Back Benchers, and the other parties in the House, are clearly heard. I know that you have set that as a particular task of your Speakership.

Both my colleagues and I—and, I suspect, many other Back Benchers as well—are grateful to you for your work to ensure that our voice has been heard. We know of some of the battles that have been fought on that matter. Of course we have had our disagreements from time to time: it would be remarkable if we had not. It may be one of the qualities of a good Speaker that he should come under pressure from all sides, but submit to none.

One of the special qualities, commented on by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, that we have all enjoyed under your Speakership is the friendly, family atmosphere that you and "Mrs. Speaker" have created in Mr. Speaker's House. Those of us—it must be a majority if not every hon. Member—who have enjoyed your hospitality remember those occasions with great affection.

My colleagues and I join others in expressing our respect and affection and we extend our warmest wishes to you and "Mrs. Speaker" for your future. You may be assured that you carry with you the gratitude of the House and, I believe, the respect of the nation.

3.56 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): As the Father of the House and one who has sat in this place for 42 years under the eagle eye of seven Speakers, I wish to say a few words on behalf of Back Benchers wherever they may sit. I recall that it was Sir Winston Churchill who once said that parliamentary government was the worst form of government ever devised by mortal man. He then paused, and one can imagine the sly chuckle and the glint in the eye, before saying, "save all the others."

If our system has endured down the centuries and is widely admired around the world, it owes a great deal to the way in which the occupant of the Chair exerts quiet but effective authority. It was Edmund Burke, one of our greatest parliamentarians, who wisely remarked in his "Reflections on the Revolution in France":

> "Good order is the foundation of all good things."

I sometimes wonder what a rabble we would be if it had not been for you, Mr. Speaker, and your distinguished predecessors, one of whom, early in my career here, warned me by saying that the hon. Member should not "engender more heat than he can contain." I have tried to observe that wise advice ever since.

I must say how greatly all of us, without exception, have admired your gentle authority, your good nature at all times, your complete lack of stuffiness, your fairness —an important quality in an assembly such as this—and your very special brand of humour which has so often helped to smooth away a prickly situation. Wherever we sit in this place, Mr. Speaker, we are deeply grateful to you and we humbly forgive you for not always calling us when we desired to speak, although that may sometimes be to the advantage of the House.

I am sure that your gracious lady must have been a strong contributor to the special qualities to which I have

[Sir Bernard Braine]

referred. You have been very fortunate in Lyn. We warmly wish you and your dear lady a fruitful, happy and long retirement.

3.58 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that you did not rule the motion moved by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition out of order because it has given me an opportunity briefly and sincerely to express the thanks of all who represent Northern Ireland in this place. I wish to place on record our appreciation of your recent visit to Northern Ireland. That was a landmark for everyone concerned.

I thank you sincerely for all that you have done to see that Northern Ireland Members have their opportunities. I hope that you and "Mrs. Speaker" will return to see us in Northern Ireland very soon.

3.59 pm

Sir Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): There is one important aspect of your Speakership which needs to be placed on record, I hope as a guide for the future. All the holders of your office have been invested, by the tradition of the House and by Standing Orders, with authority. But, up until 1983, for longer than anyone can remember, the election of Mr. Speaker had been largely a fiction. The Speaker had been imposed on the House by the Government of the day.

In 1983, the House brought back to itself the reality of an election, and no edition of "Erskine May" shows that. It is that which has given your Speakership an additional authority. We chose you, you were not imposed on us, and the Back Benchers re-elected you in 1987.

Just as you continued so much of the good work of Speaker Thomas, who brought back to the Chair the reality of decision in so many spheres in which it had fallen away from the Chair into other unelected hands, so you also, on being elected, stated that you would sign each day in your own words, and place with the Votes and Proceedings, any rulings given in private that could be called into precedent. You thereby destroyed the evil system of having private rulings unknown by Back Benchers which could then be trotted out to astonish the House and often to pervert it. In continuing that, you have now established as a rule what could otherwise have been taken as a benign idiosyncrasy of one Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, may I also pay my tribute to your wife, who has brought good taste, energy and good humour to her very original and excellent concept of the duties of a Speaker's wife? You have made a most excellent team and we are all so glad to see you go while still possessing all your faculties.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that it was Speaker Brand who created the closure by saying, "I have had enough." *[Laughter]*. I have very nearly had enough, but I shall call Mrs. Margaret Ewing.

4.1 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the nationalist parties in the House, may I add our own warm wishes and endorse the motion so eloquently propounded by the Prime Minister and seconded by the Leader of the Opposition.

This Bench has not always been your most peaceable one and from time to time we nationalists have been extremely restless. However, we have been very grateful to you for recognising the specific viewpoint that we have wished to express democratically and for the courtesy with which you have listened to it.

I wish you and "Mrs. Speaker" a very long, happy and healthy retirement. I assure you that there will always be a warm welcome for you in Wales and Scotland. During one of your early visits you may, perhaps, wish to offer us some advice on the running our new Parliaments in those nations.

4.2 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): I join the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and all hon. Members in expressing, on behalf of my colleagues, our deep appreciation of your kindness and thoughtfulness during your period of Speakership.

When I came to the House in 1983, you took over the office of Speaker, and I can honestly say that I have been treated very fairly by you. I should also like to express to you the deep appreciation of my constituents, bearing in mind that my constituency has suffered as perhaps no other constituency in the United Kingdom has suffered from the violence of terrorism. I should like to thank you for your thoughtfulness in allowing me to express their worries, concerns and fears.

I trust that "Mrs. Speaker" also knows that she has a place of great affection in the hearts of the people of Northern Ireland. Your recent visit to Hillsborough and to the Province was deeply appreciated. I trust that you and "Mrs. Speaker" will have a long retirement and much happiness and that you know that you are always very welcome in the Province.

4.4 pm

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): As usual, I rise with some diffidence in your presence, Mr. Speaker, because I feel that I have to express my great admiration for the way in which you have conducted your unique office over the past eight or nine years. You and I have had a number of clashes, and I have always been wrong—I absolutely accept that—but all those exchanges have ended in happy and felicitous comments between us, in or out of the Chamber. I have absolutely no complaint about the fact that it has been easier to catch your eye today than it has been on other occasions.

You have been an extraordinarily impartial and fair Speaker—so fair and so impartial that I have never been able to discover over these last nine years whether you admire me and approve of me—as I am sure that you should—or whether you think that I am a total berk.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Don't take a vote on that.

Mr. Faulds: I do not want a vote taken on that.

Speakers come in all qualities. You have sat under some of lesser quality, and we have sat under one or two whom I could name, but who shall remain anonymous—I cannot do accents very well anyway—and who were less than admirable. You have been a remarkably fair, friendly and —if I may use such an improper expression—lovable Speaker. I want to thank you immensely, and I wish you and your wife and you and your thimble a very happy future. May I finish as we usually do when exchanging our greetings by putting my hand on my heart, Sir, and wishing you very well.

4.6 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): It is a mark of your distinction, Mr. Speaker, that there is still one thing left to mention which has not yet been said, and that is the way in which you launched the magnificent appeal for the moneys that were successfully raised to completely refurbish St. Margaret's, the House of Commons church, which now sits as a jewel in Parliament square. It is appreciated by people inside and outside the House, and it is a living memorial.

4.7 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): As one who, from time to time, has given you no end of bother, Mr. Speaker —and I have to say in all honesty that there have been times when I have not been too pleased with you, either —may I join in these tributes to you on your retirement?

I do not know what on earth I shall do for exercise after you and I have left the House, because the number of times I have stood up and down without being called in the past nine years is beyond counting. Every time you leave me to the last, I am reminded of the great story of the Scottish islands Member who was always being called last. He goes home to his constituency for the summer recess and decides to visit one of his island communities, travelling by one of our famous coastal puffers. As the vessel approaches the harbour, it is held up just outside. The harbourmaster shouts to the skipper, "What's your cargo?" The skipper shouts back, "Manure, two dozen sheep and the local MP." The hon. Member says, "Called last again."

You have not called me last this time, Mr. Speaker, but you have called me for the last time. May I leave the House and yourself with another story? I am making a confession about my retirement, because yesterday I went down to the hairdresser—as you can see—to get my hair cut. He asked me what size of majority I had and I said, "Oh, 14,500." "You'll be all right, sir," he said. I said, "No trouble, no trouble." I was damned if I was going to tell him that I was retiring, because he would have expected a big tip instead of the usual 10p.

So, Mr. Speaker, you go with all my good wishes to yourself, your good lady and all your immediate family.

4.10 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Throughout the House a large number of hon. Members have one thing in common: 85 per cent. of Members on both sides of the House belong to the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Over the years when we have had delegations to this country from all parts of the world, we have invariably asked you, Mr. Speaker, if you would be kind enough to meet them to speak to them, to entertain them in Mr. Speaker's House or, on their last night here, to give them a grand dinner at your table. You have never failed to assist us in that way.

I know that I speak for all IPU members, past and present, when I say that you have enabled us to give to our visitors from abroad a memory that they will never forget. We will never forget the way that you have helped us to do that. Thank you.

4.11 pm

Sir Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): If I may, I shall speak for a moment as a former Clerk in the House of Commons. I have been asked by my former colleagues and members of the staff of the House of Commons to express on the Floor of the House their deep appreciation to you, Sir, and to "Mrs. Speaker" for the kindness, care and consideration that you have given to them. It is not a tremendous secret that there have been Speakers who have not commanded the complete respect of those who worked for them. I can say, Sir, that you have commanded their complete respect.

I know that we are a dwindling breed, but I should like to add a word about the Burma Star Association and the forgotten Army. There are not many of us left, and I hope that we are not completely forgotten, although probably we are. It is an important part of my life, my father's life, my brother's life and, I know, of your life, Sir. You have been a wonderful Speaker. All of us who have been your servants and have served under you admire you and thank you.

4.12 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I have previously had occasion to express the appreciation of the executive of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for the help, leadership and inspiration that you, Mr. Speaker, have given to the CPA United Kingdom branch in this House. The vast proportion of the membership of this House has participated to some extent in CPA affairs as it has in the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Your generosity in this respect, in terms of both helping us to go abroad and receiving incoming Commonwealth parliamentarians, is a source of enormous gratitude from us all.

The leadership that you, Mr. Speaker, have given to the presiding officers across the Commonwealth is also enormously appreciated. The 41st parliamentary seminar is now taking place in the Palace of Westminster—the eighth in which you have participated as Mr. Speaker. You also participated in earlier seminars in earlier incarnations. We are all enormously grateful for your contribution and wish you well.

Mr. Speaker: It is now my duty to put the motion moved by the Prime Minister.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

"That this House tenders its warmest thanks to the right honourable Bruce Bernard Weatherill for the skill and distinction with which he has maintained the traditions of the Speakership through momentous changes in the practices of this House; thanks him for the genial and wise exercise of his authority; records its appreciation of his fairness and tolerance in dealing with all Members; and unites in wishing him a long and happy retirement upon his departure from the Chair and from this House".

Business of the House

4.13 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): With permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the rearranged business for Friday 13 March and Monday 16 March.

FRIDAY 13 MARCH—Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (No. 3) Bill.

Timetable motion on the Finance Bill and the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill.

Proceedings on the Finance Bill.

Consideration of Lords amendments to the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill.

Supplemental timetable motion and consideration of Lords amendments to the Education (Schools) Bill.

Remaining stages of the Army Bill.

At the end of business the Question will be put on all outstanding estimates.

The House may also be asked to consider any other Government business and any Lords messages that may be received.

MONDAY 16 MARCH—Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill.

Committee and remaining stages of the Friendly Societies Bill.

Proceedings on the Charities Bill *[Lords]*.

The House may be asked to consider any Lords amendments that may be received to the Transport and Works Bill and the Competition and Service (Utilities) Bill.

The House may also be asked to consider any other Government business and any Lords messages that may be received.

Warm and thoroughly deserved tributes have just been paid to Mr. Speaker. Although he has now left the Chamber, I put on record as Leader of the House how much I support and endorse those tributes and how much I wish to thank Mr. Speaker and Lyn, his wife, for their many kindnesses to me. I wish them a very happy and long retirement.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I begin by associating myself with the remarks of the Leader of the House. The greatest tribute that can be paid to the Speaker is that throughout his time he has enhanced the reputation of the Chair. That, above all else, has been the best guarantee of the proper and orderly conduct of our business in the House.

How typical it is that the Government should conclude this Parliament by introducting three guillotines on the penultimate day of our consideration of business, and how appropriate it is that one of the guillotines applies to the Finance Bill—a reckless economic misjudgment and a huge political misjudgment.

Can the Leader of the House assure us that another Bill that is subject to the guillotine tomorrow, the Education (Schools) Bill, will be made available in the Vote Office today? That Bill, as amended in the House of Lords, which is to be debated and guillotined tomorrow, is not yet available in the Vote Office. That seems an appalling way to conduct the affairs of the House. Opposition Members and, I suspect, even some Conservative Members would like the opportunity to consider the Bill in its latest form and to table amendments before it comes before us for debate. Will the Leader of the House assure us that that will take place?

May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the centenary version of the Conservative publication, "The Campaign Guide 1992"? I am not sure whether it has yet been published. May we be assured that when the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or perhaps the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, speaks on the Finance Bill tomorrow he will draw the attention of his right hon. and hon. Friends and of the House generally to page 10 of the section of "The Campaign Guide 1992" on the economy? Will he point out to the House that in the campaign guide the Government say:

> "The Government expects the PSBR in 1991-92 to turn out at about £10·5 billion"?

Does this not make the Conservative campaign guide somewhat out of date?

Will the Leader of the House also draw his right hon. Friend's attention to the sentence in the same section which says:

> "The result was an accumulation of debt, with interest charges being met by taxpayers of later generations"?

During tomorrow's debate, may we have an explanation of that inclusion in the Tory campaign guide?

Mr. MacGregor: As usual, the hon. Gentleman has it all wrong. If he thinks that we could end this Parliament without a Finance Bill, he must face the fact that the House would be moving into a general election without allowing excise duties and revenue from income taxes to be raised for the forthcoming year. Given the high-spending programmes that the Labour party is putting before the country, that would be highly irresponsible and would mean an enormous borrowing requirement. That is one reason for the business tomorrow.

The other reasons, first in relation to the Finance Bill, are that we are keen to see tax levels reduced for the lower paid rather than imposing additional burdens on them with unemployment such as a national minimum wage would involve. We note that it is likely that the Opposition will vote against that reduction in tax.

We are keen, as are all the higher education institutions in Scotland, to see the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill on the statute book. We are keen to see the extension of parental choice, with information being given to parents, which will come through the Education (Schools) Bill. We shall arrange for copies of that Bill to be available in the Vote Office—depending on whether any changes are made in the other place—as soon as is practicable.

There will be plenty of time tomorrow and on succeeding occasions to debate the point that the hon. Gentleman raised about the borrowing requirement. I look forward to doing that with him tomorrow morning. We are ending this Session in excellent order, completing the vast majority of an extremely good Government business programme, and I hope that by the end of Monday we shall have got most of our Bills on the statute book.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House on managing to pack in so much legislation. May I be assured that the Charities Bill, which shows the Government's concern for the millions of people in the United Kingdom and overseas who are served by Britain's extensive network of non-governmental organisations, will continue to be a top priority for the succeeding Conservative Government?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her comments. I assure her that charities issues will continue to be a top priority for the succeeding Conservative Government, just as we have devoted a great deal of time and attention to charities matters in this Parliament. I hope that it will not be necessary to deal with the Charities Bill in the next Parliament, because it is very much my intention to get it on Monday.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for including the Charities Bill in the legislation that he hopes to get through quickly, and he is aware of the representations that I and others have made on that matter. It is noteworthy that the Asylum Bill does not feature in any of the proposed legislation; that, too, is welcome.

At Question Time, the Prime Minister said that the appropriate forum for a debate between himself, the leader of the Labour party and my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) was the House of Commons. One wonders when and where that debate could take place, bearing in mind the business that the Leader of the House announced. In the absence of any reference to such a debate, might we use the mock-up Granada studios?

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has participated in many debates in the House and has won all of them hands down. The hon. Gentleman made representations to me yesterday about the Charities Bill, and I hope that we shall complete all its stages on Monday. We believe that the Asylum Bill is right as it stands, and if the Labour and other parties would accept the measure unamended, it would reach the statute book. We—and, I believe, the country—would regard that as desirable.

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): Is my right hon. Friend aware that as a result of the change of business on Monday I shall not be able to move my ten-minute Bill to grant city status to Basildon? My constituents and probably the country will be deeply disappointed about that. I had intended to talk about the marvellous achievements of Basildon, about our plans to build a cathedral and possibly the appointment of a Bishop of Basildon. In the light of that missed opportunity, I hope that my right hon. Friend will pass the message to the appropriate authorities that Basildon deserves to be made a city.

Mr. MacGregor: I thought for a moment that my hon. Friend was going to spend 10 minutes telling us about Basildon. I am well aware that Basildon is the oldest and largest new town in the country and I am sure that the appropriate authorities will have heard what my hon. Friend said. I assure him that we all look forward to his having another opportunity in the next Parliament to present his ten-minute Bill.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the Leader of the House accept that, in view of the extra hours that he proposes for Friday's business, it makes him seem somewhat foolish, given that he is the architect of the proposal to diminish Parliament's hours? That is in direct contravention of his proposals for tomorrow—*[Interruption.]* Well, the right hon. Gentleman was the architect of the Select Committee report to curtail sittings of the House, yet he wants longer hours on Friday.

As we shall have extra time on Monday, could we have a debate on the homelessness crisis created by the Government? Will the right hon. Gentleman ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to announce, even at the last ditch, the release of some revenue from the sale of council houses so that local authorities such as Bradford, where thousands of people are on the housing waiting list, can gain some hope of having houses built again by local authorities at rents which they can afford? If the right hon. Gentleman will not announce that, it will be one of the first priorities of the new Labour Government after 9 April.

Mr. MacGregor: The reason why I looked slightly surprised at the hon. Gentleman's opening remarks was that I was not Chairman of the Committee which made the proposals; I simply set up the Committee. It will be for the new Parliament to decide how to proceed with the recommendations made by the Committee of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling). I stress yet again that those recommendations do not involve a cut in the amount of work that Members of Parliament will do, but reflect the desire that we all share to reduce the sitting hours of Parliament so as to enable hon. Members to attend to their constituency interests on Fridays more than they have been able to do in the past and, at the same time, to cope with the large amount of business.

Mr. Cryer: What about tomorrow's business?

Mr. MacGregor: I think that tomorrow is slightly exceptional.

On the hon. Gentleman's point on homelessness, he will know that local authorities can spend a proportion of their receipts from the sale of council houses and other assets each year and that we have a £2 billion housing programme currently being taken through via the housing associations, which is an appropriate way to deal with the matter.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Would my right hon. Friend be kind enough to confirm that there will be a vote on the Asylum Bill and therefore a chance for it to be legislated in this Parliament? Many of my constituents, although flattered, are deeply concerned that hundreds of thousands of foreigners with no proper right in this country now seek to come here. If the Bill is passed before the election, or even if it is not, my constituents will want to know about and discuss the issue, and they should know that the Labour party does not share their concern.

Mr. MacGregor: I understand my hon. Friend's point, but I cannot give the assurance that he seeks. Although the Government believe that the Bill is right as it stands, it depends whether other parties in another place will be willing to let the Bill go through. If not, we shall have to consider the position, but we have made it clear throughout that we regard the Bill as a priority in this Parliament.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): How long will the House have on Monday to debate the Consolidated Fund Bill? The Leader of the House will understand that hon. Members will wish to raise many matters in the

[Mr. Greville Janner]

debate. I should like to discuss the 14 per cent. increase in crime in Leicestershire in the past recorded year, matched by an increase in the police force of only just over 6 per cent. in 13 years. The chief constable says that, in the midst of that misery and the soaring increase, he will have to cut his budget for the year by £1 million. Surely matters of immediate concern to our constituents should be raised in the House, and I hope that the Consolidated Fund Bill will provide an opportunity to do so.

Mr. MacGregor: As the hon. and learned Gentleman should know, proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill on Monday will be formal.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind the House that we have a heavy day's debate ahead. I hope that hon. Members will put relevant and succinct questions.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Bearing in mind the devastating news that certain former Maxwell pensioners, including constituents of mine, will no longer be paid by the Mirror Group, and the excellent recommendations of the recent Select Committee report, can we not squeeze in just a little time to debate that report, not least the fact that the report omitted to investigate the huge pay-offs—£200,000 in one case—to senior Labour party members? Should not those people, in all conscience, pay the money back? Is there not a sleaze factor to be looked into before the general election campaign starts properly?

Mr. MacGregor: I understand my hon. Friend's concern for his constituents, but I am afraid that, given the need to complete the Government's legislative programme, it will not be possible to have a debate on that matter in the next two days.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the Leader of the House persuade the Chancellor of the Exchequer to come to the House and explain, for the benefit of a lady from the constituency that I have the honour to represent, why it is that, left to bring up two children on her own, going out to work to make things a little better and thus earning £17·48 per week, she has £2·48 taken straight back off her by the Government, with no allowance for the further £3 that she has to spend on bus fares? In effect, therefore, she is taxed at 33 per cent. What does the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget do for that lady—apart from nothing?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman knows that we are currently debating the Budget.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the £240 million road programme recently announced by my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic is threatened by the Labour party's proposal to declare a moratorium on all road building and its refusal to endorse either the upgrading of the A1 or the A1-M1 link road.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. How can that possibly relate to the statement?

Mr. Batiste: I was about to ask the relevant question, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that there will be an opportunity during debate on the Consolidated Fund Bill to raise those important issues so that the differences between the two parties can be made clear during the forthcoming election campaign?

Mr. MacGregor: I understand why my hon. Friend puts that matter forward for debate, and I am sure that he will make that distinction clear during the forthcoming election campaign. I regret that it will not be possible for him to do so on Monday morning on the Consolidated Fund Bill, but he has made the point now, and I am sure that he will find other opportunities to do so.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): While I know that this Parliament is dying, it is to remain in existence for another two days, and during that time we should try to ensure that democracy is not dying. Therefore, before Parliament dissolves, will the registration figures for the election in England and Wales finally be published so that hon. Members can see them? They are available in Scotland and Northern Ireland, but the total figure for England and Wales, and the figures for individual constituencies, are not available. We should know those statistics in case we wish to use the procedures of the House to comment on them. I ask the Leader of the House not to give the standard answer, given to me week by week, as my question has nothing to do with my constituency, where the figures are healthy and there has been an increase in the electorate since the last general election. The question relates to the general pattern in England and Wales.

Mr. MacGregor: I note how sensitive the hon. Gentleman is getting about his own position in his constituency. On his general question, as I have repeatedly told him, the electoral figures for as many parliamentary constituencies as are available will shortly be published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): As my right hon. Friend will be aware, the Secretary of State for Wales told the Welsh Grand Committee on 12 February that he would seek a meeting of the Committee before the general election on the subject of the structure of government in Wales. Why has that debate not been held, particularly as devolution is such an important election issue and the Scots have already had two debates on the issue?

Mr. MacGregor: I know the importance that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State attaches to that matter, and I hope that it will be possible to debate it widely and publicly during the election campaign. However, we simply did not have enough time to fit in that debate before the election was called.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I thank the Leader of the House for dumping the Asylum Bill in the parliamentary waste bin, which is where it has always belonged. All those who believe that political asylum should be dealt with on the basis of natural justice will rejoice at that. I repeat the question that I put to the right hon. Gentleman last Thursday: will he give an assurance that the extradition treaty between Britain and India, and the bilateral agreement between Britain and India on the confiscation of terrorist funds, will not be laid before the House before the Dissolution of Parliament?

Mr. MacGregor: Political asylum will be dealt with on the basis of natural justice, to use the hon. Gentleman's words, in the Bill. I still very much hope that it will go through. I believe that it gets the balance absolutely right; it deals with the large number of additional economic migrants who are coming here, enabling them to be dealt with speedily, and I believe that it is much wanted by large numbers of people in the country.

I have just written to the hon. Gentleman about his second point. What he refers to will not happen in the course of the next two days.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): While I do not challenge the right of genuine political asylum seekers to come here, may I ask my right hon. Friend to think again about dropping this important measure? There is enormous pressure in my constituency on public housing and much of the demand is not considered genuine by my constituents—indeed, it is probably not genuine. Is my right hon. Friend aware that about 200 units of housing have been given up to asylum seekers in the past year or two, and that the same is true of other constituencies around Heathrow, where we are under enormous pressure? The Bill is urgently wanted.

Mr. MacGregor: I entirely agree, although it is not I who should think again—I want the Bill on the statute book—but the Opposition parties who are opposing it.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I do not recall seeing you in the Chair selecting people to ask questions at business question time in the past 11 years.

The rising of the House next week means that my Bill—the Criminal Activity (Proscribed Equipment) Bill—to restrict the supply of scanner equipment which can interfere with police telecommunications, introduce a licensing system for such equipment, and restrict the sale of skeleton keys which can be used to pick the locks of motor vehicles, will not have enough time. Would the Government have supported that important little bit of legislation?

Mr. MacGregor: I am afraid that I am not familiar with that Bill, so I shall have to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As about 3,000 secondary school children and several hundred teachers in Southend-on-Sea will be in a state of total uncertainty about whether their schools will be allowed to continue, depending on the result of the election, would it be possible to hold a small debate on Monday to seek all-party agreement to allow certain issues such as school organisation to be left to the people in communities to decide? That would be much better than a great upset for children and teachers every time there is an election. Bearing in mind that 3,000 real kids, including two of mine, depend for their education on the result of the election, would it not be great if we could leave decisions of this kind to local communities so that education is not disrupted by election results?

Mr. MacGregor: I wonder whether my hon. Friend is referring to grant-maintained schools—

Sir Teddy Taylor: No— four grammar schools.

Mr. MacGregor: As my hon. Friend will know, the kind of choice that we are endeavouring to extend in many ways to children and parents would be jeopardised only by the policies of the Labour party. I am sure that my hon. Friend would agree that the right way to ensure the choice which he and I would both like to achieve is to make sure that we win a resounding victory at the election.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the leaders of the parties to address the House in the next two days on the conduct of the coming general election? A month after the last one, I received a written apology from the then leader of the Liberal party for the lies that his party had published about me in a document called "101 Damnations". Could we have the apologies first this time, so that the leader of the Conservative party can apologise to me for the lies printed in the publication, "Who's Left?"? Would it not be a better idea if the Conservative party entirely withdrew this wildly inaccurate and fatuous piece of muck-raking?

Mr. MacGregor: I understand that that document simply refers to the past and present support exhibited by Opposition Members for motions and policies.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): In which debate next week or tomorrow shall I be able to draw attention to the advertisement placed in a national newspaper this morning by the National and Local Government Officers Association, which is paying for part of Labour's election campaign in the expectation that if by some mischance a Labour Government were elected they would pay the bill for NALGO's future demands?

Mr. MacGregor: I am not sure when my hon. Friend can raise that in the debates in the next two days, but I am sure that he will make the point strongly outside the House.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I was quite relieved to find my name in that Conservative booklet. If I had not been in there, it would have quite destroyed my street credibility.

Can the Leader of the House give any estimate of how long the House is likely to sit tomorrow? I ask that not because I want to do a runner from the place, but because I do my advice surgery in Stratford on a Friday evening and if we shall be sitting past half past five I need to know until what time he thinks that we shall do so. Perhaps he and I could escape during the vote so that he can come to my advice surgery and meet some of the many people who have suffered so badly under Conservative policies over the past 13 years.

Mr. MacGregor: I would love it if the hon. Gentleman came to some of my advice surgeries to make known to my constituents some of the left-wing policies to which he has attached his name in that document.

I cannot give a firm time for the end of the debate because it will depend on the number of Divisions and how long each of the debates takes. The hon. Gentleman will have to keep in touch with progress as we work through the day.

Business of the House

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That—

(1) At this day's sitting, Mr. Speaker shall put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion moved by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer relating to Ways and Means —Amendment of the law not later than Ten o'clock.

(2) At the sitting on Friday 13th March—

- (a) notwithstanding the provisions of the Order [6th November] relating to Business of the House, Government business shall have precedence, and may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour;
- (b) notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 53 (Questions on voting of estimates, &c.), Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion in the name of Mr. Francis Maude relating to Estimates; and
- (c) notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 133 (Time and manner of presenting petitions), no petition shall be read.

(3) At the sitting on Monday 16th March—

- (a) this House do meet at half-past Nine o'clock;
- (b) the time for private business shall end not later than a quarter to Ten o'clock;
- (c) notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 17 (Time for taking questions), no Questions shall be taken, provided that at Eleven o'clock Mr. Speaker may interrupt the proceedings in order to permit questions to be asked which are in his opinion of an urgent character and relate either to matters of public importance or to the arrangement of business, statements to be made by Ministers, or personal explanations to be made by Members;
- (d) Standing Order No. 19A (Motions for leave to bring in bills and nomination of select committees at commencement of public business (Budget day)) shall not apply;
- (e) Government business may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour; and
- (f) Mr. Speaker shall not adjourn the House before a Message is received from the Lords Commissioners. —*[Mr. MacGregor.]*

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not sure whether you can do anything, but the Standing Orders require that parliamentary questions should be answered. I tabled a question on the export of ozone-destroying chlorofluorocarbons by the United Kingdom in 1991. The answer was that the information was confidential, but the information was provided for 1990, after I had received a corrected reply from the Minister denying that the information given originally was confidential and saying that 40,000 tonnes had been exported. This obviously destroys the credibility of the Government's alleged concern for the ozone layer. Even at this late stage, given what is obviously a ploy by the Government to get away from their responsibility to give proper and correct answers, could the Standing Orders be brought into operation so that they are made to provide the answer?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The Chair has no responsibility for the content of ministerial replies, but doubtless what has been said will have been heard by the Government Front Bench.

Question put and agreed to.

Orders of the Day

WAYS AND MEANS

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [10 March],

AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

- (a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;
- (a) for refunding any amount of tax;
- (c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importations; or
- (d) for relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Question again proposed.

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

[Relevant document: European Community Document No. 10212/91 and COR2, the Commission's Annual Economic Report 1991-92.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I should tell the House that Mr. Speaker has not selected the amendment standing in the name of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor).

4.42 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Michael Howard): I begin by welcoming the fact that the hon. Members for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) are to speak for the Opposition in today's debate. We had originally understood that the lead speaker for the Opposition was to be the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), the shadow Secretary of State for Health. Fresh from his triumph over David Frost on Sunday morning, the hon. Gentleman, who is a noted horseman, was no doubt anxious to speak today on the time-honoured principle that, if one has had a nasty fall, one must get back in the saddle as quickly as possible.

But the hon. Gentleman has been unceremoniously booted aside. The fact is that 48 hours have now passed since the dismal performance of the Leader of the Opposition on Tuesday. As the awfulness of that performance has sunk in, Labour's business managers have realised that since the shadow Chancellor spoke yesterday, they have got to give equal time to their other two leadership candidates—the hon. Members for Dunfermline, East and for Sedgefield.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East will, no doubt, put his usual doom-laden gloom on the Budget, on this morning's retail sales figures, encouraging as they are, and on any other piece of good news that he can get his hands on. The hon. Gentleman is a happiness hoover, the gloom-monger in chief. When the story is grim, and the policies are dim, one knows that "It's got to be Gordon."

Four weeks today our nation will go to the polls. The people will be deciding on the future course of our country and they will entrust their support to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Government whom he leads. They will choose a Government who believe in free enterprise as a matter of conviction, not electoral convenience. They will endorse an approach which involves leaving people with more of their own money, not less. They will back a leader who has steered the country with great skill through 16 difficult months and who has a clear vision of the future that he wants to build.

Tuesday's Budget has set us on course for election victory. It is a Budget that will increase incentives, encourage enterprise and help employment to grow. It is a Budget for industry, a Budget for enterprise and a Budget for jobs. It will help to accelerate the end of the recession and advance the progress of steady and sustained recovery.

The framework for recovery is already in place. We have: low taxes, the lowest of any of the G7 countries; low inflation, lower than the EC average; and lower interest rates, four and a half points lower than we had 18 months ago. We have created the conditions in which enterprise can thrive and jobs can be created—as they were during most of the 1980s. Today, there are still more than 2 million more people at work than there were in 1983; we have a greater proportion of our work force at work than any other EC country apart from Denmark; and there are more women at work than in any other European Community country.

The Budget will reinforce the conditions that have made these achievements possible. Its measures to assist small firms are particularly significant. My right hon. Friend's proposals will encourage the creation of more small firms, and enable existing ones to grow.

The Government will help those who have to pay higher rates because of the revaluation of business properties and accelerate the benefits of those who gain from these changes. We shall take action to speed up the payment of bills. We shall relieve business of the worst effects of inheritance tax. Those measures have been warmly welcomed.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman answer a question to which I am having great difficulty getting an answer? I was looking at the Red Book yesterday and I noticed that the public sector borrowing requirement—the high level of borrowing that we have this year, which will increase next year—goes on right through till the year 1995-96. That suggests that the Government intend to borrow substantially—about £110 billion—over the next six years. However, we are repeatedly told that this borrowing is being undertaken to take us through the cycle and carry us over the recession. Are the Government saying that the recession will last until the mid-1990s? Is that what they are planning for by ensuring that the PSBR is maintained at that level until almost the end of the century?

Mr. Howard: The Government are not saying anything of the kind, but I can understand that the hon. Gentleman, who has come to these notions of fiscal prudence somewhat late in life, finds it difficult to grasp the essentials. It is not surprising that the hon. Gentleman, who belongs to a party that has consistently espoused high borrowing throughout the time that he has supported it, should fail to grasp those points.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The right hon. and learned Gentleman would do well to recall that, for the past seven years, I have been a member of the Committees examining the Finance Bills. Every year, I involved myself in debates on public expenditure matters and on the PSBR.

Mr. Howard: And after all those wasted hours, the hon. Gentleman still does not understand the basic principles that govern these matters. As I was saying—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Even on the eve of an election, we do not conduct our affairs by bellowing across the Floor of the House. Labour Members will have adequate opportunities to put arguments in rebuttal.

Mr. Howard: These measures have been warmly welcomed. I understand that the Labour party is reluctant to listen to these words of welcome, but it will have to.

The Union of Independent Companies has said:

> "The greatest thing in the Budget is the encouragement to the owners of independent businesses that they can keep their companies intact".

The Forum of Private Business has said:

> "The Chancellor has tackled some of the most important obstacles facing small business."

The National Farmers Union has said:

> "This is a substantial help for the farming industry and something we will welcome".

The chief executive of the Forum of Private Business put his finger on it when he said:

> "Many businessmen and women are motivated because they are working to leave something for their family".

We recognise that fact. We welcome their enterprise; we want to encourage their endeavours. What a contrast with the Labour party. While we want to reduce taxes on income and inheritance, it wants to increase them both. It intends to introduce proposals

> "to secure the effective taxation of wealth".

Labour says:

> "The key to the most effective action is to tax wealth when it is transferred through gift or inheritance."

Labour will not own up to the form that tax would take or come clean on the levels at which it would bite. But one thing is clear: instead of encouraging the owners of independent businesses, Labour would clobber them; instead of removing the obstacles facing small firms, Labour would increase them; and instead of motivating people who want to leave something to their family, Labour would punish them. That is the attitude of the Labour party to inheritance and transfer.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): How would the Secretary of State explain to those running small businesses that he was the Minister who introduced the uniform business rate?

Mr. Howard: Small business people recognise that the uniform business rate offers them a guarantee of keeping increases, once revaluation has come into effect, to no more than the rate of inflation. The hon. Gentleman should have chosen his ground much more carefully before intervening.

We listened with great interest to the Leader of the Opposition when he spoke after the Budget statement of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on Tuesday. The right hon. Gentleman welcomed the measures which my right hon. Friend proposed to take to limit increases in the UBR, which he had provided for in his Budget. It would be impossible for the Labour party to do anything of the sort. It wants to let these things rip. It wants to put them in the hands of local authorities, with no

[Mr. Howard]

control, no capping and no restrictions of any sort. The Leader of the Opposition was welcoming a measure that was proposed in the Budget that he would not have the power to put into effect because of the policies that he is putting before the British people. That is the truth of the matter.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman wants to get up after that, I shall happily give way again.

Mr. Fatchett: The Secretary of State seems to have forgotten his role in introducing the UBR. When he introduced the measure, he said that it would be in the interests of British industry, especially small businesses. He said also that the system would work in a way that would cause no injustices and no anomalies. Why is it that, within two years of the introduction of the UBR, the right hon. and learned Gentleman has had to announce that changes will be made to it and has set out the measures that the Government would take? Does this not show that the Government failed in the first place, that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was responsible for that and that a great burden has been imposed on small businesses?

Mr. Howard: I am astonished by the hon. Gentleman's intervention. He represents a Leeds constituency, and businesses in Leeds have benefited from the introduction of the UBR. The measures introduced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will let them have the benefits even earlier than would otherwise be the case. The hon. Gentleman does not know what he is talking about.

No one should be surprised by the sheer ignorance that the Labour party brings to its consideration of these matters. The truth of the matter is that the Labour party still does not have the faintest idea how a free enterprise economy works. It remains a party in thrall to economic illiteracy. I make this offer to the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer—who, sadly, it not with us at the moment—the shadow Secretary of State for Employment and the shadow Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. After the election—when we have won—I shall personally see to it that they are offered training places on a programme that will teach them the basic principles of free enterprise. But I cannot promise them the prawns. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has banned them. After the election there will be no more prawns for the right hon. Gentlemen and their friends.

The most economically illiterate policy of the lot is the proposed introduction of a national statutory minimum wage. Every independent expert who has looked at Labour's proposals has come to the conclusion that it would destroy jobs. James Capel concluded that a minimum wage would result in

> "higher inflation, which deteriorates competitiveness and profitability and ultimately results in an increase in unemployment".

Goldman Sachs has said that a minimum wage

> "can be expected to raise both inflation and unemployment".

It added that Labour's policy "is unambiguously bad news". The Reward Group has reported:

> "a national minimum wage would create havoc in some regions. The West Midlands' industrial base would be desperately hard hit by the increased costs . . . it is likely to create further job losses in the areas with the highest unemployment rates".

Every expert is agreed that the introduction of a minimum wage would result in an increase in unemployment. It is a question not of whether jobs would be lost but of how many. Under stage 1 of Labour's proposals, Nomura Securities estimates that 145,000 jobs would go; UBS Phillips and Drew predicts that 400,000 would go; and the university of Liverpool forecasts the loss of 500,000 jobs.

But that is not the limit of Labour's ambitions. Labour is committed not only to introducing a minimum wage but to increasing it. Stage 2 of Labour's policy would result in even higher increases in unemployment. UBS Phillips and Drew believes that 1·25 million jobs would be lost. The university of Liverpool has put the figure at 1.4 million. Economists in my Department have calculated that 200,000 jobs would be destroyed even without any restoration of differentials. If differentials were restored in full, up to 2 million jobs would be in jeopardy.

The extent to which differentials would be restored is crucial in determining the cost and employment implications of the Labour party's policy. Only last week the CBI estimated that, excluding any attempt to restore differentials, the Labour party's proposals would add £2·5 billion to the annual costs of employers and destroy 150,000 jobs. If full differentials were restored, the extra costs would soar to £50 billion a year.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Secretary of State confirm that the figures from the university of Liverpool are from Sir Patrick Minford, a notorious right-wing extremist? Will he confirm also that all the people making these predictions are on rather more than the basic minimum wage? Does he not think that it is particularly distasteful that well-paid Cabinet Ministers and well-paid Tory Members, who are busy lining their pockets with parliamentary adviserships and directorships by the score, will vote against the poorest of the poor?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman should know that the Labour party's proposals will not help the poor, as I shall demonstrate. It is a rum approach to economic forecasting—the new approach that the Labour party urges upon us. It is that we should accept forecasts only from those who earn less than the minimum national wage. It is extraordinary. We have an interesting proposition from the hon. Gentleman and it deserves very careful consideration.

I have cited the estimates of the City experts of the consequences of Labour's policy. It may be that the shadow Secretary of State for Employment sees himself as essentially a provincial figure, a man of the people, keeping his distance from the City circuit, distrustful perhaps of its estimates in these matters. If so, let me help him. Some of the employers in his own constituency have been making their views known on the subject of the minimum wage. The managing director of Filmco Euroform, for example, says that there would be a problem with differentials. The proprietor of the aptly named Walworth Castle hotel is quoted as saying:

> "Labour's plan would be nothing short of disastrous. It would be ridiculous to believe we would be able to maintain our staffing levels if the minimum wage was introduced. We would be talking about redundancies and lay-offs".

So there you have it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Every independent expert proclaims that it would cause job losses. Employers in the hon. Gentleman's own constituency spell out the consequences.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Would my right hon. and learned Friend care to comment on the east end of London trade union convenor who told me only two weeks ago that this time around he would vote Conservative because the Labour party's spending policies would not soak the rich but would take money from the pockets of people such as him and his union's members?

Mr. Howard: I am not in the least surprised by what my hon. Friend says. The trade union leader to whom she spoke is not alone in his view. There will be many more like him who see the evils of the Opposition's policies.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Secretary of State knows that I share his opposition to the statutory minimum wage and think that it would result in unemployment. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has given the likely unemployment figures that would result from a national mimimum wage. Will he estimate whether unemployment will rise or fall and by how much as a result of the Chancellor's Budget on Tuesday?

Mr. Howard: I have made it clear that over a period, as we put in place a framework to encourage the creation of jobs, as they came forward in unprecedented numbers in the 1980s, so we would see job creation again in the 1990s.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill) *rose*——

Mr. Howard: I must get on.

In the face of all that evidence, the hon. Member for Sedgefield says that not a single job would go. His approach to statistics makes the hon. Member for Livingston look like the epitome of respectability in these matters. It is not as if the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends have not been warned about the consequences of their policies. This week the veil has been lifted on the way in which the Labour party makes such decisions.

This very day, Eric Hammond's autobiography is published. On the minimum wage he says:

> "I have told Kinnock it simply will not work. So has Gavin Laird, the AEU General Secretary, among others. Everyone in the world of work is paid and expects to be paid extra as they develop additional skills. They are not going to allow any government to diminish their earnings as part of a Utopian dream to guarantee a minimum to all. Employers will be dissuaded from taking people on. It will create more unemployment and chaos and conflict on the shopfloor. Already, the backtracking has started with news that Tony Blair says the scheme will exclude youngsters. It should include nobody. I have warned Neil Kinnock of the electoral consequences of pursuing a policy foisted upon them by unskilled unions not capable of doing their own job of representing lower-paid workers. They want it all to be settled by law."

There is one particularly revealing passage. Mr. Hammond says:

> "At Labour's 1990 Blackpool Conference, they deliberately exluded me from speaking on the National Minimum Wage . . . However, I did rather redress the balance the next day. BBC television asked me to join a panel reviewing the day's conference with John Edmonds and Tony Blair. Instead of dealing with that day's events, I launched into an attack on the National Minimum Wage. It upset Mr. Edmonds and caused Tony Blair to have a long discussion with me afterwards. I don't think he had fully understood our objections. As he stormed out of the studio, Edmonds said to me with all the pomposity he can muster, 'Thank you very much for that.' Blair obviously had not thought through the effects of the policy on skilled people like ours."

Hon. Members: More, more.

Mr. Howard: It is a very good book and I commend it to my hon. Friends.

While the Government are looking to leave people with more of their own pay, the Labour party's policies would leave people with no pay at all. Its minimum wage would hit the very people whom it is intended to help, wantonly increasing the level of unemployment. The minimum wage makes minimum sense.

Today we see the ultimate in the ridiculous. We see the Labour party proposing a minimum wage, ostensibly to help the low-paid, while planning a tax increase for the low-paid to help foot the bill. What Labour would give with one hand, it would take away with the other.

Of course there are people in low-paid jobs who need help, and we help them. We help them in a sensible way through family credit. We shall not introduce a law which, according to the Institute of Fiscal Studies, would help the richest third of the population more than it would help the poorest third.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield) *rose*——

Mr. Howard: I shall give way in a moment. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will particularly take the opportunity to comment on this observation by the director of the Institute of Fiscal Studies:

> "If the point is to avoid people being poor, then this is an extraordinarily stupid way of doing it."

Mr. Blair: The point is not the difference between Labour's national minimum wage and the status quo but the difference between the national minimum wage and the Secretary of State's plan, which he will carry through if re-elected, to abolish the wages councils altogether. If that is what he intends and there were a pay cut, even of as little as 30p per hour, 1 million catering workers, 1·25 million retail workers and more than 60,000 of those who work in hairdressing shops will lose more than £600 per year if they are full-time employees. Is that right or wrong?

Mr. Howard: We have made our position on the wages councils clear time after time. We shall keep their position under review although we see no permanent place for them in our system. We have said that before and we shall say it again. That is our position on the wages councils.

Mr. Blair *rose*——

Mr. Howard: I have answered the hon. Gentleman's question. I shall give way to him if he will answer the charge made by the director of the Institute of Fiscal Studies. Will the hon. Gentleman answer that?

Mr. Blair: Yes.

Mr. Howard: Yes, the hon. Gentleman says. Let us see how he answers.

Mr. Blair: I do not agree with the Institute of Fiscal Studies on that point. But the right hon. and learned Gentleman is rather unwise to mention the Institute of Fiscal Studies since it has also said that the 20p tax band is not the way to help the low-paid. Can we have a firm undertaking from the right hon. and learned Gentleman that he will not abolish the wages councils and lose

[Mr. Blair]

protection for those 2·5 million people, mainly women, who are covered at present by the wages councils—yes or no?

Mr. Howard: I gave the hon. Gentleman a clear answer on our position in relation to the wages councils. There is no change. We have made it clear time after time.

Mr. Blair *rose*——

Mr. Howard: I am not giving way to the hon. Gentleman. I have answered his question repeatedly.

The mischief of the minimum wage is not simply that it would destroy jobs; it would cause havoc in many other ways. No doubt one reason why the hon. Member for Livingston was pulled out of the debate was that the Labour party was afraid that he might be asked about his admission that the minimum wage would cost the national health service half a billion pounds—half a billion pounds without any improvement in patient care.

Let us look at the effect of the minimum wage on Labour's so-called recovery package. The centrepiece of that package is supposed to be an extra £800 million for training. It is supposed, so we were given to understand by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East on "World at One" today, to stem the rise in unemployment, to lower interest rates and to achieve a miraculous transformation in our economic circumstances. What the hon. Gentleman did not mention was that £630 million of the £800 million would go towards those people who are currently on training schemes because Labour insists on paying them the rate for the job instead of benefit plus £10, which they currently receive. Therefore, £630 million—80 per cent. of the total training portion of the recovery package—would be spent without providing a single extra training place.

In "On the Record" last week, the hon. Gentleman pledged himself to the introduction of a work experience programme with a throughput of 150,000 people a year. It would not be introduced "as resources allow" or "over the period of a Parliament"; it was not accompanied by any of the other weasel-worded formulae of which the Labour party is so fond; it would be introduced from the very first year and everyone taking part would be paid the rate for the job. At the level of the minimum wage, that would cost £551 million a year more than we are spending on employment action. How will that be paid for? Where will the money come from?

It is not surprising that it is not only the shadow health spokesman who has been booted from the debate; it is the shadow Chief Secretary who was to reply to the debate and who would, no doubt, have been extremely embarrassed by the hon. Gentleman's indiscretion. The fact of the matter is that Beckett's law is in tatters.

I shall make this prediction: after we have won the next election, the Labour party will have another of its policy reviews. It will discover that it was wrong about the minimum wage, wrong about inheritance tax and wrong about the 20p rate of income tax—just as it has discovered that it was wrong about defence, about the trade unions, about public ownership and about taxation; and wrong about socialism itself.

The basis of the Labour party's appeal at this election is the simple proposition: "Aren't you lucky you didn't vote for us last time?" "Aren't you lucky", Labour says to the electorate, "that you didn't vote for a Labour Government in 1987? After all, if you had, we would have saddled you with all those wrong policies on defence, on the trade unions, on public ownership and on taxation." "Never", the Labour party says of itself, "has a party been so wrong so often on so many measures so recently". That is the clarion call with which the Labour party enters the fray for this election. It is a clarion call that will be rejected with contempt by the British people.

The Labour party has never believed in free enterprise. Labour Members came into politics to sweep it away. The Labour party has never believed in a market economy. Labour Members came into politics to destroy it. The Labour party has never believed in capitalism. It thought that it had a better system, called socialism. Now Labour Members sit there and believe in nothing.

We are the party that believes in free enterprise. We defended it when it was unfashionable; we have championed its cause through thick and thin. We shall be returned to Government to preside over a free enterprise economy that will bring ever greater prosperity to our people, ever greater resources for our public services and ever greater help for those in need.

I commend the Budget to the House and the Conservative party to the country. Both will be returned by substantial majorities.

5.11 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Is it not extraordinary that the Secretary of State for Employment, faced with the biggest rise in unemployment in western Europe over the past year, could speak for more than 45 minutes to the House without even mentioning the unemployment that his Government have caused?

Mr. Howard: On a point of information, I spoke for less than 30 minutes. The hon. Gentleman cannot even get his basic arithmetic right.

Mr. Brown: The right hon. and learned Gentleman confirms that, as Secretary of State for Employment, he can make a 30-minute speech without mentioning any measures that the Government are prepared to take to bring down the appalling level of unemployment in this country. That is an absolute disgrace. The Secretary of State mentioned the Budget, and that was especially bad, because the framework for the Budget assumes that unemployment will continue to rise for many months.

Our argument is not just that people who are unemployed are hit by the Government's failure to deal with unemployment, but that thousands more are in fear of unemployment in every region, in every industry and in every sector, trade and profession. Thousands more people know that confidence will not return to the economy, investment will not substantially expand, and the housing market will not fully recover until employment and investment prospects improve. That is why we need an employment, industrial and regional policy for this country.

Three years ago, there was what was called a "Budget for jobs". The result is that, since then, nearly 1 million jobs have been lost. Last year, the Budget was entitled the "Budget for business". The result of that was that 50,000 businesses went under during the course of the year. Now we have a Budget which is blatantly a Budget for the Conservative Government. The result will be the same: they too will go under.

There is nothing in the Budget for the construction industry, no special incentives for manufacturing, and nothing targeted on increasing industrial investment. There are no special new measures for training, and, as the Secretary of State must be the first to know, there are no measures to tackle the rising problem of the 2·5 million people whom the Government have left unemployed.

The nearest that we came to a Budget for jobs was when the Secretary of State, to tide him over another embarrassing set of unemployment figures, announced at midday on 13 February:

> "I have no doubt we will see a Budget for jobs".

By the afternoon, a Treasury spokesman—no doubt acting on the instructions of the Chancellor of the Exchequer—had corrected the Secretary of State, saying:

> "The Chancellor never said that".

How right he was. This is no Budget for jobs. We would be more impressed by the Government's claim to be a party of the poor and the low-paid if they had not created so many of them.

A year ago, the Chancellor told us in his Budget speech that recovery was just around the corner. At least he is consistent—in this year's Budget speech he told us the same thing: that recovery was just around the corner.

The small print of the Budget statement shows that jobs will continue to be lost—the Chancellor had to admit that. He also had to admit, in the small print of the Red Book, that business investment would continue to fall. In our view, public services will continue to deteriorate and unemployment will continue to rise.

We are talking about a generation of young people—many qualified, and all eager to work—who have been successively disappointed. Many have been embittered and disillusioned by rejection after rejection, as unemployment continues its remorseless rise. We see the young couples who are forced to give up their homes and go with their young children into the misery and the unhealthy uncertainty of life in bed-and-breakfast accommodation—and there is the skilled man in his 50s who knows that, when his workplace closes, his working life, too, is over.

The Government cannot blame all that on the Trades Union Congress, the European Community, the American recession or—their latest pretext—world recession. They have no one to blame but themselves.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): In giving his view of the future, the hon. Gentleman said that public services would continue to deteriorate. I am not sure what he meant by that. Presumably he meant that not enough money is going into public services. Will he tell us whether he would increase taxes, increase borrowing, or increase both?

Mr. Brown: If the Chancellor is in any doubt about the deterioration of public services in this country, let him visit our schools and hospitals, and let him travel down our roads and look at our railways. A report today by the King's Fund reveals the problems that the health service faces under the Conservative Government [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer".] I am happy to answer the Chancellor's question.

Mr. Lamont: If the hon. Gentleman had been in the Chamber for Treasury questions today, he would have heard one of his hon. Friends complaining about borrowing and two of them complaining about the tax burden. How can he then say that not enough resources go into public services?

Mr. Brown: The Chancellor seems to have misunderstood the whole argument. We say that a tax cut at this time is wrong, because we should be investing in the economy, including the economic infrastructure. Our argument is that the Budget, which should have been a Budget to strengthen Britain, will do nothing to reduce unemployment and little to increase investment. It does not begin to add up to an economic recovery programme for the future of Britain. At its heart there is a complete void, because there is no purpose, no vision and no direction.

Let us remember what has happened in the past year. More than 500,000 more people are unemployed; there have been 50,000 more business closures; several hundred million pounds in investment has been lost; and, according to the census yesterday, there are even 190,000 more self-employed people out of work.

Last March, the Government told us that many of those redundancies, closures and cuts could not happen, because they predicted that there would be a recovery last June. The Chancellor should apologise to the House and to the people he has betrayed. Those are the business failures that the Government promised could not happen. In the summer, the Prime Minister said that a recovery would start "in weeks". He should apologise not only to us but to the people who have lost their jobs.

Those are the closures that the Government told us that we could not suffer. On 1 January, the Prime Minister said that the recovery had already started "as we speak". It is a disgrace that, when people have been cruelly misled in that way, there is not even a hint of remorse.

This is the Chancellor who said that unemployment "is a price worth paying". One of the Ministers with responsibility for social security said that unemployment was a "liberation" for thousands thrown out of work. The Chief Secretary said that training was a luxury that we cannot afford. The Prime Minister said that if it was not hurting it was not working. Let us be clear: this is the Government who are hurting but not working. They are a luxury that we cannot afford. If unemployment is a price that people are prepared to pay, they are prepared to pay for the unemployment of the Ministers on the Treasury Bench today.

If we look at what is happening in the country, we find that 22 people are chasing every job in the north of England, 28 in Yorkshire and 33 in the west midlands. In jobcentres in some constituencies, 100 people are chasing every vacancy on offer. There is a one in a hundred chance of people in many areas getting a job under this Government. The real national lottery is ever more thousands of disappointed men and women facing ever lengthening odds as they go after ever fewer jobs.

What has the Secretary of State for Employment done? Two years after the recession started and a year after he promised that action would be taken to create employment, how many people are on employment action schemes throughout the country? With unemployment running as high as 10,000 people in some constituencies, what do the Government offer? The Secretary of State for Employment plans to create 30,000 places under the employment action programme. Many of those places, I believe he will admit, have not yet been created. That

[Mr. Brown]

amounts to 40 employment action programme places for a typical constituency, yet in some constituencies there are 10,000 people out of work. That is scarcely even tokenism, and is hardly even cosmetic. The Secretary of State has certainly not taken action commensurate with the scale of the problem, but after 9 April the Secretary of State may have a greater concern for the interests of the unemployed.

Our argument is clear: unless we tackle unemployment and the fear of unemployment, we cannot and we shall not have a swift economic recovery. As long as the fear of rising unemployment is there, people will hesitate about spending, about moving home and about investing their savings. As long as that fear is there, many of our shopping centres will remain quiet or empty, the housing market will be slow to recover and investment will continue to falter. It is not just the unskilled or the semi-skilled but the skilled and the white collar workers who are now anxious, with reason, about the economy. We cannot move the economy swiftly out of recession unless we diminish the fear of unemployment. We cannot diminish that fear unless we have a Government who are prepared to start to bring down unemployment.

Who influenced the shape of the Budget that the Chancellor put before us on Tuesday afternoon? Certainly it was not the unemployed. They were never consulted, and they will not be the beneficiaries of this Budget. Was it industry? Many sectors of industry were not consulted and do not feel that they will benefit from many of the Chancellor's proposals. Was it the regions? There is to be no action on regional policy. Who sketched and drafted this Budget? Was it the people at the Treasury or was it, more likely, the people at Saatchi and Saatchi? The Tory party's secret weapon is the double Saatchi. The Budget owes less to manufacturing industry than to the advertising industry.

I have been checking up on Saatchi and Saatchi and on what it has been saying not just on behalf of the Conservative party but on behalf of many other people. In the advertising industry, Saatchi and Saatchi has an unenviably notorious record for complaints made, for prosecutions initiated and for verdicts handed down by the Advertising Standards Authority.

I have here a letter from the head of the Advertising Standards Authority—not about the one or two prosecutions for misleading the public, or the half-dozen prosecutions for not telling the truth, but about the 71 prosecutions that were upheld against Saatchi and Saatchi: twice as many complaints as have been upheld against any other agent. Let me read out what the head of the Advertising Standards Authority said about the organisation upon which the Conservative party relies. She said that it was disappointing to find Saatchi

> "producing quite so many complaints. It is too many complaints too often. It is not a very good record. They need to pay greater attention to detail, show firmer control of substantiation and take more copy advice when they are dealing with sensitive areas."

What has been the substance of the complaints against Saatchi and Saatchi? It has been prosecuted for advertising products that are no longer available. That ideally qualifies Saatchi and Saatchi for talking about certain services in the national health service under this Government. It has been prosecuted for advertising old products that are described as new. Again that ideally qualifies Saatchi and Saatchi for presenting Majorism at the election. It has been prosecuted for advertising products that fall below the standards claimed on billboards, such as the claim about economic recovery. These are the prosecutions that have been brought against Saatchi and Saatchi in the last few years. It has been prosecuted for advertising considered inadmissible because of misleading, restrictive, dishonest or undisclosed terms of offer. We have yet, however, to see the Conservative party's manifesto.

The persistent offence which best qualifies Saatchi and Saatchi to represent the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Government in their present plight is that of advertising products at give-away prices and advertising them only in the last few days of the period on offer.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I shall give way later.

What is the basis of this perfect, indeed enduring, relationship between Saatchi and Saatchi and the Conservative party? I have read the memoirs of Lord Young. One must go to him for his description of what happened during the last election when advertising was being prepared for the campaign. The Secretary of State for Employment may not remember this, but others will remember wobbly Thursday, or panic Thursday, when Maurice Saatchi wobbled. However, as Lord Young said, he steadied him by the lapels. Let me quote what Lord Young said to him. Then we shall see the truth behind the relationship between Saatchi and Saatchi and the Tory party, and who benefits.

> "'Now look, Maurice'"—

Lord Young said to him, taking him by the lapels—

> "'how much are you worth? How much are your companies worth? Do you know what you will be worth this time next week if we lose the election? You will be broke, we will all be broke. I'll be broke.'"

That is the relationship between Saatchi and Saatchi and the Government.

Mr. Howard: Can the hon. Gentleman confirm that the message that he wants to send to the country is that there is so little in the Budget that he can criticise that he is spending all his time talking about the Conservative party's advertising agents?

Mr. Brown: The Secretary of State for Employment has the audacity to rise on that point when he did not even mention unemployment in his speech.

Let us be absolutely clear about the scale of the problem that this country faces. In 1992, investment—which has already fallen—will fall again. Business investment, which has already fallen, will fall again. Construction and housing investment, which has fallen, will fall again. Having been bottom of the league in the European Community for investment in 1991—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members do not like it, but they are going to hear it—this country will be bottom of the league again if current policies continue. Moreover, having been bottom of the league in the European Community for industrial production in 1991, we shall be bottom of the league again, if current policies continue. Having been bottom of the league for losses in manufacturing employment in 1991, according to the European Community we shall be bottom of the league again, not just in 1992 but in 1993.

Anybody who listens to what the trade associations throughout the country are saying knows of the problems that industry faces in holding on to people. Does the Secretary of State for Employment deny the accuracy of the forecast by the Engineering Employers Federation, that 70,000 people employed in the engineering industry alone are in danger of losing their jobs this year? Does he deny the forecast from the Retail federation that more than 10,000 jobs are at risk? Does he deny that more than 50,000 jobs in the construction industry are at risk? Is the CBI right to claim that 200,000 jobs in manufacturing alone are at risk and could be lost this year?

The failures that began under the Government in 1987 and 1988 were compounded in 1988, 1989 and 1990. Our argument is that the Prime Minister and the Chancellor have failed to correct those policies in the Budget. Having said that unemployment will rise, will the Chancellor tell us, under his forecast, for how many months it will rise?

Mr. Norman Lamont: The right hon. Gentleman chose to quote from what he called the Retail federation. Why does he not quote what the Retail Consortium really said about the Budget? The director general of the Retail Consortium said:

> "The retail sector was looking for a Budget which would boost consumer confidence and revitalise small business while retaining sound financial good sense. We believe this Budget fits that bill."

That is what was really said.

Mr. Brown: Does the Chancellor deny that the Retail federation and other organisations in this country are predicting job losses this year? Does he deny that the scale of the job losses predicted is of the order of 200,000 in manufacturing and 400,000 in total if we include retail jobs? When we know that those are the forecasts for job losses from industry, why did we have a Budget that took no action to deal with the problems that we face?

Mr. Howard: Surely the hon. Gentleman knows that the only question that we should be addressing is which policies are best designed to create jobs. He knows that the national minimum wage would wantonly destroy countless jobs in the retail trade. Why does he not abandon that job-destroying policy?

Mr. Brown: It is interesting that the Secretary of State said nothing about unemployment when he spoke, and now——

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *Hansard* will clearly show that, when my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment was speaking, he did mention unemployment and said specifically——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Brown: The key question in the debate is whether there will be a substantial economic recovery as a result of the measures in the Budget. The Chancellor admitted in his Budget statement that unemployment will rise. The Red Book makes it clear that investment will fall in 1992. Does the Chancellor agree with the forecasts from the trade associations including the CBI, the Engineering Employers Federation and others that 200,000 manufacturing jobs will be at risk this year if current policies continue, and that 400,000 jobs are at risk throughout the economy? The Chancellor refuses not only to answer the question but to take any measures to act directly on the unemployment that the Government have created.

The truth is that the Government have been wrong this year and throughout the five years during which the Chancellor has been at the Treasury, when the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—he has not appeared today—was at the Treasury and when the Prime Minister, with only a few months exception, was a Minister at the Treasury making economic policy.

What is their defence for the failures of the past few years? Were they not consulted when the wrong decisions were made? Were they not involved in making them? Did they advise differently? What is their defence for the mistakes that have cost thousands of people their jobs? What is the Prime Minister's alibi? We know that the Secretary of State for Employment has an alibi. He was not in the Treasury. He was involved in another crime at the time—the poll tax. We know that the Secretary of State for the Environment was not in the Treasury. He was not even at Westminster at the time. He was touring the country trying to win the leadership of the Conservative party.

There is no doubt who was in the Treasury during those years. It is not just the Chancellor but the Prime Minister who will have to answer to the electorate for the mistakes that have been made. The Prime Minister was wrong in 1988 when he said that he would have a balanced budget—he has failed to deliver it. He was wrong when he predicted that the trade deficit would fall substantially in 1988 and 1989 and it did not. He has been wrong ever since. He was wrong when he told us that there would be no recession, when he told us that there would be an early recovery and when he told us that the recovery had arrived. He had to admit in the House only a few days ago that we were still in the midst of the recession.

The failures that the Government refuse to address are the failures not just of the past three, four or five years but of the past 13 years. Let us be absolutely clear about the extent of the Government's failure. Despite all the talk, all the boasts and all the rhetoric from Ministers, and despite all the statistics that Saatchi and Saatchi produce and put on billboards and in leaflets for them, no other country in the European Community has such a poor record of manufacturing investment since 1979. Our record is worse than that of Greece, Spain and Portugal. The real value of manufacturing investment under a Conservative Government, even with the unparalleled advantage of North sea oil, has fallen.

What of manufacturing growth? From being second bottom in manufacturing growth since 1979, we are now incontestably bottom of the league. In Japan, manufacturing has managed to grow by more than 60 per cent. outside the EC. In Germany, manufacturing has managed to grow by nearly 30 per cent. In this country, the growth rate for manufacturing has been one tenth that of Japan, and substantially below that of Germany.

That is why we need a policy that addresses the problems of under-investment. That is why we need a policy for the regions. It is absurd that we have a Minister responsible for regional policy who says that regional policy is a "phoney activity" of Government. The Government will pay the price for that when it is told to the electorate during the campaign. That is why we need a Government who are prepared to take seriously the problems of investment in the country's infrastructure.

[Mr. Brown]

I invited the Chancellor to look at our hospitals and schools. There are 7 million children being taught in schools where, according to independent reports, repairs are long overdue. There are thousands of pupils in schools with only outside toilets. Classrooms are still accommodating and teachers still have to teach more than 40 children at a time. The Secretary of State for Education and Science even admits that standards are not as good as they used to be, and that we lag behind our competitors abroad in the number of school leavers participating in further education.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science is prepared to tear up the pledge made 20 years ago by the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) that there would be nursery education for all. In Britain in 1992, parent-teacher associations are reduced to having to write to parents asking them to make donations and begging for money for equipment and even for money to employ teachers. All that is a scandal that the Conservatives cannot defend. That is not educational autonomy. The pay-as-you-learn education policy is educational neglect. There was nothing in the Budget for education or training. There was nothing for the unemployed and nothing for the health service.

More than 1 million people are on waiting lists for the national health service throughout the United Kingdom. In some cases, people still have to wait two years for operations that they know they could have within days in the private sector. Two of the country's leading children's hospitals have lost faith in Government funding and have had to launch huge appeals for millions of pounds—not for extras, but for essential development. Disgracefully, in the Budget the Government have approved the transfer of £80 million from the health service to private medicine. A terminally ill cancer patient who needs radiotherapy for pain relief has had to wait four months—too long—to get it. I say—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members will listen to what is happening to the national health service. The reason they need to be told is that they do not use it.

Mr. Norman Lamont *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I am not giving way again. I have given way three or four times to those on the Treasury Bench.

Up and down the country, the principles of the NHS are being eroded by the Government as surely as hospitals are crumbling, and the Government must shoulder the blame. It is interesting that, when we mention the words "unemployment", "education" and "health", the Government cannot react in any other way than to try to shout speakers down. That is what happens.

This country does not want a Britain in which one can be turned away from an opt-out hospital because no one is prepared to pay, but a Britain——

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): That is untrue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must level at Government Back Benchers the advice that I offered earlier. We conduct our affairs not by bawling across the Floor of the House, but by reasoned debate. I very much hope that hon. Members, particularly senior Ministers, will set a better example.

Mr. Brown: The Chancellor is getting anxious because, as we can see from the press, this will be one of his last public appearances before the election on 9 April. As we know, the Budget was under wraps for two months, but for the next three or four weeks it will be the Chancellor who will be under wraps.

Mr. Norman Lamont *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I am not giving way again.

The country does not want a Britain in which parents have to raise funds for the basic essentials, but one in which every classroom has books for children to learn and no one has to pay to learn. We do not want a Britain in which literally millions are condemned to a life without either the training they need or the jobs they deserve. What we want is a Britain in which, no matter where one is or who one is, one will have a chance to learn and to develop skills with the highest quality training. We do not want a Britain in which, by Act of Parliament, the poor must literally beg and borrow from a state charity social fund. What we want is a Britain in which compassion, fairness and justice are the values of the Government as well as the values of the people.

The British people have rejected the values of the Government who brought us the poll tax, the social fund, cardboard cities and the commercialised NHS. On top of all that, the Government have brought us abject economic failure. The country will reject this last-ditch Budget from a beleagured Cabinet that is trapped by time, failure and, now, by the certainty of defeat. They are the men who, by their mismanagement, have put thousands out of their homes, tens of thousands out of their businesses and millions out of their jobs. Now is the time for the people of this country to put them out of office.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Earlier, Mr. Speaker advised that I should apply the 10-minute limit to the length of speeches between 7 o'clock and 9 o'clock. However, given reasonable restraint, we might be able to get by without it.

5.43 pm

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) did not once mention the increase in public expenditure that was announced in the autumn statement or the increases in public expenditure, in real terms, on roads, health and so on since 1979. Many of us listened with bated breath when the hon. Gentleman called for more expenditure on this, more expenditure on that and more on the other, but not once did he say where he would find the money.

We have been promised that, next week, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) will unveil the plans of a Labour Government. I hope that they will be spelt out in clear terms because the Labour party's fudge on public expenditure is beyond belief. The only time that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East roused Labour Members was when he attacked Saatchi and Saatchi. For the life of me, I do not understand what Saatchi and Saatchi has to do with this Budget.

You will appreciate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have been in the House since 1959. With the exception of three or four years when my service was broken, I have taken part in practically every Budget debate. In 1979, I was elected chairman of the Conservative Back-Bench finance committee and, since then, I have taken part in every Budget debate. Towards the end of one's career, one looks at the transformation that has occurred. In 1979, under the previous Labour Government, the standard rate of income tax was 83 per cent. in the pound. If one happened to have investment income, the rate was 98 per cent. Now, however, the top rate is 40 per cent. I should have thought that one should continually remind people of that transformation which has been achieved since 1979, when the Conservative Government took office.

Not only have we increased public expenditure in real terms but, at the same time, we have reduced the taxation charges for the higher bands. In addition, the standard rate of income tax, once 33 per cent., is now 25 per cent. and it will go down to 20 per cent. We have also done much to help businesses and manufacturing industry because the corporation tax, which stood at 52 per cent. in 1978-79 —a real crippler—is now down to 33 per cent.

The Government have also abolished many taxes and they have disappeared from the statute book. The composite rate and the investment surcharge have gone. However, I understand that if there were to be a Labour Government, that tax would come back because Labour intends to add national insurance contributions to investment income, which, in itself, is an investment surcharge under a different guise. We have abolished the differential between husband and wife in terms of taxation and that has proved a great boon to all families. The land development tax, the investment surcharge estate duty, dividend control and exchange control have all gone.

We must admit that the current recession is much deeper than was thought not only by the Conservative party but by many pundits in the City and throughout the world. However, there are some good signs and I should like to point out some of them. When one has an international economy such as our own, one cannot wave a magic wand to make everything all right. However, the economic signs are looking promising.

Wage rates have come down tremendously and are now moderate. The number of production days lost through strikes is lower than it has been for many years. Inflation, which was nearly 11 per cent., is now just about 4 per cent. and it will fall further. That has been a great boon to everyone whether on low pay or on a middle-range income. It is a bit much that Labour Members should criticise us about the inflation rate, but I do not hear them say much now that it is standing at 4 per cent. They do not like to be reminded that inflation rose to between 25 and 26 per cent. when they were supposed to be in charge of the economy. That inflation rate was a killer. Anyone with small savings had up to 26 per cent. of them eroded each year and that, too, was a crippler. The Labour party has a lot to answer for.

It is claimed that the production rate in manufacturing industry has not increased. However, the statistics show that that rate is now 15 per cent. higher in real terms than it was in 1980. Productivity and investment have increased by 50 per cent. and exports have increased by 60 per cent. Let us make an international comparison. Twenty-seven of the top 50 performing companies in the European Community are United Kingdom companies. That is not a bad record; it is one that should be mentioned.

The Opposition do not like privatisation, but it has several advantages. Industries such as steel, the National Freight Corporation and the other privatised industries have been turned into far more profitable organisations. In many cases—for example, steel—a loss-making industry has been turned into a profit-making industry. That is good for the economy and means that the Chancellor's receipts are that much greater.

It is wrong and regrettable that—for, I suppose, party political purposes—so many right hon. and hon. Opposition Members always talk down the British economy. They give the impression that nothing pleases them more than bad news and bad trade figures so that they can say that our economy is a shambles. We must remember that it is not only the United Kingdom that is in recession—we need only to consider Australia, West Germany, Italy, France and the United States which have all suffered. Therefore, one should not blame only the British Government for the world recession.

A foreigner to this country may ask why we have the highest rate of inward investment of any country in the European Community. The Japanese and the Americans would not invest here if they thought that their investments were at risk. They come here because they know that we are competitive and that they can have a profitable outfit.

Let us consider the increase in the number of the self-employed. The number of people in work today has been compared to the number in 1979. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment was right to say that it is regrettable that unemployment has increased—it will probably climb a little in the next few months—but it is plateauing out. There is no easy way to make unemployment fall. My right hon. and learned Friend's devastating demolition of the statutory minimum wage was so logical that I do not understand how any Opposition Member can continue to believe that it would do anything for the economy. It is not only my view but that of the Confederation of British Industry, the chambers of commerce and the trade federations that the minimum wage would jeopardise employment.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman reflect on the remarks made to me recently by the Korean ambassador about the investment by Samsung in the north-east? He expressed surprise that in real terms the wage rates in the north of England are now lower than those in Korea and that people in the north had less protection from trade unions than people in Korea. What does the right hon. Gentleman deduce from those remarks?

Sir William Clark: I am not familiar with the economic circumstances of the Koreans. If the Korean gentleman believes that, he should talk to people from the United States and Japan who will tell him that our wage rates are very competitive and are not lower than those elsewhere. The hon. Gentleman makes accusations about the Koreans, but I should not have thought that one could possibly compare the Korean economy with that of this country.

The public sector borrowing requirement is really an overspend. People in the House and elsewhere often speak in initials but people outside the House do not know what we mean when we talk about the PSBR. We should spell it out in easy terms—it is an overspend. The Government receive money and spend a proportion of it. As they do not receive sufficient to cover their spending, there is overspending. It looks as though the overspend in the

[Sir William Clark]

current year will be about £14 billion and it is projected that next year it will be £28 billion. That means that over the two years it will be £42 billion.

In considering any economy one must examine what has happened in previous years. If we look back one year to 1991 we find that we repaid £26 billion—so over three years my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has overspent about £16 billion. Over three years, £14 billion plus £28 billion equals £42 billion, less £26 billion which gives——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The right hon. Gentleman rightly draws the attention of the House to this matter, but has he studied the cumulative figure? By 1996-97 it will be £110 billion. When the Minister of State was asked today by one of my hon. Friends about the relationship between that increased borrowing—and, in particular, next years's doubling of the borrowing—and interest rates, she said that there was no relationship. Does the right hon. Gentleman—he is the chairman of the Conservative Back-Bench finance committee—believe that there is no relationship between the doubling of the PSBR and interest rates?

Sir William Clark: I shall come to that in a moment, but let me finish my analogy. The £28 billion and £14 billion equal £42 billion. We have repaid £26 billion, so there has been an overspend of £16 billion in three years, which is just over £5 billion a year. That is about 2·5 per cent. of gross domestic product, which is well within any guidelines on how much a Government can borrow.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: It is extremely important to consider the overall national public sector debt which, as my right hon. Friend will recall, has fallen from 50·6 per cent. of GDP in 1979 to 28·5 per cent. today. That is a significant cut and, even taking account of the increases forecast in the Budget, it will not return to the same proportion of GDP as in 1979. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree that the figures must be viewed in the context of overall borrowing and not considered merely on an annual basis.

Sir William Clark: I am grateful to my hon. Friend because he makes the point more succinctly than I could have done. I agree that if we consider the national debt as a proportion of GDP, it is way below that of our competitors. If we wish, we have a tremendous leeway of borrowing capacity.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) spoke about 1996. That is too far ahead for us to judge what the effect will be. One must be fair—the extrapolation of what might happen in 1994, 1995, 1996 or 1997 is bound to have changed——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is in the Red Book.

Sir William Clark: It may be in the Red Book. Something has to be put in the Red Book, and that is what is thought today—it is all based on estimates. Anyone who knows anything about business will understand the analogy of cash flow. The cash flow of any company in any country changes every three to six months.

Mr. Wallace: The right hon. Gentleman speaks of the uncertainty of making predictions. At Prime Minister's questions today the Prime Minister in reply to my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) seemed to say that as a result of the Budget there would be a balance over the period of the cycle. Does the right hon. Gentleman also reject that analysis?

Sir William Clark: No, I do not. One cannot make definite predictions about what will happen four years hence. Just taking the past three years——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir William Clark: No, I want to get on.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: But it is interesting——

Sir William Clark: Of course it is interesting. I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman finds this interesting, but the debate should not be a dialogue between us. Perhaps afterwards we could have a cup of tea and go into the matter.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Let me intervene once more, very briefly——

Sir William Clark: No, no. I have given the hon. Gentleman a lot of licence, if I may put it that way, and I wish to turn to the taxation proposals.

We had a reduced rate band in the past and it has been reintroduced in the Budget. The first £2,000 of taxable income will be taxed at 20 per cent. rather than 25 per cent. I cannot for the life of me understand how anybody could oppose that. The pension exhausts all the personal allowances of a retired pensioner, whether single or married, who must pay 25 per cent. on any sum over it. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor proposes that an individual will pay only 20 per cent. tax on the first £2,000 over the personal allowance. I hope that I am right in saying that this is a step towards the goal set down by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson). The Conservative party and the Conservative Government are committed to getting the standard rate of tax down to 20 per cent.

That compares with what we are promised by Labour politicians. We know that under a Labour Government the top rate of tax would be 50 per cent. and that the investment surcharge would be 9 per cent., making a total of 59 per cent. In addition, an investment surcharge of 9 per cent. would be levied on the investment income of those who do not happen to be in gainful employment or who are not necessarily enjoying a pension which has always been considered as earned income rather than investment income.

The car tax reduction will be a great boon to the car industry, one of our key industries. It is extraordinary how some people run down British industry given the amount of Japanese investment in our car industry that will come on stream in 18 months' to two years' time. When it does, the United Kingdom will again be a net exporter of motor cars. The action on the unified business rate is welcome. It will help small businesses in particular. In addition, the concession on inheritance tax is good for business.

I have always thought that the rule of thumb for economics is that in good times we start to repay our debts and in a bad year it is fair and right to borrow to give an impetus to the economy. In the long run, that will generate taxation back to the Treasury. As I said earlier, the Chancellor of the Exchequer stressed the amount of extra investment in the infrastructure, schools and the rest.

On 9 April the electorate will face the stark choice between a high taxation Government or a low taxation Government. At the moment we are on the road to prosperity. It would be a catastrophe to change course.

6.4 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): At times during the speech of the right hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) we heard a somewhat typical reaction from Conservative Members. The right hon. Gentleman rightly pointed out what was good about the economy —for instance, that inflation was relatively low and set to decrease—but everything that was good was the result of the Government and all the failures were someone else's fault. He blamed the failures not least on the French, other foreigners and whoever else might be responsible for the recession. Those who are unemployed, those who face unemployment and those who have the fear of unemployment hanging over them know where the blame lies. The head of the Government was Chief Secretary to the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer before he became Prime Minister. His fingerprints are well imprinted on the recession.

When I heard that the Secretary of State for Employment was to open today's debate, I thought that he would tell us how this is a Budget for jobs, which he predicted when the unemployment figures were last announced, but so far no one has been able to see how that is so. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) quoted the right hon. and learned Gentleman's statement following the release of the unemployment figures on 13 February and said that during the afternoon they had been somewhat glossed over by a Treasury official. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is aware of this, but on a programme for Central Television recorded later that evening, in which the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and I took part, the Secretary of State again said that we would have a Budget for jobs. None of us can work out what has happened to that Budget for jobs.

I accept that there has been a welcome boost for the car industry. That was very necessary, although I would not necessarily have adopted the measures in the Budget. More should perhaps have been done to promote environmental objectives at the same time. Nevertheless, the boost is welcome. There has also been a welcome boost for the small business sector, to which I shall return.

Clearly—no one has sought to deny this—the Budget will do nothing to stem the rise of unemployment which has been going on for almost two years. The figures this month will almost certainly show that unemployment in this recession has risen by more than 1 million people. That is 1 million individuals, with their families, all of whom feel the blight of unemployment in a very real way.

We have heard that the great centrepiece of the Budget is the reduction of the tax rate to 20 per cent. on the first £2,000 above personal allowances. But the unemployed do not have the earned income to benefit from that in any way. It has been argued that the tax cuts are intended to help the low paid. The Institute of Fiscal Studies, which the Secretary of State for Employment was pleased to pray in aid during his speech, has said that the measure is an inefficient way of targeting help on the low paid. It would be far more effective to use the same sum to increase personal allowances.

I do not know whether anyone has done the calculation, but for many people the additional income that will derive from the tax cut will mean that they will no longer qualify for as much family credit as they do now. Some people will be taken out of family credit and will lose benefits—such as free prescriptions. *[Interruption.]* If the Minister is about to say that that is not accurate, I shall be only too pleased to hear it.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Maples): I am only too happy to give the hon. Gentleman the figure. The cost of the tax cut is about £1·8 billion, £20 million of which will be clawed back in lost benefits. That is 1 per cent. of the total, which is a very small amount.

Mr. Wallace: The Minister points out that the tax cut costs £1·8 billion, but the cut is not concentrated solely on the low paid. The highest paid will also enjoy it. It is not £1·8 billion being enjoyed by the low paid from which £20 million has been taken away. There will be an impact on the higher paid as well.

Mr. Battle: This is a debate in which I take great interest. I put the point about the low paid to the Chief Secretary yesterday and in reply he gave me the figure that the Economic Secretary gave just now. If Parliament lasted longer, I should be tempted to table parliamentary questions to draw out the true figures. If £617 million is being spent on family credit, the percentage works out at 3 per cent., not 1 per cent. as the Government claim. If we take into account access to other benefits, the little gain that the low paid have left is wiped out.

Mr. Wallace: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. I have no doubt that he has gone into the figures in greater detail than I have. There will be some among the low paid who will lose out through losing family credit and through losing further entitlements such as free school meals and free prescriptions.

As has been said, the impact of the Budget on the public sector borrowing requirement shocked the House. I heard the Chancellor mention the figure of £28 billion for 1992-93, which was far higher than I had expected. When I looked at the face of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), I realised that it was also considerably higher than she had expected.

As the Chancellor introduced one small measure here and another small measure there, and even after he had announced the 20 per cent. tax band, I kept waiting for the big idea which would explain that level of borrowing. The Chancellor then sat down and one was tempted to say, "Is that it? Where is the big idea?" The truth is that the borrowing requirement is so high because of the depth of the recession, because of the transferred payments that have to be made, such as unemployment benefit and social security benefit, and because of the loss of revenue. The extent to which the Chancellor will have to borrow emphasises the depth of the recession.

The right hon. Member for Croydon, South has said that he thinks that borrowing is quite acceptable if it gives the economy an impetus, and I agree with that as a principle, but I believe that the real question in the debate is whether the Chancellor's proposals are sufficient to give an impetus and whether they have been targeted in the right direction. We believe that to borrow principally to finance consumption, which is what one does through tax cuts, is not nearly so effective an impetus as borrowing to

[Mr. Wallace]

embark on a programme of investment. When the right hon. Member for Finchley was Prime Minister, she often used to give the House little homilies on prudent housekeeping and the corner shop business. We were always told how the books had to balance. I am sure that the corner shop business man or woman accepts that it is prudent to borrow money if one uses it to extend the range of goods, to put in new shelving, to extend the premises, to make the premises more attractive or to employ another person. The same corner shop business man or woman would not consider it prudent to borrow money and then to hand it out to customers who might spend some of it in the shop down the road, which is what will happen to some extent with the tax cuts.

We are not talking about very much money. As my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) pointed out yesterday, we are talking about the equivalent of buying a daily newspaper every day for a year. Some of the money will be spent on imports, and some will be spent on repaying debt. We are nationalising private debt, which will not give the impetus for which the right hon. Member for Croydon, South looked.

Sir William Clark: We must be logical. The hon. Gentleman has agreed that part of the borrowing requirement is caused by welfare benefits and transferred payments. Surely all those payments go to consumption.

Mr. Wallace: Indeed they do. However, I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman is not saying that the resulting borrowing should be encouraged. It would be far better —hon. Members of all parties would agree—if the borrowing was not necessary. If we had a lower level of unemployment, it would not be necessary to make so many unemployment payments. If we had lower levels of unemployment and higher levels of employment, the greater buoyancy of the economy would generate revenue.

Before the Budget, we suggested a package to try to turn the economy round and to create jobs. Our estimate was that in the first year we could create up to 400,000 jobs, with perhaps another 200,000 the following year. As the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East mentioned, we could carry out the much needed repairs to schools and college buildings.

Everyone tries to make the issue of housing more complicated than it is. We have homelessness, yet capital receipts from the sale of council houses have been frozen and local authorities are not allowed to invest in housing. The recent report by the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service in response to the autumn statement says that there is a case for using local authority receipts to try to give a boost at appropriate points in the cycle.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wallace: I have given way a fair amount and we are trying to keep our speeches brief. I may give way later.

Rail investment, energy conservation programmes and training, both in quality and quantity, are worth doing in their own right and are especially worth doing when there is a deep recession. They are temporary because after the house is built or after the school is repaired, the borrowing does not recur, whereas borrowing for tax cuts has to continue unless the tax cut is only a temporary phenomenon.

Many local authorities have been prevented from undertaking school repairs because of poll tax capping. British Rail has drawn up projects which it could implement relatively speedily. Such projects would have a more immediate and noticeable impact in trying to turn the economy round than will the tax cuts proposed in the Budget.

We should give particular help to the construction industry. So long as unemployment is set to rise and so long as the fear of being unemployed hangs over families and communities—and with it the fear of losing their homes—where will the confidence come from to boost consumer demand?

I try to be fair and to give credit where credit is due. The Government's targeting of help towards the small business sector and the changes in the uniform business rate are welcome moves. I heard what the Chancellor said about why he did not go down the road of corporation tax allowances, and I believe that his judgment was probably right. When I heard the Chancellor list some of the measures that he proposed for the small business sector, it was like hearing one's own words coming back.

For a long time, I have tried to point out that for a business to lose its transitional relief if it sought to move premises was helping to freeze the property market and meant that smaller businesses which wanted to expand were being contained, whereas larger businesses in larger premises which wanted to contract in the recession were being hampered. The proposal on the UBR was a sensible move which, as is often the case, came late. The measures designed to keep down the rate of UBR are welcome, although I would have preferred the Government to take the simple step of freezing this year's increase and, as we propose, to give equivalent help to Scotland. That would have been of greater help for the small business sector.

I also welcome the steps towards tackling the problem, about which many small businesses complain, of the late payment of debt. It is not solely a question of large company customers because it can happen at all levels. The real problem is a customer on whom a business is dependent, which means that the business does not like to push its luck too much. The Government have suggested that businesses will have to publish in their accounts how late they pay. I make the constructive suggestion that it might be better if companies had to make a statement of overdue debts in their accounts. If we were to introduce statutory interest, companies would have to list those debts as well. Last week the hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) introduced a Bill to allow for interest on debts after late payment by 28 days. He was given leave to introduce the Bill, but clearly it will not reach the statute book on this occasion. The measure has considerable support in all parts of the House and I hope that it will be revived in the next Parliament.

The Secretary of State did not refer to unemployment this afternoon, except in the context of trying to attack the minimum wage. When the unemployment figures are published each month, he tries to put a statistical gloss on them. He says, for example, that perhaps it is the second lowest month's figures in relation to trend and rate of increase. I thought that he might have said last month that it was the lowest rate of increase in a month when England had won two successive test matches against New Zealand since 1979. The right hon. Gentleman has run out of excuses, to the point where he cannot even address the subject.

The Labour party's approach to unemployment is disappointing at times, in terms of the number of press releases in which unemployment seems to matter only in the context of how much it has increased in a constituency compared with the sitting Conservative Member's majority. That does not do much for the unemployed, who are looking for a message of hope.

The package that we put forward would not bring about employment as we knew it in the 1950s and 1960s, but it would turn the economy around and produce that ray of hope for which the unemployed are looking, and which the country as a whole thinks is right and proper to get the country moving again. On 9 April the British people will have an opportunity to vote for a party of hope with a message of hope.

6.20 pm

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): It is a relief to follow the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), and I am grateful to have been called to speak now, rather than having to follow the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who I see is about to leave the Chamber.

I could not help thinking that, if Tchaikovsky had written the 1812 overture when the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East was around, he would not have needed an orchestra. He would simply have scored it for the hon. Gentleman. If Wagner had been scoring Gotterdammerung, he would have done so similarly, solely for the hon. Gentleman, but with 12-inch howitzers at the end of every bar. I was reminded during his speech of the famous comment that the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava was magnificent but was not war. What the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said was not magnificent, and it bore little relationship to the major problems facing all the major industrial countries of the western world, the subject which I shall discuss.

As in your case, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is my 28th Budget debate. Unlike you, I have always participated from the less elevated position of the Bench below the Gangway. I expect that we both share similar regrets and have listened to a great flood of rhetoric and argument. I have always been much obliged to you, Mr. Speaker, and to your colleagues in the Chair, and to all those who have tolerated my perhaps somewhat eccentric views on economics, science and southern Africa, to say nothing of industry. That tolerance has also been extended by my constituents, most of whom, I am glad to say, have taken a broad view of the alignment between the national interest and their own.

When we arrive here, many of us step on the great glacier of history and think that, by our personal efforts, we can shift it perceptibly. I suggest that we should not be here if we do not hold that view when we arrive. We have learnt nothing if we still hold that view when we leave. On arrival, most of us step firmly on to the ice, find somewhere where we can lean on solid rock, and heave. From time to time, great chunks of the glacier crash into the sea miles away and the more hopeful among us attribute the noise and rumble to our personal efforts.

Some of us band together in government, a process which reinforces the perception of power. But if we are frank with ourselves, we realise that the forces operating on the glaciers of human history are far more powerful than any which we might bring to bear, personally or even collectively, in this place. It has always been thus.

In August 1914, a great Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, stood not at that Dispatch Box—it did not exist at that time—but at its predecessor and made a speech that was crucial to political support in Great Britain for the first world war. The distinguished historian, the late Barbara Tuchman, described his task as

"reconciling the past, persuading the present and speaking to posterity."

The Chancellor faced an equally daunting challenge in recent days. He had to reconcile economic realities with political perceptions on both sides of the House, expose the prejudices which exist in all parts of the House, convince the City and speak to the posterity which will judge Britain's economic performance in the new era of a united Europe. Those have been formidable tasks, and he has made a pretty good fist of them.

The arguments are not about objectives but about methods. They have been going on since, in my intellectual and political youth, I read Harold Macmillan's "Middle Way" before the second world war and Keynes's "General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money" shortly afterwards. Since then, the debate has filled a few thousand books, a few million articles and thousands of tons of newspaper commentary. It will continue for some time yet, but the argument will be advanced only by better definition and information. The paradigms must change, and the one general criticism I offer—it will be my last —is that we tend to ignore significant, objective and devastating analyses which challenge our definitions.

I have on the Bench next to me three such reports from the OECD which it is obvious most Opposition Members have not read. Good definitions scar our political prejudices more severely than any other factor. That is why we avoid them. But in doing so, we allow our debates to be dominated by obsolete paradigms and criteria. I therefore give a warm welcome to the reorganisation of the budgetary procedure announced by the Chancellor, and the White Paper is significant and long overdue. It is also a solemn and significant acceptance of the fact that this House neither controls public expenditure nor debates it adequately. Public recognition of that conclusion is the essential basis of future reform, and later I shall give an example of that.

The electoral processes and forces in a democracy persuade most of us to offer £2-worth of entitlements where there is normally only £1·99-worth, or less, of provision. It is the modern version of Micawberism on a large scale. In my judgment, the most significant figures produced by the Chancellor on Tuesday were contained in two tables of the red document, the Budget report. The first appear in table 2A.1, which reveal that, over three decades, all Governments, irrespective of political philosophy, have had the greatest difficulty containing public expenditure and the tax burden associated with it.

Up and down it goes like the proverbial yo-yo, never less than 37 per cent. of gross domestic product, as in 1963-64, nor more than 49·25 per cent., as in 1975-76. Again on an upward curve, it is scheduled to fall, hopefully, in 1996. It is an issue on which most of us and most of our constituents are somewhat schizophrenic. We resent the burdens, but we claim the benefits. We should be

[Sir Ian Lloyd]

more concerned about—we do not discuss it with any relish or with much competence—the wealth-creating effectiveness of the expenditure in either sector.

The second set of figures appears in table 1.2. The magnitudes are much too large for public comprehension. They are galactic figures, for most people the economic equivalent of light years or black holes, depending on one's point of view. I will try to summarise them. In 1991-92, our best estimate is that we shall spend £87·2 billion on social security and health combined. That amounts to £1,516 per head of population of 57 million in this country, or £3,910 per head of the employed population.

Significantly, that expenditure is now so large that the whole of the taxation derived from income tax and corporation tax—some £76 billion or £1,312 per head or £3,421 per employed person in this country—is not enough to pay for it. Only if social security receipts are added does the total rise to £113 billion—a colossal £1,963 per head, or £5,000 per employed person. The significance of that is that the whole of the remaining revenue from Customs and Excise is not enough to cover the other items of public sector expenditure, including defence and education. In relation to those massive total receipts from privatisation, borrowing and other sources are minuscule.

For what are doubtless regarded as sound political reasons, we concentrate our fire not on basic determinants but on residuals. That must change if the House is to retain credibility as a representative or controlling institution. I have argued before and do so again for the last time that we must look at the boundaries between the great spending empires and ask whether, how soon and in what direction they must change. Most of our supervisory instruments and procedures are directed not at the strategic or structural elements of public expenditure and revenue, but at the nit-picking level of waste and inefficiency within Departments. That is not enough.

I trust that the House will understand if I discuss science for the last time. Our national endeavour in basic science is the critical component of long-term success—more so today than ever before. Its development, understanding and transfer into industrial performance is a function of many things, not least academic excellence. But only the most assiduous among us—we all have other things to do—are prepared to wade through the vast, comprehensive research and development analysis now published each year so that we can begin to form a judgment about that.

The sum spent by the Government on the public sector is large—some £6 billion—and by the nation as a whole even larger—some £11 billion. Its adequacy is debatable, but the fact that it is almost impossible for the House, given the present emphasis on other matters, to make significant judgments about what the nation is doing in that area is not debatable.

Responsibility in the public sector is spread between dozens of Departments and institutions. The most important Ministers—Education, Trade and Industry and Defence—have other major concerns, and brook no interference in their scientific domains. No one except the Prime Minister can take an overall view, and no one speaks to him on behalf of the science community as a whole from within the political establishment, either in the House or in the Cabinet.

The miracle is that so much good science is still undertaken and applied in the United Kingdom, but "muddling through" will not always produce the best results. There are disturbing signs that, because of that, the overall performance of British science is declining compared to that of other countries, which see the problem in a different light.

The most depressing document that I have come across recently is an OECD report which classifies research and development intensities in the 1980s and compares various groups of countries. The first group is technological leaders which includes six countries—Germany, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States and South Korea. The second group is the other hi-tech countries, and the United Kingdom comes at the bottom of the table. I found that immensely disturbing, and far more attention must be paid to it. We are led by Taiwan, Norway, the Netherlands, France, Finland and Belgium in the second group of countries.

President Bush has referred in disparaging terms to the "vision thing". Political realists doubtless advise him and others that, where there is no vision, the people perish, but that where there is no defence, law and order, or where the vision is distorted by political distorting mirrors, there is little opportunity for calm reflection on problems or events that sustain both academic and scientific excellence. That may be so. Judgment, as the poet Robert Bridges reminded us a long time ago, lies in the "masterful administration of the unforeseen", and the political leader will always be assailed by the unforeseen, whatever his scientific advisers predict.

However, in this age of exponential change, if scientific excellence is not the whole vision, it is undoubtedly the coal face of our civilisation and the most vital component of the spectrum. The Government must pay more attention to that question. They must ensure that they keep up with the performance of our principal competitors. We must give the structure and direction of our scientific machinery far more attention in this place.

If I have one criticism of the Budget, it is that, within the substantial increase in public expenditure that it envisages, there seems to be no specific mention of the science budget. Science represents the seedcorn of the future, and it should come first. That is why I hope that, when the House returns—whichever party is in power—it will endorse the recommendations of the new Information Committee, which has recommended a significant change in the relationship between Parliament and the organisation set up by the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee called the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology.

It would be churlish of me not to acknowledge the tremendous support that I have received from hon. Members and others in that endeavour, but the staff must now pass to others, for this place will not survive as a valid democratic institution, as it must in this scientific age, unless it is adequately informed about the immense potential and consequences of science at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries. As a tribe much maligned by Swift, we politicians should be kinder and more generous to those who, today more than ever before, provide through modern science an unlimited and exciting vision of the standards of health and welfare, output dissociated from drudgery, and leisure and security unimagined by our forebears, and certainly unimagined in the lifetime of many living today.

6.37 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I am grateful for the opportunity to sing my swansong this evening. I shall leave this place when Parliament is dissolved and there is no doubt that I shall miss it. I have thoroughly enjoyed every moment I have spent here, but one can only enjoy those moments—*[Interruption.]* I am already bringing tears to the eyes of a Conservative Member. One can only enjoy one's stay in this place if one is not left completely alone but gets a fair amount of assistance.

I will start with the Chair. The Chair has been very good to me, and there is an important reason for that. I spent 10 years or more in the Whips Office. Whips are more or less a go-between between the Chair and hon. Members because the Speaker or Deputy Speaker cannot leave the Chair if they want something done.

We cannot manage in this place without the Serjeant at Arms Department, which does a wonderful job on our behalf. One particular officer in the Serjeant at Arms office —Michael Cummins—has helped me in many ways ever since I have been here. He and the rest of his team have done a wonderful job, and I am grateful for his help. When we discuss Bills in Committee we could not manage without the wonderful doorkeepers, under the leadership of Mr. Roy Usher. I recognise immediately that they do a first-class job, and I feel that I must make particular reference to them.

Police and security staff have been mentioned; we cannot manage without them, particularly with the things that are happening nowadays. They do a good job on our behalf.

Mr. Speaker's staff do a first-class job. He would not be able to do his job properly unless they were doing theirs, and I am grateful to them.

I want to recognise the place above you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We could not manage without the *Hansard* writers, who do a first-class job. Behind them sit representatives from the media, who can sometimes be kind and sometimes be awful. A little chappie who works for *The Guardian* does a good job on my behalf and has been kind to me. I shall not mention one other reporter, who writes for *The Times*, as he has been a naughty boy.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): I hope that in his list of commendations the hon. Gentleman will not forget the admirable official who adjusts the volume control. It is normally so difficult to hear the hon. Gentleman, but thanks to the guy who turns up the sound, we can always hear the hon. Gentleman when he speaks in his usual soft voice.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Hear, hear!

Mr. Haynes: I do not need any back-up from my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell). It is also said that patients in bed at St. Thomas's hospital can switch off the television if they want to hear a speech in the Commons provided by my good self.

I want to travel a different road from that travelled by the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd). I do not want to talk about science, so I shall leave that subject and make my speech in my own way, but for the moment I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore.

Mr. Ray Powell: We normally look at the Annunciator to know who is speaking in the Chamber. Earlier, when we were gathered in the Tea Room we started listening to a strong voice from the Chamber. It was only then that we realised that the voice was that of my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes). As we do not like to miss any of his speeches—I am sure that the House appreciates all his contributions and excellent speeches —we all dashed in. That shows clearly the volume of his voice and the excellent content of his speeches.

Mr. Haynes: You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, know as well as I do what I have to put up with sometimes. In fact, it happens nearly all the time.

I want to concentrate on the Budget. I am terribly disappointed with this Tory Government's Budget, which is not going to get us out of the mess that we are in.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): They put us in it.

Mr. Haynes: We are all in it. They make the decisions and carry out the policy, but we have to live with it until we can get rid of them. I have no doubt that we shall do that on 9 April, when there will be a Labour Government and such Conservative Members as manage to get back in will be sitting on the Opposition Benches.

When I retire from this place, I shall be able to sit in my little old armchair and watch all the activities going on here. I shall keep my eye on things, and no doubt I shall see my hon. Friends the Members for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) and for Ogmore sitting on the Government Benches.

Mr. Dixon: If we get re-elected.

Mr. Haynes: My two hon. Friends will definitely get re-elected. With their majorities, they cannot but get back here, and the same applies to my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). I know Pontypridd because I knew the previous Member. With his nice majority, my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd is certain to get back in.

I thought that the Secretary of State for Employment had a nerve to stand at the Dispatch Box and make a Budget speech with no reference to unemployment and what the Government intend to do about that problem. Our constituents are up to their necks in unemployment, and they tell us in no uncertain terms how they are struggling to live.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was sitting on the Treasury Bench earlier, but he is not there now. I bet he is having a nice rich meal. Some of my constituents back home in Ashfield will have to be satisfied with bread and jam, or bread and cheese. I have been through those days. I am 66, and I know what goes on. I had to live through such days under a previous Tory Government many years ago, and I know what rough living is. I know how to go without.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), who has a big grin on his face, will not be coming back. He need not have a grin on his face—he is only a young lad and has not yet experienced poverty. He has no idea about poverty, and nor have the Treasury Ministers. They have no more idea about it than flying to the moon.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) talked about the unemployed, the Chancellor sat on the Treasury Bench with a big grin on his face, which I thought was disgusting. I remember when the Chancellor had a black eye and he put a 14lb steak on

[Mr. Haynes]

it. I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—a 14lb steak on a black eye? Some of my constituents can't afford fish and chips, never mind a 14lb steak. The way this lot carry on shows that the sooner we get rid of this shower——

Mr. Roger King: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Haynes: No, sit down.

The sooner we get rid of that shower, the better off we shall be. That was shown by the Budget, which contained nothing about halting the pit closures which are ruining the economy of Nottinghamshire and my constituency. There were 10 pits in my constituency when I came here. That number is down to three due to the Government's policies. They never mentioned what amount of money is available to keep the pits open. Oh no, instead they organised a survey with a view to Rothschild drawing up a report on closing the pits that are left and leaving the nation with only 12 pits. How is the economy to survive on that sort of decision?

When we consider borrowing money it is no wonder that the shares are falling like nobody's business in the City. I am laughing my flipping socks off at the Government's wrong decision. There is no doubt that the City is realising the Government's bad mistake on borrowing. I have heard some Tories say that borrowing is all right, can be spread over time and will all come right in the end. One thing that they have not mentioned but have forgotten is that the money has to be paid back from somewhere. If the economy fails, as it has done under the Tory Government, how the hell will that money be paid back? The problem will get worse and worse.

I have two wonderful grandchildren. What do they have to look forward to under this Administration if things go on like this? We have got to get rid of the Tory Government on 9 April in the interests of the nation and the people who follow behind us. The hon. Member for Havant and I are two elderly gentlemen who are bowing out. We do not want to spoil the economy so much that living standards will have fallen by the time our young people have grown up.

The Government brag about how they have helped pensioners. They do not realise—or perhaps they do, but they are keeping it to themselves—that the new income tax band of 20 per cent. filters all the way through to the rich bods at the top who have been raking off for years under this Administration.

There is another thing about this Secretary of State for Employment. He was partly responsible for the poll tax, and look at the misery that that has brought to lower paid workers and struggling families. And what else did he do? He privatised water and then allowed the directors of the new companies to bump up their salaries as high as the clouds at the expense of ordinary people who have to pay their massive water bills. The Government use the excuse that they will make the water authorities more efficient in the private sector, but that will cost the ordinary folk whom we represent a great deal. Tories represent them too, but they could not flipping care less. Ordinary people will suffer more and more under the Government's policies.

We need to get Labour into office to change direction. People in this country need the kind of help that we can give them. The Government have had billions of pounds of oil money and they have squandered every penny of it. They ought to be ashamed of themselves. If they had spent it properly we would not be in this mess.

The chairman of the education authority back home is a wonderful man called Fred Riddell. He does a marvellous job for Nottinghamshire's education, but what has he been told by the Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)? If he spends too much, he will be capped. But he needs to spend the money to provide improved education facilities and accommodation for the kids of Nottinghamshire. The Government have ruined adult education. I sat on the relevant Bill and I got sick to death of listening to the Minister reeling off what the Government were going to do. We had to sit and listen to the Government destroying adult education. We heard nothing about education from the Dispatch Box today. Opposition Members have argued that people need help—that their buildings are falling down and that they will keep falling down so long as this lot are in office. To change things we need more money, but the Government are not providing it. They are just borrowing money in the interests of the people they represent.

All this will go on unless the people of this nation have some sense and realise where to put their crosses—in the right place, next to the Labour candidate, throughout the land.

Mr. Maples: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Haynes: The hon. Gentleman is killing my flow; I have really got going now.

Mr. Maples: I will give the hon. Gentleman's voice a rest just for a moment. Will he explain why, if Labour government is so good, his constituency was won by the Conservatives in a 1977 by-election?

Mr. Haynes: The Minister is not getting away with that one—it was a fluke.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Where is the winner now?

Mr. Haynes: He sits up at the back on the Conservative Benches. He is with Price Waterhouse. We all know about the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. We all know about Price Waterhouse. We hear reports that those organisations are crooked, and the Conservative Member in question has got his flipping nose in them. He is known as the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), and he won by 263 votes——

Mr. Maples: But he won.

Mr. Haynes: It was a fluke, but I can tell the Minister this—I took the seat back, and it has been Labour ever since.

I am going now—I have said my piece. I look forward to the election. I shall play my part back in Nottinghamshire. We shall win there; we shall get them out in the city of Nottingham. Conservative Members who sit for that area should never have been there in the first place. We shall get them out and replace them with Labour candidates. We shall get a decent Government—and we have not had one of those for a long time.

The Government have repeated history. I recall the last time the Conservatives went out after 13 years of terrible rule. History is repeating itself—the Conservatives are in their thirteenth year. You and I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are going out, but so are they—and we shall have a Labour Government after the election.

6.55 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): It is always a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), and it has been a pleasure to serve in the House of Commons with him. He always has amusing things to say and he says them positively—and we never have any difficulty hearing them.

Much of what the hon. Gentleman said was all heart——

Mr. Roger King: All mouth.

Mr. Hind: No, all heart, but he did not deal with certain problems. It is easy to churn out rhetoric and say that we want to spend money on this, that and the other, but in the end we have to ask how that money will be raised and how the prosperity that creates it can be generated. If we take it out of industry and out of people's pockets, we reduce their standards of living and the amount of investment in the country, thereby reducing the number of jobs available for our people.

If, as the hon. Member for Ashfield claims, the economy is in a dreadful mess, he and his colleagues should be asking themselves how on earth the increased taxation that they propose will drag our economy out of the recession. The answer is that it will not. It will deepen the recession and make matters worse. It will not help to improve the standards of living of the British people.

Today's theme is employment. It was my privilege to serve as a Parliamentary Private Secretary in the Department of Employment after the last general election, when the Government increased the number of jobs in the country by more than 1 million and reduced unemployment by 1·4 million. We did it then and we can do it again.

The British people can expect as much from us in the years to come, provided that they recognise that there must be a degree of prudence in our economic planning and that there are limitations, because of the exchange rate mechanism, on what can be done. No longer can we lower interest rates to generate economic activity or to protect the parity of the pound against the deutschmark and other currencies in the ERM. The public must realise those limitations.

We are left with the public sector borrowing requirement. I have listened to what the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and his colleagues have said about that. They ought to remember that the PSBR run by a Labour Chancellor in 1978 was 9·5 per cent. of GDP. We at least will not forget that, and we will remind the public during the campaign that it was a Labour Government who borrowed to provide tax relief in the 1978 Budget—except that on that occasion they reduced taxes from 35p to 33p in the pound in the year before an election.

Now Labour is turning around and saying, "It doesn't matter what we did in the past. You've got to forget all about that. That was in a past era and we've changed our habits. We're not going to do it again." I do not accept that. A leopard never changes his spots. The public will be able to tell from history that the Labour party will pursue the same policies if it ever gets into office again.

Over the past few months, we have been able to analyse the Labour party's proposals. We know that they amount to a £37 billion increase in public expenditure. That is the same problem that Labour had after 1974, when it had promised the public that it would spend, spend, spend. The fact that the country could not afford it then and cannot afford it now has nothing to do with the Labour party's policies. If that spending were to start again, the country could only look forward to more borrowing, above the level proposed in the Budget, and major increases in taxation.

The Labour party will increase taxes not just in the higher rates but in the basic rate. A Labour Government would raise £12 billion from taxation—that is in the party's plans. However, between £12 billion and £37 billion there is a £25 billion gap, and that can be paid for only by increasing the standard rate of tax, which will amount to a return to a 35p in the pound rate of tax. That is what the public can expect from Labour—imprudence in borrowing, higher tax rates and inevitably higher inflation and prices.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): The hon. Gentleman is comparing the PSBR of 1978 under a Labour Government and Labour's proposals for the coming year. Would he care to include in his comparison the advantage enjoyed by the Tory Government, who have scooped £150 billion from selling the family silver and harvesting the crop of North sea gas and oil? Will he make some sensible and clinical comparisons between the one and the other and not use distorted methods?

Mr. Hind: The hon. Gentleman can be satisfied that I can. The 1980s saw record levels of investment, right up to 1990, a fall in unemployment of 1·4 million, an increase in participation in companies through the increase from 2 million shareholders in 1979 to 12 million today. The public have a greater say and participation in industry than ever before. There was a record increase in jobs, by 1 million. Britain had more jobs as a proportion of the population than any other country in Europe and the G7. This is where the money worked its way through, and it has resulted in a higher standard of living. The public are better off than they have ever been, and that is where the oil revenues went—to benefit the British people. The Conservative Government need have no shame about the way that they used that money.

It has been suggested by the Opposition parties that the 20 per cent. band set out in the Budget is a bribe and that it is not enough and does not achieve what it set out to do. Both cannot be right. It is not a great deal of money in itself. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has injected 0·33 per cent. of GDP back into the economy. It is part of the picture, part of the strategy to kick-start the economy and move it forward. For the seventh month running, there have been improvements in retail sales in the high streets. Organisations such as the House of Fraser are saying that they are astonished by the increase in sales. The CBI has said that retail sales are improving.

The Budget makes a contribution to moving the country out of the recession. Inevitably, that move must be demand led, which means putting money into the pockets of people. If one takes the money out of their pockets, one deepens the recession. Putting money into pockets helps to pull the country out of recession. The country will face a clear choice when the parties go to the hustings over the

[Mr. Hind]

next four weeks. The public must realise—I am sure that they will do so quickly—that increasing taxation will not stop the recession. However, decreasing taxation at a time when it is prudent to do so, in limited measure, will help and will result in Britain turning the corner and getting back on the right track towards prosperity.

We have seen the Labour party's confusion over the 20 per cent. band. I am delighted with the Budget for this reason. It is a Budget for the needy, not the greedy. It will benefit the lowest-paid workers, and it will benefit 5 million pensioners by making additions to income support. They will see that and realise that things will improve for them.

Pensioners will realise that the lower rate of tax, with the 20 per cent. band under a Conservative Government, will improve their standard of living. The alternative to that is the investment income surcharge to be imposed by a Labour Government which would add 9 per cent. to the tax on savings, taking it to 34p in the pound. That would drag away years of savings. That is what pensioners are up against and do not let us forget that more than 50 per cent. of pensioners have savings, occupational pensions and investments, all of which count. They will turn their backs on the Labour party because they will realise that the Labour party will put its hands into the pensioners' pockets rather than putting money into their hands.

Mr. Battle: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to make his own speech.

I welcome the proposals for small businesses, such as the changes in VAT. The most important is the improvement in the uniform business rate. That will be welcomed by small businesses throughout the country. They will be frightened to death at the thought of the UBR being taken over by profligate Labour councils which would use it to draw cash into their communities. Businesses would be used as money milch cows to the detriment of employment, investment and the prosperity of their communities.

Mr. Battle: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: I have already said that I will not give way.

Small businesses will welcome the changes in inheritance tax concessions which will allow owners to pass on to their children more of what they have worked for. These are not wealthy people, the rich about whom the Labour party talks. Labour thinks that somebody on £20,000 a year is rich, but it is misguided. It will find that police sergeants, staff nurses and many others doing essential jobs that are not particularly highly paid will fall into its so-called rich category.

Our economy is highly dependent upon cars and the cut of 5 per cent. in car tax—50 per cent. of it—will help to generate economic activity. If there is one factor that will bring my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) back to the House of Commons, it is the realisation among midlands workers that the Government are behind the car industry. They will be helping to export cars. They will not be turning their backs on the workers. That is what it is all about.

People throughout the country—in Sunderland and Derbyshire and those on Merseyside who work for Vauxhall and Ford—will realise that they are being given exactly the sort of help that they need. They will understand that Government policies will help to end the recession and push the country forward. The Budget will not inject an especially large amount of money into the economy—we are talking about £2·2 billion in the context of gross domestic product—but it will help to move the economy forward. There is a balance: the Budget is prudent and it is targeted at areas where it will produce the maximum results for the benefit of the people and for the economy.

Mr. Battle: Nonsense.

Mr. Hind: The hon. Gentleman says from a sedentary position that I am talking nonsense. Labour Members speak nonsense when they make promises about training, the health service and all the money that they will spend. We are never given figures. We do not know how much a Labour Government would spend. We never hear from the Labour party how it would raise the money; we hear only rhetoric. We can all trot out rhetoric but the Labour party cannot back it with hard facts. The difference between the Conservative party and the Labour party is that Conservatives do what we say. We do not make promises, only to lead the public up the garden path. No doubt, we shall have four weeks of promises from the Labour party at the hustings, but we, the Conservative party, will deliver what we promise.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Does my hon. Friend agree that the lower band of income tax will put an extra £250 million into the pockets of the people of the north-west? It is entirely wrong for Labour Members to think that they should take that money out of the pockets of those people because they know better how to spend it.

Mr. Hind: That is right. As my hon. Friend said, the money will go into the pockets of the people of the north-west, who will spend it on goods and services. The consequences of that will work their way through into the economy. Jobs will be protected in the north-west as a result. Job opportunities in the region will increase and there will be a gradual move towards prosperity.

There will be slow recovery but it will come and we shall see it by the end of the year. We can do it and we can deal with it. I am sure that the public will realise that, if they vote for a Labour Government, they will have to pay more tax, which will increase interest rates, inflation and unemployment. That will postpone the recovery. That will deepen the recession, not help to end it. The Budget is one step forward towards recovery and I welcome and support it.

7.12 pm

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) was correct when he said that recovery is slow. I would say that it is imperceptible. There are many people, especially my constituents, who fail to find any evidence of it. They have suffered massive unemployment for many years.

When I opened my mail last week I took out *The House Magazine* from its cover. At first, I thought that I had come across a satirical magazine. On the front cover was a picture of St. Margaret's church, and beneath it was the caption, "Reviving the economy". It seems that the

Conservatives have turned to divine intervention in the absence of policies. I am sure that their predecessors would agree with the proposition that faith without converts will not save the Government.

I found it incredible that the Secretary of State for Employment could make a lengthy speech without saying one word about unemployment levels. On Tuesday, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said casually—it seemed to be a throw-away remark—that unemployment would continue to rise until he finally managed to bring about economic recovery. How can anyone say that and claim that he has concern for the low paid, the unemployed and those living in poverty? That must be nonsensical.

In the past few days we have heard Conservatives expressing their concern for the low paid and we have seen their breast beating, but we remember their policies over recent years, which have shown clearly how little they care for the low paid. There are tens of thousands of low-paid employees who do not have the protection of wages councils, and thousands of others who come under wages councils but find that the councils can do only very little under the current arrangements. When the Secretary of State was pressed on this issue today by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), he said that the Tory party's policy on wages councils was under review. He said nothing at all about protection.

Mr. Battle: He said that the policy was under review, but in the document entitled "People, Jobs and Opportunity" he states that the councils should be phased out.

Mrs. Fyfe: My hon. Friend is correct. The Government's intention is to phase out wages councils. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has made that intention clear over and over again when my hon. Friends and I have debated employment Bills. The Government's position is clear—so much for their concern for the low paid, if that is their attitude to wages councils.

The Secretary of State claimed that family credit is a great scheme for those on low pay. It is a scheme that uses taxpayers' money to subsidise low-paying employers. If employers were required to pay decent rates, there would be no need to use taxpayers' money to provide a subsidy.

The Government are hoping that we have already forgotten the poll tax. If ever a policy was designed not to take account of the needs of the low paid and the impoverished, it was the poll tax. Everybody had to pay the same if weekly family income exceeded a low threshold. A person whose income barely crossed the threshold had to pay the same as the richest in the land. That policy was supported by those who have claimed today that they care about the poor. We see them beating their breasts and expressing concern for the poor, but they supported the poll tax and forced it through Parliament.

There was not a word in the Budget statement about improving unemployment benefit. As a result of small increases in the price of beer and cigarettes, for example, the unemployed will be even worse off. Nothing was said about housing benefit. We know that the Government want gradually to reduce the value of the benefit. They have not said anything today about improving it and making it more valuable to those who receive it. We have heard nothing about child benefit, either.

The Government's approach shows that their so-called concern for the low paid and the poor is entirely insincere. It amounts to nothing more than a death-bed conversion. If they are concerned about the poor, it is only because we are on the eve of an election.

The Federation of Small Businesses in Scotland has written to me drawing attention to two areas in which the Government, in the context of the Budget, have been negligent. There will obviously be consequences for small businesses in Scotland and for those who work in them. We know that the uniform business rate will be reduced slightly. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that Scottish business rates would be similarly reduced. In Scotland, small businesses pay a higher level of business rates than their equivalents in England. That deters the provision of work in Scotland. The problem is not so great in England and Wales.

Businesses throughout the United Kingdom should pay their fair share towards the cost of running their local authorities, but the anomaly between what Scottish businesses pay and what their counterparts in England and Wales pay is a problem for Scottish businesses trying to overcome unemployment and to create work in our localities.

Likewise, it is not entirely clear what is planned to help the whisky industry in Scotland. The Chancellor spoke of protecting our spirits industry, but I should welcome some clarification of what precisely he meant by that in terms of protecting our important whisky industry.

For months, the Secretary of State has attacked the minimum wage in a wearily repetitive way, as though we were incapable of taking in his points, just as he is incapable of taking in our answers to those points. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman care about how many jobs are being destroyed simply because people are unable to buy goods in the shops because they are too poor, because they are scraping a living and have no money to spare? Lack of money for households in which earnings are less than £3·40 per hour, and sometimes not even half that figure, means that there is no demand for goods that people could otherwise be employed to make.

The Secretary of State quoted some hotel keeper as saying that if the minimum wage were imposed he would be forced to pay off staff. I should have liked to know what that hotel keeper pays his staff—in many hotels the pay is scandalous—but perhaps it would have been too uncomfortable for the right hon. and learned Gentleman to tell us that. Is that hotel keeper really employing more people than he needs? If so, he would be unique among employers generally, who obviously have no reason to employ more people than they require to carry out the work which needs to be done.

Debates such as this always remind me of the days of Lord Shaftesbury. Let us imagine in our mind's eye what this House would have been like when Lord Shaftesbury was bringing forward reforms to prevent small children working in factories. At that time, people said that he could not possibly do that, that it would bring the country to ruin, wreck the economy, prevent us from competing with our competitors and create unemployment. All those arguments were heard then, and we are hearing them now in relation to the minimum wage.

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that the workers about whom she is talking who are supposed to benefit so much from the 20p rate of income tax will, because of the low level of their earnings, benefit by the princely sum of 20p per week?

Mrs. Fyfe: My hon. Friend is right. As has been pointed out, that is the price of a box of matches. Big deal. Perhaps that box of matches could usefully be used to set fire to Tory propaganda. That is the only good that will come from that measure.

People listening to tonight's debate, even if they know nothing about economics, even if they had just arrived from Mars and knew nothing about what was going on here, need only contrast the performances of the two Front Bench spokesmen. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) spoke with the deep sincerity that comes from genuine concern about unemployment and the low paid—a concern which is well respected and recognised throughout the United Kingdom. My hon. Friend will be one of the major figures in the Labour party's Front Bench team when we form the next Government.

Contrast my hon. Friend with the Secretary of State for Employment oozing insincerity from every pore. The right hon. and learned Gentleman strikes me as a man for whom the word synthetic would be a compliment because at least some synthetic things can be capable of useful service. I was reminded of the saying,

> "The louder he talked of his honour, the faster we counted our spoons".

The Secretary of State and the Chancellor continually spoke of their concern for the low paid and the more that they did so, the more we counted the tens of thousands on low pay who are not protected by wages inspectorates and who have had their trade union rights abolished, and the more we counted the millions unemployed in our constituencies. But the counting that I am thinking of now will come on 9 April, when the votes counted will show Conservative Members the consequences of their cold and heartless policies. They will then start learning something about what it is like not to have a job any more.

7.24 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I am delighted, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to have the opportunity to say a last few words in this Parliament while you are in the Chair. This afternoon the House has had an opportunity to pay tribute to some remarkable people who look after our well-being in the Chamber and to have a moment or two to thank you personally means much to me, not least because you are a south-west Member of Parliament and, as such, must be among the greatest and best.

My prime memory of you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is of the day when I found that I needed a cow in London. That was a difficult thing to achieve because I was told by the authorities in London that a cow was a wild beast. So far we have strayed from our agricultural background in this great city of ours that a cow is deemed to be a wild beast. The result is that one is not allowed to bring a cow into London; at least, if one is, one cannot offload her on to the pavement, because the pavement is not for wild beasts, nor can one offload her on to the road, because the road is not for wild beasts either.

So well served are we by the police in the House of Commons that, ever inventive, they carved out a small space with barriers off the pavement which they deemed not to be the road. It was an enclosed space just outside St. Stephen's entrance. That was deemed to be neither road nor pavement, so we could unload the cow.

How on earth do you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, come into this caper? I have to tell the House that the cow was yours. I had cheated. I had wanted a cow from Torridge in west Devon but, alas, it was deemed that the cows there were too delicate beasts to travel up to the evil city of London. None the less, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you unwittingly and unknowingly were able to provide a cow. I was feeling a little guilty. I had pinched a cow from your constituency. The cow's minder from the NFU had driven up with her at 5 o'clock that morning and had had eggs and bacon with me at 7.30 am. There the cow was, standing on what was neither the road nor the pavement, this famous wild beast, just outside St. Stephen's entrance.

By pure chance—it was quite a neat thing—along came the then Minister for Health and, again by pure chance, our good friends from the BBC and ITN were there too. That was the most peculiar concatenation of happy circumstances that any cow could wish for who was producing unpasteurised green top milk and who wished the sale of it to continue. There I was, guilt ridden, while the Minister for Health was just about to quaff his first ever draught of health-giving, bacteria-ridden, beautiful creamy green top milk which is absolutely wonderful, and along you came, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You did not say, "Goodness me, what are you doing with my cow?" You said, "How wonderful to see you, Mary" addressing the farmer, and you and she sat chatting. In the end we managed the impossible and, together, we managed to persuade the Minister to take his pint of green top milk into the Cabinet meeting five minutes later where it was decided to continue the sale of first-class green top west country milk.

That episode, Mr. Deputy Speaker, personified your urbanity, charm, delightfulness and inventiveness. Your humour, wit, courtesy and kindness to us all are legendary. I am grateful to you for all that you have done for me as a Back Bencher and for so many others during your lengthy term of office.

I do not intend to talk about animals throughout my Budget speech. I could not help but listen to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes). I am sorry that he is temporarily not with us; I am sure that he will be back in a moment. I wonder whether he quite knew what he was talking about. *[Interruption.]* Here he is. Wonderful. How glad I am that the hon. Gentleman is back in his accustomed place, or one of his accustomed places; he bobs around the Chamber quite splendidly these days. I want to comment on part of what he said. I wonder whether he knew what he really meant when he said so charmingly, in his usual dulcet tones, that his last speech, which he had just delivered, was his swan song.

I was a little fearful, as the hon. Gentleman revved himself up in his usual wonderful way, that his speech might turn out to be more like the song of a corn-crake, or perhaps an advertisement for throat pastilles, but he managed to get through his speech and sit down.

Mr. Haynes *rose*——

Miss Nicholson: This seems to be a splendid duet.

My hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd), who spoke before the hon. Member for Ashfield, said during his magnificent and masterly speech about science and technology that he had been listening to Gotterdammerung—but that means the twilight of the gods, and the past two days have been no twilight of the gods. The Labour party's opposition to the Budget has not been Gotterdammerung at all. As a matter of fact, it has reminded me more forcefully of an organ piece that I recently played at a funeral—"Pavane for a Dead Doll" by Tchaikovsky. That is the level of banality that has characterised the Opposition's objections to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's excellent Budget.

It will be a lot of fun for the rest of us to see the Labour party wriggling, wheeling and dealing in an attempt to justify to its electorate the fact that Labour Members are voting against a reduction in income tax to 20p in the pound for those who earn the least.

In his musical fervour, the hon. Member for Ashfield may not have realised that a swan song is what a swan sings when it is dying. No doubt he will recall that wonderful piece by Orlando Gibbons—"The Dying Swan". That is what a swan song is, and we may have been witnessing the dying throes of the Labour party.

Mr. Haynes: I am grateful to the lovely lass for giving way. I watch ballet too, and I have seen "The Dying Swan". I am not dying—I shall go on and on and on—but I was making my last speech in this place. I shall be making plenty more speeches outside during the election campaign.

Miss Nicholson: That explicit tenor statement did not hide the fact that we are witnessing the dying throes of the Labour party, as Labour Members attempt to vote against a 20p income tax band for the lowest paid—I make that point most seriously. I urge my right hon. Friend the Chancellor who has introduced that magnificent measure to go up the scale as soon as possible and raise the 20p band higher and higher. That is a true Conservative choice —allowing people who earn money to keep as much of it as possible.

The hon. Member for Ashfield has darted away from the Chamber again, like a gadfly, but during his speech he mentioned his favourite newspaper. He said that *The Guardian* had done him sterling service. Has that service really been so sterling? Perhaps the hon. Member did not bother to read the headline yesterday. Yesterday *The Guardian* said that the Budget was

"good for small businesses and the poor."

That may have escaped the hon. Gentleman's notice as he was talking about poverty and rich living.

I wonder whether the modern Labour party, for all its protestations, can really claim to understand the problems of poverty when it charges £500 a head for a "rich living" dinner. The hon. Gentleman told us that his constituents could not afford fish and chips. It is clear how outdated he is, because the present price of salmon makes it one of the cheapest protein dishes in the United Kingdom—bettered only by chicken. We have never had such low-cost protein before, and we shall never have it again if the Labour party gets into power—it will be £500 a head for dinner if Labour win. Labour's fund-raising efforts are quite unlike those of the Conservative party, which at a recent winter ball charged only £75 a head—we considered that to be really rich living. Perhaps the hon. Member for Ashfield —who has darted out again—is suffering from a surfeit of lampreys. Perhaps that is how the modern Labour party will writhe to death.

The Labour party will certainly not do very well in its attempts to impress the electorate with its claims that our education policy is all wrong. The hon. Member for Ashfield wanted more money for his chief education officer to spend on running education. I shouted out—perhaps inelegantly—"Jobs for the boys". The fact that I am right is demonstrated by the fact that schools are opting out and walking out of local education authority control in many Labour-controlled areas—*[Interruption.]* I am making a very important, accurate, factual point.

The great difference between the Labour party and the Conservative party emerges when Labour Members talk about the minimum wage. I was in business myself nearly all my life before I entered the House.When Labour Members use the word "differentials", I realise that the modern Labour party does not understand what a differential is—perhaps that is because there are no differentials in the House of Commons. There is a minimum wage flat rate for everything we do.

Modern Labour Members, who do not come out of industry or business, honestly do not understand what the erosion of differentials means to the lower-paid. Every low-paid person would run away from the idea of the erosion of differentials, because it diminishes people in terms of their skills and aptitudes and the way in which society regards them. Furthermore, it reduces their actual pay. That is why the minimum wage would be no good to anyone—unless differentials were preserved, in which case it would merely encourage the inflationary spiral. That is why, as one of my hon. Friends said earlier, inflation reached such intolerable heights last time the Labour party was in government. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said earlier this week, his goal has been to have a generation of people who have not been brought up to see inflation as the order of the day, as it was under the Labour Government.

Mrs. Fyfe *rose*——

Miss Nicholson: I have commented large and long on the problems which arose from the speech by the hon. Member for Ashfield, but I now wish to deal with something much more upsetting to me personally and to many people outside this place. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) acted in an unmanly way —I hesitate to use the word "cowardly", because that may be an unparliamentary term. However, the hon. Gentleman was certainly cowardly—if I am allowed to use that word in the House—because he failed to give way when he was ripping apart what he saw as the terrible Tory tactics on advertising. He would not give way either then or when he was talking about the health service, yet the important thing——

Mrs. Fyfe: Will the hon. Lady give way now?

Miss Nicholson: I am sorry; the hon. Lady has just spoken and I shall not allow her to butt in now. I had not spoken before the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, as everyone knows, and I tried twice, courteously, to intervene, but he would not let me.

Why did I wish to intervene? It was because I found it truly unspeakable, in the real sense of that word, that he should talk about advertising and attempt to destroy a perfectly honourable advertising company which has served the country well—Saatchi and Saatchi—and attempt to destroy our record on the NHS in a week in which the Labour party has destroyed the lives of a family by claiming in an advertisement that the death of their daughter was due to underfunding and understaffing at Great Ormond Street hospital. I find that despicable. I am

[Miss Nicholson]

appalled and horrified. I ask all Labour party members to spurn their party's advertising campaign. It is despicable. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, who must have known what I wanted to refer to, was too cowardly to give way and allow me to make that point.

Mr. Battle: Will the hon. Lady allow me to intervene?

Miss Nicholson: I shall give way with pleasure if the hon. Gentleman will say that he does not support that filthy advertisement.

Mr. Battle: I remind the hon. Lady that my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) simply read out what the Advertising Standards Authority had said about the advertising company in question. Does she dispute or challenge the authenticity of the ASA's statement?

Miss Nicholson: The hon. Gentleman has not bothered to pick up the point. Obviously it hurts him too much. The hon. Gentleman is an honourable man. Perhaps he does not support that foul advertisement. I did not comment on what the Advertising Standards Authority had said. I am more than willing to bow to its authority; this matter is its particular concern. I was commenting on the failure of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East to let me ask him whether he supports that form of advertising, because he purported to criticise our advertising by means of one particular advertising company. It is a squalid and despicable advertisement. I am ashamed for him for not saying that he does not support it.

When the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East referred to advertising he was not talking about the Budget. I support the excellent Budget that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented. I support also the excellent points that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment made this afternoon. I am glad to note that *Computer Weekly* agrees that the Budget offers a boost to software. As David Bicknell writes:

> "Chancellor Norman Lamont has ironed out discrepancies in capital allowances on software."

My right hon. Friend has allowed suppliers and users to obtain tax relief on all software, as he stated yesterday. This is a boost for business. Do the Opposition not realise that software is the information marketplace upon which the single market depends? This is a major initiative, but they have chosen not to recognise it, or they have failed to understand what is included in the Budget. It is an excellent move. It will encourage suppliers to download electronically transmitted software, which is the preferred method of supply. It is a first-class initiative which I heartily commend.

This is a prudent Budget, which I heartily support. I suspect that the Labour party has talked about everything other than the Budget this afternoon because it has no alternative to put forward. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East spent an enormous amount of time on saying that he believed that the national health service was deteriorating and that the principles of the national health service were being eroded by the Government. His sense of history is hugely at fault. It is a great shame that my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Sir R. Rhodes James), one of Britain's leading historians, is not here. He would be able to put the Labour party right on that.

The principles of the national health service are to offer assistance to the poorest in health, free at the point of delivery, so that they can become healthier and be less of a burden on the NHS. The Conservative Government have increased expenditure on the NHS by 50 per cent. in real terms. What sticks in the Labour party's gullet is that we are achieving real reforms that have cut waiting lists and led to many more operations and to the greater range of operations that science, doctors and the medical profession in general can now offer to patients.

I have personal experience of a flagship NHS trust hospital. I have continuing personal family experience of Guy's hospital in Lewisham. I commend most highly the plastic surgery team, the children's ward, the Rothschild ward, the nurses, the doctors, the support services, the administrators and the chairman, Sir Philip Harris. They are carrying out a first-class job. I shall continue to have family experience of that hospital for many years to come. The truth is that the Labour party does not understand what the principles of the national health service were, are, or will be. It has no alternative to offer. Therefore, it falls into the usual Labour party trap of whining, moaning and whingeing about excellent policies that, in all honesty, it ought to have difficulty in not supporting.

We are offering a lot of extra money to pensioners. The Labour party moans about that. We are offering help to family businesses and small farms. That is a first-class measure. The help that we shall give to family businesses and small farms relates to inheritance tax. Again that goes against the grain. The Labour party wants everything to go back to the centre, to the state. However, our proposals go with the grain, since the nation wishes us to conduct its affairs on its behalf in that way. The help to be given over the uniform business rate will be widely welcomed in my constituency. Many people in my constituency will also welcome the help that is to be given to small businesses in terms of the disclosure of the time of payment in the company accounts of big companies, as well as the introduction of best practice by the Government when it comes to payments to small businesses after they have secured Government contracts.

This is a prudent, thoughtful, intelligent and caring Budget. It epitomises the Conservative party's philosophy. As I prepare to return to my constituency to fight the election—where, I am delighted to say, we shall continue to enjoy our cider without any unwarranted intervention by the French—I can say that we shall win the election on this Budget. The society that the Conservative party's values represent is the larger part by far of society in modern Britain.

7.46 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): My right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) graced yesterday's Budget debate with what will be his final speech in the House of Commons. He spoke movingly of his experiences in the past 30 years as a Member of Parliament for Leeds. I have the privilege of representing part of my right hon. Friend's former constituency of South Leeds. I wish to put on record not just my thanks to my right hon. Friend but the thanks of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) as well as the thanks of literally thousands of people in

Leeds who will always regard my right hon. Friend as a citizen of our city and as one of whom they can be totally proud for having given great service to the city.

As I listened to my right hon. Friend's speech I compared its grace, style and wisdom with what, sadly, was the cheapjack speech of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. The latter was a knockabout speech,. As someone on these Benches rightly pointed out, it was a speech appropriate for a Chelsea supporter but not for a Government Minister. The same sort of speech was made this afternoon by the Secretary of State for Employment. It is indeed sad that at the fag-end of this Parliament the Government and their Ministers should behave in that way. They could certainly learn a lesson in decorum and behaviour from my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South.

My right hon. Friend made one very important point. He referred to the fact that Leeds had grown on account of its manufacturing industry. He talked about the wealth that had been created by our engineering, textile and clothing industries. He made the point that we have a Government who seem, at best, indifferent to manufacturing and, at the very worst, anti-manufacturing. It seems almost as though the Government do not believe that we need to produce goods in order to pay our way in the world. When the Government's attitude to manufacturing comes to the fore, I am always reminded of the comment of a leading industrialist in manufacturing industry who said, "We cannot live in a service economy; we cannot live by taking in each other's washing; we cannot live on a service basis; we need a manufacturing base."

In Leeds we are asking not to go back or for a return to the old industries but for support, help and hope for existing industries and future developments. Over the past 18 months we have experienced the longest recession of the past 60 years. My constituency is now faced with over 20 per cent. unemployment. There is a loss of hope and ambition. Leeds is an affluent city, but the pockets of poverty are deep and desperate. Ministers talk about generalities of statistics. They should see the pockets of poverty and hopelessness and consider them alongside those generalities. Even on the Government's official statistics, sufficient people are unemployed in Leeds to fill Elland road football ground. If the hon. Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) thinks that that is funny, he should visit Leeds. Each day those unemployed people get up and know that there is no hope and nothing that they can put their hands to. That is why we make the plea for improved manufacturing industry. We do that not in the cheapjack way of the Conservative party but because we believe in producing wealth and real jobs. That is why we want the new industries to develop and why we want to preserve our existing industries.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Francis Maude): The hon. Gentleman is keen to support manufacturing industry and to encourage the development of manufacturing industry in Britain. Will he take this opportunity to dissociate himself from the motion passed by the Trades Union Congress last year which described investment from overseas as being alien and made some thoroughly disgraceful and offensive remarks about such investment? Labour party Front-Bench spokesmen have not yet dissociated themselves from that motion. Does the Labour party support that disgraceful attitude?

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman should know that the TUC is not the Labour party.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): The Labour party is the TUC.

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) shows a lack of understanding and ignorance worthy of a member of the Government, but it does not do him justice. The Labour party's position on such issues is clear.

Mr. Maude *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: I will give way later. I want to develop my point further.

Manufacturing industry in Leeds has suffered under the Government's policies. A survey published last year by the Leeds chamber of commerce showed that 91 per cent. of its firms referred to high interest rates and the Government's high interest rates policy as the main factor affecting their performance. That is a telling criticism of the Government. In a city that is trying to improve its economic and manufacturing base, firms feel that the real constraint on increased performance has been the Government's high interest rates. That was not a comment from the TUC. Unlike the Government, Leeds chamber of commerce understands the importance of manufacturing.

Yesterday my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South made some telling points about manufacturing. I echo those comments. We need a Government who invest in and help manufacturing. My right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South also said that many of our constituents feel that there is no hope for them. They have no ambition. That is why training is important. It provides the skills for the future. It provides people with passports, hope and ambition.

In today's *Yorkshire Post* is a letter from a 19-year-old. That young person wrote to Dr. Jenny Cozens on the reader's problem page. Dr. Cozens is a clinical psychologist at the university of Leeds. It is a typical letter from a young person. It says:

> "I am 19 and I haven't had a job for over a year and I think I've lost my confidence. I realise I've got to keep trying and that it's my fault if things don't go right, but I've become so unhappy lately that sometimes I think things are too much for me. I still write for jobs, but not as much as I did and then I feel I'm not trying hard enough. I got mugged recently and that seemed like the last straw. I used to sing a lot, but now my voice sounds awful a friend said that it might be the blow to my head."

The response from Dr. Jenny Cozens is very important. She said, "Stop blaming yourself". Under this Government, it is always supposed to be somebody else's fault—very often that typical young person's fault. I enjoyed the final comment from Dr. Cozens. Talking about job losses and the difficulty of readjustment, she said:

> "Even Prime Ministers like Mrs. Thatcher get upset when it happens to them."

It is a funny old world for Prime Ministers, but it is not such a funny old world for that 19-year-old. That is the cost of unemployment and it is about time Ministers understood that.

The Government's training and enterprise councils say that the employment training programme is important and that it is a pathway to jobs and hope for the future. The Leeds training and enterprise council has suggested that we need 2,200 jobs on employment training. The Government have offered 1,800—a cut of more than 20 per

[Mr. Fatchett]

cent. At a time of rising unemployment—it has increased by more than 40 per cent. in the past 12 months—this Government, alone in western Europe, have cut back on their training budget. That is criminal. It is criminal in terms of investment for the future, for the young 19-year-old and for my constituents who have been waiting for a future.

This is a Budget in which the Government have tried to deceive. It is very much like last year's Budget. The Government cry crocodile tears about those on low incomes. I can tell the Financial Secretary that when the poll tax was introduced—every Conservative Member sitting on those Benches now voted for it—more than 70 per cent. of my constituents were losers. The Tories in Leeds voted for the poll tax regularly. We did not hear then about concern for those on low incomes. The hardship and injustice of the poll tax in my constituency has to be seen to be believed. Conservative Members should see the elderly constituents who come to my surgeries because they cannot pay their poll tax bills. They are in fear. For the first time in their lives, elderly ladies are in debt and running against the law. They are not law breakers. They want to pay their poll tax, but they simply cannot afford to pay it. They lose sleep over it. I do not want to hear from the Government about their concern for those on low incomes. After the introduction of the poll tax every Conservative Member is guilty of inflicting a great deal of hardship on my constituents.

The Government have missed political, social and economic opportunities in the Budget. It should have been a Budget for investment in our future. It should have been a Budget for investment in skills and education. It should have been a Budget that would have given us the work force for the 21st century. What have we got? We have an education system in which one in four children in primary schools is taught in classes with more than 31 pupils. Conservative Members who buy private education for their children would not be satisfied with a class of 31. In many schools there is a shortage of books, teachers and scientific equipment. Many of our science and technology classes are taught with yoghurt pot Blue Peter technology. The youngsters do not have the resources to enable them to carry out real learning and real work.

That is the reality. We have crumbling schools with a backlog of repairs worth £4,000 million. The Budget simply does not address those problems. It is criminal for the Government to put their own skins before the skills and knowledge of our children and the future of this country. The Government will be damned for that on 9 April and for a long time after. In their 13 years in office, the Government have shown they they are cheap fixers who are not concerned about Britain or its future. Labour Members are concerned about Britain's future—that is why we shall win on 9 April.

8 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): While listening to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), I reflected upon the fact that we all share the challenge of providing employment for our constituencies. We all try to create a system that will provide jobs, wealth and health to our communities.

My community is the centre of a substantial portion of our car manufacturing industry, with Rover's Longbridge plant dominating the local economy. We like to think, justifiably, that after the death throes of socialism 12 years ago, when Red Robbo was finally sent packing, we have produced at that factory some of the finest products, to the highest standards of productivity and quality.

We are justifiably proud of the Metro car, which ranks as probably the best small car that one can currently buy. Among the various car magazines that are on offer, *What Car?* named it as its small car of the year for 1990. The Rover 200 and 400 series continue to break new records in productivity, quality and market acceptance. We are proud of the fact that we make cars that are saleable and that are wanted by the public, because that brings jobs to the community and to our young people.

I watched Labour party members cavort about Birmingham in early January with their "Buy British" campaign. They visited the factory in my constituency and spoke to the workers on the shop floor. The Labour party said it was not in the business of helping that factory and it said that it was not going to abolish the special car tax. No future Labour Government would give any help to the car industry. It would not revise all the company car taxation problems that have built up over the years. No —to the Labour party, the company car is a bad thing which must be destroyed. We all have to travel by public transport, courtesy of the transport unions.

After the Labour party visit to the factory, some of us did some investigating, but we did not have to do much, because the newspapers did it for us. At the same time as the Labour party was advocating its "Buy British" policy, we discovered that the deputy leader of Her Majesty's Opposition, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), drives a Citroen. I have no objection to that. They are outstandingly good cars. I have no objection to anybody buying a car from whatever country in the world—the world is full of wonderful products—but I maintain that our local products are as good as any others. If people think differently, they are entitled to buy other goods.

Where I part company from the Labour party is that anyone who insists that we should buy British should emulate that policy. It was with great shock that I saw the other weekend, in the *News of the World*, a report that the Leader of the Opposition no less had slunk away quietly last May to buy a Fiat car. He said, "No news, please. Don't you dare tell the rest of the world." The salesman said "Mr. Kinnock, we have not got a red car for you, but we have got a blue one." The Leader of the Opposition refused to sit in that. He ordered a red car instead.

I repeat that I have no objection to people buying what they like, but when the hon. Member for Leeds, Central talks about the morality of providing jobs for young people, he should ask the Leader of the Opposition why he supports the working people of Turin and denies the people of Birmingham the opportunity to supply his needs. That is the question that the hon. Gentleman should consider. I hope that he does so because, on 9 April, my constituents will want to know why they were betrayed by the Leader of the Opposition.

I have written to the Leader of the Opposition to ask why he chose to buy a foreign car and what was wrong with our home products. Was it discount? I could have arranged a good discount and helped him out. Was the colour a problem? Do we not do a bright enough red? We could have had a car sprayed especially for him; I am certain of that. I have had no answer, and my constituents do not know why the Leader of the Opposition, who hopes to be the future Prime Minister—of course, that will not happen—bought an Italian car and denied the working people in my constituency the opportunity to provide that product for him.

Mr. O'Hara: Is the hon. Gentleman prepared to pursue the logic of his argument? Will he state his opposition to the freedom from exchange controls which allows capital from this country to be invested in millions of jobs abroad —in any country but this?

Mr. King: That has come as a bolt out of the blue. The hon. Gentleman is advocating capital control, a siege economy and the raising of tariff barriers. That would deny the Japanese the opportunity to bring businesses to this country, because we could not export businesses and opportunities there. We are a trading nation and, if we put up such barriers, no wonder that Liverpool is happy to be in its current state, given that kind of advice. One will never get the foreign investment wanted in Liverpool if one denies the opportunities to two-way trade.

Mr. O'Hara: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. King: No, I will not. I have saved the hon. Gentleman from certain defeat by not allowing him to intervene again.

Mr. O'Hara: That is the logic of the hon. Gentleman's argument, not mine.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order.

Mr. King: I am sorry if the truth causes some conflict of opinion.

We heard the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) give a tour de force or something or other. He certainly did not give any suggestions about what the Opposition would do in the unlikely event of them winning the majority at the election. He made lots of comments about the Government and about the possible level to which unemployment might rise, but he gave no suggestion about how to create jobs. The hon. Gentleman's speech contained plenty of criticism of the Government's decision to reduce taxes to give working people on lower incomes more disposable income. What was central to the hon. Gentleman's speech was his belief that, somehow or other, it was immoral to make those reductions, and that there were plenty of other things on which the money could be spent.

The sum involved is £1·8 billion, and the hon. Gentleman suggested that that money should be spent on hospitals, schools, manufacturing investment and the railways. One would not get very much for £1·8 billion if one threw all those spending commitments in, but that was just for starters. Presumably the Opposition have an endless list of expenditure promises which are supposed to be met from that relatively small sum, in terms of Exchequer levels, of £1·8 billion. The Opposition ignore the fact that they have to find the extra money for all those commitments—which have been made on top of the commitments already given by the Government.

We will provide new hospitals, new opportunities in our schools and systems for industry whereby it can invest using its own money. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor and his colleagues on the Treasury team launched an important initiative by containing the level of the uniform business rate. That decision will put a significant amount of money in the pockets of the manufacturing and retailing sectors, which undoubtedly will be used for investment.

Mr. Battle: The Government invented the uniform business rate.

Mr. King: Indeed, and the uniform business rate has been uniformly welcomed in the manufacturing sector. Some of the reductions in the business rate have a transitional element, but they will filter through quickly to much of the manufacturing sector in the west midlands, which is delighted and grateful.

The Government have certainly helped industry by their decision in the Budget to reduce the special car tax by 50 per cent. In the January visit to which I referred earlier, the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer went to the Rover plant at Longbridge, and was asked on the shop floor about the special car tax. He said that Labour had no plans to abolish it. I pressed the right hon. and learned Gentleman about that yesterday. I must say, he is fleet of foot and agile of mind. He said that what he had said was that Labour would not abolish the special car tax but that that did not imply that it would not reduce it.

I do not want to use the expression "weasel words", but in that context we must examine closely what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said in January. When asked whether he would abolish the special car tax and after he had replied that Labour had no plans to abolish it, he did not add that Labour would reduce it. Therefore, we deduce that, because the Government have done something that has been warmly welcomed by the country's largest manufacturing sector, the Labour party would not reverse it. That means that it will have to find another £700 million for its expenditure programme if it is to keep that element of tax reduction.

The changes that the Government have introduced in company car taxation have also been warmly welcomed. The Chancellor has answered many of the criticisms that I and others made for more years than I care to remember. For example, the scale charge reform based on price—as opposed to the arbitrary cut-off point of engine cubic capacity—seems to be a commitment and must be a more sensible and economically viable way of working out the benefit charges for business car use.

At long last, the Government have considered fuel scale charges in relation to diesel. Diesel is a more environmentally responsible fuel and is acknowledged to emit less carbon dioxide and far fewer noxious gases. The Government have considered diesel in a far more favourable light. If most of Britain's company cars were exchanged for diesel cars, we could fulfil the Government's commitment to maintain carbon dioxide levels in 2000 at last year's levels. That is a tall order, but the encouragement given in the Budget is a clear sign that industry can and should examine closely the idea of providing company car users with diesel vehicles.

I was delighted to learn that, from 1 August, value added tax will be recoverable on certain elements of business car purchase for car hire firms—not black cabs because they can get back their VAT, but for the new and burgeoning growth sector of community life. The private hire taxi firms will now have the opportunity to recover VAT on new car purchases. That represents a sizeable

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saving on their investment in vehicles, because they will be able to recover the 17·5 per cent. in addition to benefiting from the 5 per cent. cut in special car tax which is available to everyone as of midnight on Tuesday. The cars of private hire companies which ply their trade in the streets of our cities are generally fairly dilapidated. The saving will provide those companies and their drivers with the opportunity to buy new, environmentally acceptable cars. I look forward to that.

It is also a step forward that VAT can be recovered by car hire firms, the self-drive organisations. That will be a tremendous fillip to the car industry and to driving schools. No one could understand why a driving school that must have a car in which to teach someone to drive could not get back VAT on the car that it employed in its everyday work.

The capital allowance limit has been increased from £8,000 to £12,000. That is long overdue; it has been campaigned for for a long time. At long last the Government have seen fit to introduce the change, which has been well received.

What will be the end results in our economy of all those changes? I am convinced that our car industry is the element of our manufacturing base which will power the economy forward. The indicators are extremely encouraging. We have had massive inward investment from the Japanese and from the French—Peugeot at Ryton in Coventry—and from multinationals such as Ford and General Motors, which are building new factories, new plant and new equipment to produce new models and engines in this country.

We are beginning to see the fruits of that after the debacle of the 1970s, when hardly any factories operated on a 24-hour basis without a stoppage. We now have almost wholly strike-free conditions in the motor industry, in the component and car plants. That has been translated into a superb export performance in the past 13 months. Exports have increased by 50 per cent. so the deficit in motor vehicles, which was around £6 billion, has been closed dramatically to no more than £1·5 billion. In turn, that will become a surplus as Toyota's production gets under way later this year, as Nissan starts to produce a new small car for sale throughout Europe and as Honda's production gets under way in Swindon.

The indicators are very encouraging. Within a few years, our car and component exports will be in surplus. I cannot envisage a time when we shall move into deficit, because of the tremendous investment that has taken place, and this is only the beginning.

The Japanese, with their British management and British partners, will realise the quality of the product that we can make in this country. The Nissan Primera made in Sunderland is exported to Japan because it is of a higher quality than those which the Japanese are making.

The Japanese will realise the excellence of the highly trained British working people. Training to achieve the right results on our shop floors is exceptionally good, because British industry on its own spends well over £20 billion on training schemes, without Government interference. As people realise the quality of the products that can be made in this country, they will not only maintain production here but seek to double and treble it, so that the United Kingdom will become the supplier of cars to the rest of the European Community and eastern Europe.

That is the opportunity before us, and it is an opportunity that this Government alone will grasp. The Opposition do not like Japanese investment: they have said as much, and have continued to criticise it. Can anyone seriously believe that, under a Labour Government, we would continue to get the same level of Japanese investment? The Japanese would no doubt be driven out by import tariffs, by the lack of movement of capital which has just been advocated by the Opposition, and by penal rates of taxation.

The United Kingdom's success has been caused by the Government creating the right framework—the right personal tax policies and the incentive to put in a decent week's work for a decent week's salary which enables people to buy the home that they hitherto rented from the local authority and gives them a stake in society through privatisation measures. These incentives have filtered through society, so that our manufacturing units, especially in the car industry, are the most efficient and effective we have.

However, we have to go much further merely to stand still in comparison with the competition. The Germans and French are trying to compete with us, and the Japanese continue to forge ahead with more examples of higher and higher productivity, so we must be very efficient. To load our factories with extra taxes, to abolish the uniform business rate and then to allow authorities to get what they can from businesses within their communities to bankroll their expansionist programmes, would act as a major brake on the investment that we need and are getting as a result of the Government's policies.

Yesterday, 24 hours after the Budget, *The Birmingham Post*, which is probably the most influential regional newspaper and the second city's major morning paper, had as its headline "Car firms celebrate £80m sales bonanza" thanks to my right hon. Friend's decision to reduce car tax. That is the way forward. We should cut taxes and provide incentives to invest in business. We should allow people a little more take-home pay as evidence that Britain is a great place in which to work and earn money, and in which to live. It will continue to be a better place under a Conservative Government after 9 April.

8.19 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I suspect that the Budget may be remembered for the contrast between the period of Budget purdah and the reception that it has justifiably been receiving.

At the beginning, the air was heavy with expectation. There was a fanfare of flyers about what the Government would offer to the people. I should like to compare it to a firework—brightly coloured paper, lighting the touch paper and the rocket going up. What do we get? After Government press releases and one morning's headlines, within days we find the remainder, rather like the remains the day after fireworks: we are left with a burnt stick in a bottle. That is what the Budget will prove to be as the people of Britain start to examine it in detail. There has been something of a contrast between its muted reception and the hype it was given before it was presented.

The Budget will be noted for its silence and absences: the absence of measures to tackle the economic crises and the needs of our people; and the silences about the decline in manufacturing industry, about mass unemployment which is experienced by 3 million people and about the shift of 10 million people into low-paid jobs in the past 13 years. Even Tory Members have mentioned the silence on science, the silence on the seedcorn for the future.

The Budget will not be praised for tackling unemployment. Nor will it be praised for finding real pathways out of poverty. There was a time in the past 13 long years when the Conservative party proclaimed that the decline in manufacturing was good. I recall the attitude of Lord Young when he was Secretary of State for Employment. He advised people that his strategy to reduce unemployment was to encourage people to eat out more. He suggested that, if only more people would eat out, unemployment would sink. It was as if the service sector only, the McDonalds and Burger King economy, would be Britain's future. We all know, as it is practical common sense, that a land of rent-out car parks and fast-food outlets is not a sustainable means of running an economy.

I say that as a Member who represents a city with a proud manufacturing base and history. Leeds was based on the traditional manufacturing industries of engineering, textiles and printing. What has happened in the past 13 years? The decline in manufacturing in Leeds is absolutely typical of the decline in manufacturing in the country as a whole. Between 1981 and 1987, the number of full-time jobs fell by 8,600, and the total number in manufacturing fell by 13,900.

What was happening? Yes, there was a shift from manufacturing to the service sector, but there was also a shift from full-time to part-time work. When Tory Members tell us of all the new jobs that they have created, they should also tell the House and the country that many, if not the majority, of those jobs are part-time. They should also tell us that they are not jobs for men, because there has been a shift towards jobs for women. They should also tell us that there has been a shift from well-paid to low-paid work. There has been a shift to a part-time, low-wage economy.

In my area, redundancies in manufacturing have risen dramatically—to 1,229 in 1989 and to 1,708 in 1990. That is an annual rate of increase of 30 per cent. What comments do we hear about the outlook under this Government? Textiles face tougher times because of high interest rates depressing demand. The outlook for engineering has been described as decidedly patchy because of the present regime of higher interest rates leading to cuts in orders. Where is the strategy for manufacturing investment? The CBI projects that, between 1989 and 1992, manufacturing investment under this Government will fall by 25 per cent. That is the reality. Manufacturing in Britain dropped by 33 per cent. between 1979 and June 1991. It is continuing to fall by 6 per cent. a year.

When the Chancellor of the Exchequer implies in the Budget that a further 200,000 jobs will go in manufacturing, we should work out the impact on regions traditionally dependent on manufacturing as the source of wealth creation, such as Yorkshire. In practice, at 1989 prices there will be a loss of £329 million of manufacturing investment in Yorkshire between 1989 and 1992. The reality for millions of people whose families have relied on manufacturing industry will be insecurity and fear for the future.

Millions already feel that they are a single wage packet away from the dole queue. Unemployment is 150 per cent. higher than when the Government came to power in 1979. It is continuing to rise, yet the Government throw up their hands and declare that that is a price worth paying to get inflation down. There are now 1,426,000 more unemployed people, on the Government's own figures, than when Labour left office in May 1979. Under this Government, unemployment has never been lower than it was under Labour. During the past 13 years, the Conservative party has proved itself to be the party of high unemployment. As we all know, unemployment is a personal disaster and a social evil that the Government simply try to brush under the carpet.

Every year, the unemployed have been rubbed out, as if by Noddy's magic rubber in Enid Blyton books, by 30 changes to the unemployment benefit figures, just as the poor have been subjected to statistical elimination under this Government. When we look at the figures in practice, who are the unemployed? They are the generation of 16 to 25-year-olds. A generation of our young people is being written off by the Government.

In my constituency, unemployment rose by 51 per cent. between December 1990 and December 1991. In reality, it is now standing at 15 per cent., yet the number of jobs advertised locally has fallen in the past two years: by 60 per cent. in 1990-91 and by 44 per cent. in 1991-92. There has been a 50 per cent. drop in textile vacancies.

In December, I looked in the jobcentre to see what was on offer. These were the vacancies: one managerial and professional job, seven clerical jobs, one secretarial job, 11 non-manual jobs, one fitter/machinist job, one catering and domestic job, seven road-sweeping jobs, three processing jobs, one assembly-packing job and one transport-operating job. I read out the list to show that, significantly, there was not one single skilled manufacturing job. That is the reality in our constituencies.

It is all very well for Ministers to go round the country and make stupid remarks about people who are made redundant being "liberated" from work. Fine—but the problem is that those without work get very little income. It is surprising that the very Minister who declares that those people are liberating themselves from work is a Minister responsible for social security, who does not even guarantee them a decent income to live on when they are out of work.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer claimed that this was a Budget for the low-paid—a noise echoed by Tory Members. The Chancellor said that he had given

"proportionately greater benefit to those on low incomes."—[*Official Report*, 10 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 760.]

Yet the unemployed gain absolutely nothing. They do not get a penny from a tax reduction, because they are not paying any tax because they are not working. How will they gain from the Budget?

When the Conservative Government's Budget details are put under close scrutiny and analysis, they reveal, as usual, that, despite all the instant claims, it is not the poor or the poorest, but the rich, and the richest, who gain. Members of Parliament get more from the tax cuts through the 20 per cent. reduction than do the unemployed. The 10 million workers—46 per cent. of the work force—who now earn below the Council of Europe's decency threshold for wages will get little. The tax changes

[Mr. John Battle]

do not help the low-paid in any great measure, because those caught in the poverty trap of taxes and means-tested benefit will gain even less.

I give the example of family credit. In my constituency, with high unemployment, 1,124 families claim family credit. My area is a low-wage area, and Yorkshire generally is one of the lowest-wage areas in Great Britain, second only to Northern Ireland. Those people will lose 70p for every pound they may gain under the Budget. Many families are too poor to pay tax, and will not benefit at all.

An answer to a parliamentary question on 5 March shows that, because of the Government's decision to change the definition of full-time work from 24 hours to 16 hours for family credit, 15,000 families will have their family credit topped up by income support. They have now been pushed towards having to apply for two means-tested benefits. That is the reality for the poor under this Government.

Conservative Members may tell us that the change will affect few people. Let them do their homework and let them see how the tax benefits disintegrate under the pressure of the social security system. Even if people earn enough to pay tax, and even if they benefit fully from the 20 per cent. band, many will gain only £1·64 a week. The problem is that bringing in the lower rate band as a means of making tax fairer and more progressive is, in this Budget, at the expense of the failure to maintain the value of the personal allowances for married couples. In practice, its effect is limited and many families on low pay will be drawn into paying tax as a result of the Budget. The Government hope that people will not realise that point until they get their wage packets some time at the end of May when the election is over. People will have to take advice to find out why they have been short-changed.

There was an article in *The Independent* yesterday by Holly Sutherland, a research fellow on social policy at the London School of Economics. The article was entitled "Poor without work stand to gain least". She pointed out:

> "the top 50 per cent. of families will on average be better off by some 0·95 per cent. of their incomes. The bottom half will be better off by only 0·55 per cent. of their incomes. They gain less absolutely—as would be expected—but they also gain less proportionately".

That wholly contradicts what the Chancellor told the House in his Budget statement. The Chancellor claims that he is unable to reach those on the lowest incomes through the tax system. The reason is clearly that people's incomes are too low for them to pay tax in the first place.

Conservative Members refer to pensioners. It would have been a far better and more progressive method of increasing the incomes of poorer pensioners to have raised the rate of the non-means-tested state national insurance pension. That is the key. People should not be pushed further into means-testing or into losing their access to housing benefits or assistance with the poll tax.

This is not a Budget for the low-paid, for the poorer pensioners or for those in work in the lower income brackets. It is not a Budget to tackle the decline in manufacturing investment. I hope that the fact that the election has been declared means that the Budget will be firmly behind us and that new opportunities will open up.

I look forward to a Budget that puts investment in manufacturing as a priority, which would reinvigorate the base of manufacturing industry in Britain, and which provides real work opportunities. I look forward to a Budget that tackles unemployment as a priority with a Government who are committed to active intervention in the labour market, and who invest in the infrastructure and who invest sensitively in the regions. I look forward to a Budget which will provide real value for one's work and which provides a real means of taking the low-paid in work out of poverty.

We heard nothing in the Budget statement about increasing child benefit which still has not caught up after the freeze that was imposed by the Government some years ago. That is an announcement in the Conservative manifesto to which I look forward. I look for a Budget that will establish a skills fund to boost the skills of those in work. I look forward to a Budget that introduces a statutory minimum wage to ensure that people do not degenerate further into a European cheap-labour economy, which some Conservative Members seem to want to inflict on us.

This is a burnt-out Government. They are a spent force, whose time is up. The Government are well past their sell-by date. It is time for a Labour Government, with a vision of social justice and with new hope for the future of the people of our country.

8.35 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): It is a pleasure and a privilege to speak at the end of a Parliament. It is also a pleasure and a privilege to follow the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), who speaks with knowledge and passion on these matters. The hon. Gentleman and I share one of my most pleasant memories of this Parliament. Some two years ago we both went on a visit to the United Nations. I enjoyed his company then, and I enjoyed his speech today even though I do not always agree with the way he wishes to achieve his ends. He knows enough about me to know that I share some of the aims of which he speaks, although we differ in our methods in terms of how to get there. I do not detract from the knowledge and passion with which he put his case.

The interesting point about the Budget is that it has themes which link this old Parliament with a new Parliament in which I confidently expect that there will be a Conservative Government. I welcome the Budget, the themes of which underline some of those which separate the Government and the Opposition.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has the reputation of being bold and clever. I was rather disappointed that he chose not to deliver his budget at the same time, or immediately after, the Budget presented by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. I see no reason why he should not have done so. He knew as much about the economy as my right hon. Friend did and he knew enough about the economy to prepare his budget for next week, yet he chose not to make his statement at the same time. That does not show a great deal of bravery and it enables him to pick and choose among the items introduced by my right hon. Friend, to mull over the Sunday papers and to cobble something together. It would have been braver to produce something the day before, or at the same time, but he has not done so. The other reason why the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East did not present his budget statement at the same time as my right hon. Friend's was that he was wrong-footed. He was afraid that if his budget had been ready immediately after my right hon. Friend the Chancellor sat down, he would have been exposed as being wrong-footed—as, indeed, he would have been.

The themes which make a difference between the Government and the Opposition, and which are captured in the Budget, are these: freedom, choice and responsibility are watchwords of the Conservative party and are important in a Budget context, although they are sometimes derided by the Opposition. Freedom to choose is important because choice brings responsibility and responsibility builds a decent society. One does not build a just or proper society by taking responsibility away from people.

One of the mistakes that we made over the past few years, until perhaps 18 months ago, was not to emphasise sufficiently how the building of individual responsibility contributes to society. That is why we have always fallen prey to the argument that individual choice and responsibility are about selfish gain rather than gain to the community. It is easy to argue that social responsibility builds through individual responsibility. I hope that that theme will be developed by the next Conservative Government.

Because freedom to choose is important, our attitude to taxation is different. Labour says, "It all belongs to the state—we will let you have back what we think you deserve." We say, "What you earn is yours—we will ask for what we need for society." There is a world of difference between the two, and the £250 million that is coming into the pockets of people in the north-west through the tax changes announced by the Chancellor is important because I trust those people to use the money sensibly. They will use it to look after their homes and families, to make a proper choice of purchases and to contribute to society. We must trust people, and in our tax policy, as in many of our other policies, we do just that.

As well as being important from the point of view of freedom, a low-tax-low-inflation economy works. I fail to appreciate how the hon. Member for Leeds, West can argue that more taxation would help us get out of recession. He and his hon. Friends would have a stronger economic case if they could point to much in their economic background in the way of success. We know what happens when their economics run the country and things go wrong.

We in Bury still cherish a circular presented to the local authority in 1976 by the then Labour Government when they announced savage cuts because of the mess the economy was in, prior to its being rescued by the IMF. We recall how unemployment increased under the Labour Government. The hon. Member for Leeds, West speaks with passion about the unemployed, but he fails to appreciate that every Labour Government have left office with unemployment higher than when they began. The failure of the last Labour Government properly to look after the economy cost my constituents dear in terms of the national health service. It was the only time in the history of the NHS that expenditure on health care in my constituency fell. That happened between 1974 and 1979.

Today and previously, we have remarked with distaste certain cases being used in advertising by Labour Members in an effort to make charges against the Government in relation to the NHS. How would they feel if I asked my constituents to calculate how many people were killed in my constituency because spending on health care fell under the last Labour Government? Why should we not challenge them with similar cases? We do not do it because we do not believe in operating in that way. It is immoral for Labour politicians to claim that their running of the economy would provide more cash and resources for the NHS. They did not do it when they were last in office and they would not do it in the future. The bottom line is that, if the economy is bankrupt, the Government cannot deliver, whatever promises they make. Such promises were made to the people of Bury by the last Labour Government. They promised, but they did not deliver.

That is why low taxation and a low-interest economy is right, not only for freedom of choice but because it works better. People do not trust the Labour party to run the economy properly. I assure Opposition Members that the electorate have longer memories than they think, and that fact will be decisive on polling day.

Bury will enjoy other benefits as a result of the Budget. I welcome the changes for industry and business—for example, in the uniform business rate. Heavy industry has enjoyed a drop in local taxation. Businesses that have witnessed increases, as a result of changes in the rates, will be assisted by the measures announced in the Budget in the sense that the rises that they have suffered will be easier to cope with. The Labour party cannot disclaim responsibility in relation to the UBR because at the heart of it was the revaluation policy that it supported.

An important aspect of the Budget is the bringing together of spending and the raising of revenue, and I welcome the change that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is making in that respect. The Budget is only one part of the equation. The other part is the autumn statement, which details the spending policy of the Government. Many comments about the Budget, made by hon. Members who should know better and by people outside Parliament, fail to differentiate between the autumn statement—the spending part of the equation—and the Budget.

We saw in the last autumn statement the aspects on which the Government were spending. That included the NHS, education and extra resources for capital investment in transport. The money that was asked for has been put into those items and I am proud of the Government's record. But there must be a balance, and in future that balance will be seen because the two parts of the equation will appear together. That makes good sense.

It will be important for the next Conservative Government to address some of the social challenges that we face. There is no point in building an economy for its own sake. It must be built to be used, and the nation faces some of the social problems to which the hon. Member for Leeds, West referred. We have pockets of poverty and unemployment. Those problems cannot be dealt with in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggested because high taxation, with inevitable high inflation, would create the problems that had to be faced by the last Labour Government, when the economy collapsed and they could not deliver what they had promised to provide.

If we in the Conservative party build the economy that we want, we must have the courage to opt for a form of social conservatism which will deliver the conditions that our people need. I firmly believe that a Conservative Government can deliver social justice. Such justice cannot be built on a weak economy. A Labour Government would mean a weak economy. Only the Conservatives can

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

deliver what they promise to deliver. I am confident that we shall be delivering what the nation needs from these Benches from 27 April onwards.

8.46 pm

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): The Chancellor has received praise from a number of predictable quarters, including sections of the press and, of course, Conservative Members. Clearly, they were bound to heap praise on the right hon. Gentleman.

I wish at the outset to correct the wilful perversion of what I said by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). I asked him to pursue his logic in criticising me for speaking of the investment in purchasing power resulting from the sale in this country of the products of foreign workers. I asked him to explain what difference there was between that and this country investing capital in the countries of origin of those workers. I was not advocating controls on capital exchange. I am left wondering, after such wilful misunderstanding—I put it no higher than that—of the views of my hon. Friends and I, how Conservative Members can heap praise on the Budget proposals.

After much trying, I have discovered an accolade that can be given to the Chancellor—for barefaced cheek, or, as we say in the part of the world from which I come, for brass. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) will appreciate what I mean. We also say in my area that where there is muck there is brass. It came to me in a blinding flash that this is a Budget of muck and brass.

We shall be asked later to support a series of instruments relating to the payment of VAT, penalties for misdeclaration and surcharges for default of payment. I marvel, as I watch the Chancellor clearing up the muck left by his predecessor, at the way in which he is claiming credit for it. For example, the right hon. Gentleman tries to claim credit for alterations to the uniform business rate. The Government claim credit for the mitigation of the worst effects of their actions. The uniform business rate is the ugly sister of the poll tax. The Government were responsible for driving many businesses to the wall because of the uniform business rate. They drove businesses over the edge in the teeth of the current recession and now claim credit for rescuing the victims that they had left buried up to the neck for two years in the face of the incoming tide. The uniform business rate is the muck and brass of this Budget, adding just one small extra cost to the £14·5 billion final account of the poll tax.

I doff my cap to two small fiscal changes that I came across in the small print of the Budget: the abolition of the requirement for small social clubs to pay bingo duty and the 50 per cent easing of car tax. My postbag will be much lighter, because the priest of my local parish church will no longer complain to me about the burden of bingo duty on his parish social club and the manager of Halewood labour club will no longer lament about the burden that he has suffered from the imposition of bingo duty. People were dancing in the streets of Halewood last night. I was there and I was not sure whether people were rejoicing because of the easing of bingo duty or the 50 per cent. easing of car tax, because Ford of Halewood is an important car manufacturing plant. I suspect, however, that it was part of a splendid celebration of the 25 years of life and work in St. Mary's church there, which I was delighted to attend. Halewood had several reasons to rejoice last night.

If that 50 per cent. easing of the car tax is fine today, why was it not fine 18 months ago, when it was clear that the car industry was approaching a disastrous decline, in the face of which the Government have at last had to act? The same question must be asked about other measures in the Budget—if they are so good for the economy now, why were they not taken earlier?

I have been in the House for about 18 months. I referred in my maiden speech to the fact that the recession was the "R" word that Conservative Members dare not mention. At first, the Prime Minister and the Chancellor denied that there was a recession. They then deliberately understated the depth of the recession, before rashly and prematurely predicting its end. Most recently, they blamed it all on "those foreigners". It was a remarkable repertoire of evasion, deceit and hiding from the truth. Throughout those 18 months, the Government did nothing to resolve the problems. We have now gone beyond recession and have the "S" word—slump.

My constituents in Knowsley, South have suffered. The unemployment statistics for my constituency show that, in the past 12 months alone, unemployment has risen by 25 per cent. I checked the figures yesterday and discovered that there were 101 vacancies in the jobcentres there.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): Before my hon. Friend gets away from the dancing in the streets of Halewood—he is one of the most perspicacious Members in the House—will he say whether that dancing took place because a general election is approaching and people knew that a Labour Government would soon be elected?

Mr. O'Hara: Indeed. Not only that, but the sun came out in response to the news that at last we were going to have a general election. I planted a tree and my constituents cheered and wished me well in the coming election.

Mr. Battle: Spring time for Labour.

Mr. O'Hara: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) for allowing me to make that extra point.

I was quoting unemployment figures for Knowsley, South and mentioned the figure of 101 job vacancies, which is pathetic when one realises that 65 jobless people chase every vacancy. Taking the figure 30 modifications ago, 99 people without jobs in Knowsley, South chase every vacancy in our jobcentres.

If the Budget is such a good measure to cure the recession now, why could not the Government have introduced such measures when the estimated public spending borrowing requirement was only £8 billion rather than £28 billion? A cartoon published by Credit Lyonnais, which hon. Members may have seen in the press, showed the Chancellor and the Prime Minister as Batman and Robin in a helicopter, showering £5 notes on the ground and shouting, "Holy £28 billion, and it is not even reaching the streets yet!" That is what the Government are about.

The Budget is not about tackling the recession but is a desperate scramble to rally wavering Tory voters in the marginal constituencies, cunningly targeted on small business men who feel comprehensively cheated and let down by the Government's mismanagement in the past. It provided too little, too late for those tens of thousands of people who had already been made bankrupt and whose businesses had failed. It was cunningly targeted on those in danger of having their houses repossessed, but it gave too little too late for those hundreds of thousands who have already lost the roof over their heads. It was cunningly worked to deceive those pensioners who have been callously robbed by the Government for 13 years. It gave them, as a sop, entitlements that were theirs by right in a blatant attempt to steal the Labour party's clothes. I heard Conservative Members refer to shooting Labour's fox. The fox analogy is appropriate: it is a foxy Budget, if cunning is the defining characteristic of a fox.

The Labour party is proud of its long-held commitment. It does not use advantageous ploys, like those of the Government, when addressing the problems of pensioners' poverty. As for the proposed 20p rate of income tax, I marvel at the Government's remarkable conversion to the principle of regression after 13 years of punitive and progressive taxation. It was a glance—one might say a wink—towards the principle of regression as the last minute of the last hour of the last day of the Government approaches.

The cunning, cynicism and blatancy of the Budget takes one's breath away. It is the Budget of deferred accounts and post-dated cheques. Those who will pay the post-dated cheques are the recipients of the phantom benefits put on offer. The Budget tinkers with the margins of recession. It says nothing about the thousands of unemployed residents of Knowsley, South who are doomed to live on income support. It says nothing about investment in training. In my district, as elsewhere in the country, the training budget has been cut. We have the farce of trainers being added to the queue of jobless.

The Budget contains nothing on the construction industry, transport infrastructure or charting our way out of recession. There is no strategy: it is a Budget for the moment—the ad hoc Budget—and the moment is that of the imminent election. The Budget contains no strategy, just tactics—ducking and weaving. "Si monumentum requiris" said Wren, "circumspice"—if one wants monuments, one should look around. Monuments to the Government's incompetence lie all around us in the ruins of recession. The electorate will not be deceived by the exercise in chicanery that constitutes the Budget statement and will treat it with the contempt that it deserves.

The chairman of the Conservative party, the right hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten), launched his double whammy last week, and it fell flat. The Labour party would need an octopus in boxing gloves if it were to present in a poster the octuple whammy that is Conservative party policy. That policy encompasses high taxes, high interest rates—which have only been brought down to 10 per cent. from 15 per cent. to which they had been increased—the poll tax, unemployment, repossessions, cardboard cities, business failures and multiple debt. I have covered the boxing gloves on every leg of an octopus and have enough left to put a kangaroo in the ring with it. We also have crumbling schools and the crisis in the national health service and on the railways and roads. The Conservative party is not the party to talk about whammies.

I now turn to the obscenity referred to by the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt): the Government's sudden conversion to social welfare after 13 years of not only destroying the economy but—in the last minute of the last hour of the last day, in a blinding flash of inspiration —discovering that social welfare for the people ground down in Knowsley, South is as important as private wealth creation. Never was nemesis better deserved, and never was it more certain to be delivered than on 9 April.

9.3 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Having listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara), I think that, even were the sun to shine on Halewood, he would see only the gloom. That is not at all how I view the implications of the Budget. In the short time allowed me, I do not have scope to go into the detail on those Budget items that my constituents and I welcome. The Chancellor correctly targeted such prudent tax cuts as he could make on those most in need. I enthusiastically welcome the new 20p rate because it will most benefit those who are beginning to earn and to be taxed at the bottom of the scale, and those working part time whose income is most disproportionately affected by a lower tax on lower earned income. I welcome all those measures; the alternatives which might have been available to my right hon. Friend in other circumstances are to be discounted—he did what was right at this stage.

I strongly welcome the help for pensioners on income support. Businesses in my constituency will benefit from the changes in the uniform business rate—I have received many representations about it, but not because it is wrong as a system. Hon. Members from the north of England should bear in mind that constituencies in the north, not those in the south, have tended to benefit. The burden of the UBR often affected people who wanted to sell their property, because the transitional relief could not be passed on with the property. That meant that sales were difficult, or if a company had ceased business it was difficult for another to occupy its premises.

I shall concentrate on the broader Budget judgment, as my hon. Friends have eloquently analysed the taxation aspects of the Budget. I wish to mention some of the weak-willed people in the City who have allowed their worries to overtake their judgment. I readily admit that I am an adviser to two City institutions, which is not to say that they always accept my advice. Often they appear not to.

In a difficult situation my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has created an extremely responsible framework for the Budget. He made a clear commitment to maintaining our position in the exchange rate mechanism and a further commitment to joining the narrow band at the DM2·95 level. There could be no clearer signal that a Conservative Government mean to maintain a stable exchange rate and will continue to reinforce sound monetary policies. My right hon. Friend's statement on M0 clearly underlined that. We need have no worries that a Conservative Government will allow the currency to decline, thereby creating further inflationary pressures, so the City should take careful note of the Budget commitments.

Certainly the public sector borrowing requirement is much higher than any Government would wish, but as a percentage of GDP it is a great deal less than it was under the last Labour Government—and much less than it would be under a Labour Government if the country unfortunately got one after 9 April. Labour is committed

[Mr. Ian Taylor]

to forgoing privatisation proceeds, which will instantly add a further £8 billion to forecasts of the public sector borrowing requirement for next year.

The key point about the PSBR under a Conservative Government is that the rise which has occurred since the autumn statement forecast is due to a decline in revenues from taxation. That is both important and positive. It has not been due to a giveaway in the form of tax cuts; the proportion due to tax reductions in the Budget was small —less than £2 billion net. The rise has not been due to additional public expenditure either. We still work in this strange system—I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is to reform it—in which we announce our public expenditure plans separately from our revenue-raising plans. The public expenditure plans, including a large increase in spending on key social services, were announced last autumn, since when the recession has led to a decline in tax revenues, which in turn has led to an increased PSBR.

I said that this was a positive point, because when the economy begins to pick up again the buoyancy of tax revenues will also pick up speedily. That will lead to exactly what the Chancellor predicted—a rapid fall in the PSBR. The City should therefore take good heart from the fact that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has set up a reasonable framework in the Budget. Because the PSBR, even at this level, will be fully funded, that will lead to a rapid recovery in Government revenues when the growth in the economy that all the independent forecasters believe is upon us starts.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor set out another factor in his speech which is not widely talked about but is critical to understand because it gives the lie to the Opposition's claims that we are borrowing to bribe. We are not. We are borrowing at this stage of the recession, with a commitment to balance the budget over the cycle, and at the same time we are financing £30 billion of public sector asset creation.

This is a sound and prudent Budget which will take us out of the recession. It shows that only a Conservative Government is capable of running the economy successfully. I am sure that the electorate will understand that on 9 April.

9.10 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): The test that the country applied to the Budget was whether it would bring economic recovery to Britain—and the answer is no. The test that the Tory party applied to the Budget is whether it would bring political recovery to the Tory party—and the answer is again no. It has failed both the high test of public interest and the low test of party advantage. It has failed because it does nothing to promote investment in industry, nothing to rectify the appalling damage done to training by cuts in Government spending, nothing to increase economic confidence, nothing to assist the construction industry and nothing to reduce unemployment or even to stop it rising.

Almost before the cheering of Conservative Members —at least of those who were not still sitting in a state of shock from hearing the borrowing requirement—in support of their Chancellor had ceased, the Budget as a work of political art began to unravel. In the City, as Morgan Grenfell said:

> "It will have a tiny effect on the economy as a whole."

As Mr. Lyons of DKB International, said:

> "This was not a Budget for recovery."

As Mr. Gardner, managing director of ICL UK, said:

> "As the managing director of a large company it did little for me. There were no real measures to break the capital expenditure block; nothing to encourage large companies to spend more money."

It is not hard to fathom the reason for the scepticism and downright hostility of large parts of industry and taxpayers alike. The vast majority of people know that, when our health service is in crisis, our school buildings are crumbling, our crime levels are rising and our transport system has become Europe's sick joke, borrowing to finance tax cuts rather than to spend on good services is not a sensible use of money. Many in industry who see the daily ravages of a recession that they were promised would never happen, but is now the longest for decades, know that, unless the Budget deals with the fundamental problems of the British economy, it fails. Above all, unless and until we halt the rising tide of business failures and unemployment and begin to turn that tide, we cannot get economic confidence moving and we therefore cannot get economic recovery.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) yesterday asked me to read the newspaper reports about minimum wages. I have taken his advice, and I read from the *Employment Gazette* that the average hourly wage a year ago was £7·57. If one simply applies 6 per cent. to that, the average wage in Britain this year will be £8. As the shadow Secretary of State for Employment, will the hon. Gentleman be advising the right hon. and learned Gentleman that the pledge of £3·40 is out of date and the Labour party should be pledging a £4 minimum wage?

Mr. Blair: The hon. Gentleman must tell us why the Conservative party, as the Secretary of State for Employment said today, is still pledged to abolish wages council protection for some of the lowest-paid in our society.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman must not misrepresent what I said, which I shall repeat. I have said it endlessly before and I shall repeat it again. Our position is that we shall keep wages councils under review, but we see no permanent place for them in the system. That is what I said before and that is what I say again. The hon. Gentleman must not misrepresent me.

Mr. Blair: That was an extraordinary intervention. I assume from that that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is pledged to remove the wages councils. Is he? Let me give him the opportunity to make his position clear. Let him give us an undertaking that, if re-elected, the Conservatives will not abolish the councils.

Mr. Howard: We read from Mr. Hammond's book this afternoon about the hon. Gentleman's failure to understand the minimum wage. The hon. Gentleman fails to understand the meaning of the simple English word "review". It means that we are not committed to keeping wages councils and we are not committed to abolishing wages councils. We shall keep their future under review. Does the hon. Gentleman understand the meaning of that simple English word?

Mr. Blair: I thought that I had asked a simple question. Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman not give us such an undertaking? He cannot, because the Conservatives will abolish the councils if they are returned.

Since the recession began, unemployment has risen by 70,000 in the east midlands, 80,000 in the north-west, 400,000 in the south-east and 100,000 in the south-west. Employment has fallen by over 500,000 in the south, 170,000 in the west midlands, 80,000 in Humberside and 73,000 in the north-west. The vacancy levels become worse month by month. The tightening labour market means that there are 23 people chasing every vacancy in the south-east. Over 40 are chasing every jobcentre vacancy in London and 33 are chasing every such vacancy in the west midlands.

Many of the unemployed fear that they will never work again. Men in their 40s who are made redundant are told that they are too old even to be considered for a job. Women who have raised a family and look forward to returning to work are now unable to obtain qualifications or work. Many young people have neither work nor training. They are denied even the basic right to benefit. They are shunted from dole queue to training queue to benefit queue. It is not these people who have let down the Government: it is the Government who have let down these people.

The most significant part of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statement was that unemployment will continue rising for many months to come. Surely we are entitled to ask in a Budget debate before an election, "How many months and how many people?" Will the number of unemployed increase by 200,000, 300,000 or 500,000? Until when will unemployment rise? Will it be until the middle of the year, the autumn or the end of the year? While there remain hundreds of thousands in fear of losing their jobs, unemployment will blight their prospects and the prospects of the entire economy.

The impact of such a devastating situation in the labour market is not confined to the personal tragedy of those who are made redundant or unemployed: it is felt throughout the economy. The housing market is not merely stagnant: it is declining. The February edition of *Greenwell* tells us that there was a 12 per cent. fall in construction activity up to the end of 1991. It is forecast that new construction will fall by 10 per cent. this year. No wonder that the January edition of *Building*, the chief magazine of the building industry, stated:

> "It is not the job of this magazine to tell its readers how to vote, but imagine if construction companies had the franchise —and had to exercise it in the best interests of their shareholders. Their vote would be cast for Labour."

That is what is being said within the construction industry.

Why is the housing market failing? The answer is that, while householders, especially in the south, are worried about their jobs, they will not sell and they will not buy. Even those who are not at risk find the market too cold and stay out.

Take consumer spending. A report soon to be published by PA Consultants on the problems of consumer spending says:

> "Three factors are responsible for undermining the prospect of consumer-led recovery: rising unemployment, fear of unemployment for those still in work and falling house prices."

The message is clear. If there is no stop to rising unemployment, there is no start to economic confidence. If there is no beginning to economic confidence, there is no end to the recession. That is why unemployment today is a problem not just for the unemployed but for the whole country. That is why, when we propose measures to tackle unemployment or to halt the rise in business bankruptcies, we do so not just out of compassion for the unemployed, not just out of sympathy for those who have sweated and toiled to build up businesses and now see them collapsing, but because helping the unemployed is helping all of us. That is the message of the Budget.

But the crime is not simply one of omission. It is not just that the Government have refused to increase help for the unemployed in the recession: they have cut it drastically. Since 1988, the Department of Employment's budget has been cut by more than £1·5 billion. Last year, as unemployment soared, the special measures for the unemployed were cut again. So outstanding has the Secretary of State been at the helm of the Department of Employment, so enthusiastic has he been in its cause, that now apparently, according to the most recent newspaper reports, the Tories want, if re-elected, to abolish the Department of Employment. Is not that typical of the Tories? Instead of abolishing unemployment, they abolish the Department responsible for helping the unemployed.

The Government's response, announced last June as an emergency measure, was employment action. I believe that there are barely 20,000 people on that scheme—less than half last month's rise in unemployment. Why is the Government's response to unemployment so pathetic? As the chairman of the Conservative party, in one of his rare moments of frankness, said:

> "The question is how much unemployment affects people's voting intentions and I don't think that there is very much evidence that it has all that much impact."

The reason why there were no measures in the Budget to help the unemployed is that the Conservative party does not care about the unemployment.

Consider the absurdity of not acting on unemployment. There are now 150,000 homeless people in Britain, possibly as many as 2 million in substandard homes, and thousands of families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation costing hundreds of millions of pounds. Only today, the King's Fund report into health care in London showed that buildings were so dilapidated that some were fit only for demolition.

Spending on school buildings in Britain is less than half that of the OECD average. There is a backlog of billions of pounds-worth of repairs. Our pensioners often live in cold and badly insulated accommodation, forced to pay high heating bills because they cannot afford the capital cost of insulation. Thousands of environmental improvements are needed in our local communities. Councils want to carry out the work, but cannot find the resources to do so.

When we know that unemployment is damaging our economy, when we know that the unemployed are anxious, if not desperate, to work, and when we have a collapsing infrastructure in need of urgent repair, what sense does it make to cut help to the unemployed rather than marry the unused human resources with the unmet needs of our community?

[Mr. Blair]

For the past three years, however, the Government have not merely been cutting help to the unemployed: they have betrayed our future in the cuts in training and skills. They have instigated a savage programme of cutting investment in training and skills. For months, the Secretary of State has denied that that is so. For months, he has told us in debates in the House that no such cuts have taken place. But on Tuesday, the same day as the Budget, the Government published their up-to-date estimate of the labour force.

Not only did it show the catastrophic drop in employment, not only did it show that, on international definitions of unemployment, there are nearer 3 million than 2·5 million unemployed: it showed that, during the past three years, 112,000 places have been cut from Government training programmes for young people and the unemployed. As some of my hon. Friends have already said, all over Britain programmes have collapsed, trainees are being turned away, and training providers are being closed. What other party anywhere in Europe but the British Conservative party would be so cruel and short-sighted as to cut investment in training just when it is most needed?

What would we say about a private sector company which borrowed money to pay higher wages and then cut investment in training? We would say that it was feckless, irrational and bound to fail—and that is what we say about the Government. Now, in the depths of the recession, we should be increasing investment in training and skills so that, when recovery comes, it is British firms which benefit, British order books which are full, and Britain which is prosperous.

I shall ask the Secretary of State a specific question. On 6 December 1989, the then Secretary of State for Employment made a speech in which he set out what he called a framework of national objectives, within a time frame that he described as essential for the upgrading of skills. The Government set themselves a specific target for the upgrading of skills. By the end of 1995, all employers, of whatever size, were to be given the kitemark seal of approval as investors in people—the sign of training excellence.

It is now March 1992. How many employers have received the kitemark? There are about 100,000 major employers, so, although the target was for employers of all sizes, will the Secretary of State tell us how many of the 100,000 major employers have so far received the kitemark? I shall tell the House the answer, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman is being coy. In the whole country, 38 employers have received the kitemark. Is that right or is that wrong? It is right. That is why, under present Tory policies, this country is so ill prepared.

The Tories cannot understand that modern economy requires an active partnership between Government and industry to make it successful. All through the 1980s, they have ignored the importance of industrial policy, and of building a strong industrial base. Even now, in the depths of the recession, what do they do to stimulate the economy? Again they attempt to cut taxes in order to boost consumption, while at the same time cutting investment in training—and this time they borrow to fund the tax cuts.

That is the worst of Thatcherism without even Thatcherism's compensation of fiscal rectitude. One might almost say that it is Margaret without Prudence. That is the difference between the present leader of the Conservative party and his predecessor. For the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), the task was to manage her political party in the interests of her political philosophy. For the present Prime Minister, the management of his party is his political philosophy.

The problem for the Conservatives is that they have lost Thatcherism but they have not yet found Majorism. Let me spare them the trouble of looking for it: it does not exist. That is why they have spent the past 18 months attacking Labour rather than advancing their own ideas. They do not dare to defend the philosophy of the first 11 years of their Government, and they have not had the wit to put anything in its place.

The Conservatives cannot escape their record, because we shall not allow them to escape it. The country will be reminded of the 13 years in which the Tories have given us two recessions in a decade, ending with the fastest rising unemployment, the lowest output and the sharpest fall in investment in Europe. And they have the nerve to call that an economic miracle. We shall remind people of the 13 years in which the Government sold our public services, spent the proceeds but still inflicted higher charges on our consumers. We shall remind the public of the 13 years in which the Government have received—alone out of all previous Governments and of all present competitors—the God-given bonus of North sea oil: £100 billion flowing into the Exchequer but squandered on a boom that is now a bust. That is the record of 13 years of Conservative government.

The Government talk of being the taxpayers' friend. Let me remind them that it was not the Labour party that doubled value added tax but the Tory party; that it was not the Labour party but the Tory party that introduced the most hated and least competent tax of modern times —the poll tax that has cost every family in Britain £1,000, not to pay it but just to get rid of it.

The questions that the country now asks are these: when the Tory party has got things so wrong, why should the public now trust it to get things right? Why should we trust those who created unemployment now to reduce it? Why should we trust those who scorned the manufacturing base of this country now to build it? Why should we trust those who cut training now to increase it? Why should we trust Tory party politicians—who, even as the mistakes were being made, congratulated themselves on an economic miracle—now to rectify those mistakes rather than repeat them?

That is why it is time for change, time to turn back the rising tide of unemployment and put our people back to work. It is time to make investment in the education of our children and our work force, so that this country can succeed. It is time to reinstate the national health service as a great public service of which we can be proud. It is time to give our young people hope and to give our elderly the comfort in old age that they deserve. It is time to build Britain as a land of opportunity for all our people, not just for a privileged few. It is also time to recognise that we are not just individuals, stranded in helpless isolation, but members of a community. It is time, in other words, for change—time to turn this Government out, and time for Labour.

9.32 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): This has at times been a heated debate, which I suppose is hardly surprising on the eve of an election, but it is at least worth recalling that there is one measure in the Budget which commands the support and respect of Members in all parts of the House. I refer to the decision to bring expenditure and taxation together in future Budgets. I believe that that measure has the support of the Labour party. It is a far-reaching reform which will provide us with a much more rational system and much better control of public spending. Above all, it will lessen much of the pressure for tax reliefs, which have given us such a complex and unnecessarily complicated tax system. I was pleased that a number of right hon. and hon. Members felt able to support that measure.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) managed to drag up a few quotations from business men and implied that this Budget had not been well received by the business community. I do not know what newspapers the hon. Gentleman has been reading. Obviously, he does not regard the Confederation of British Industry as a representative organisation in any way. The director-general of the CBI said:

> "This is a prudent and positive Budget—reflecting the prime importance of keeping inflation under control."

That was the verdict of the CBI and also of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce and of the Institute of Directors. The Budget has been well received by manufacturing industry.

It was a Budget for sustained recovery and prosperity. It will enable the people of this country to do as well in the 1990s as they did in the 1980s. Above all, it was a Budget to deliver real help to business. Within the scope available to me, I was able to cut car tax by half. I know that that was welcomed by my hon. Friends and some Opposition Members. It was also warmly welcomed in the car industry. Many dealers and manufacturers have already said that the halving of car tax is having a good impact on business. That measure seems to have been warmly welcomed. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said:

> "The Chancellor has appreciated the importance of boosting the domestic car market. We believe about 70,000 extra sales should result."

That was the verdict of the SMMT which, unlike the hon. Member for Sedgefield, regards the Budget as good for business and for the motor industry in particular.

The chief economic adviser of the Retail Motor Industry Confederation said:

> "This is the stimulus the industry needed."

I was also able to give immediate help to industry and businesses, big and small, by ensuring that no businesses will see a real increase in business rates this year. That will help some 600,000 business premises in this country. All my hon. Friends know that that measure has been welcomed by small business men and women up and down the country. It is exactly what business was looking for. The Association of British Chambers of Commerce said:

> "Relieving the burden on business of UBR increases will be of enormous help to . . . businesses, particularly in the South."

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, South): The Chancellor has made great play about how business is happy about the changes to the UBR. Will he tell the House who introduced it in the first place?

Mr. Lamont: We are keeping the UBR. We believe that it will be much better for business in the long run. It is warmly welcomed by business and by the CBI and the Institute of Directors. They know that it stops irresponsible Labour local authorities from bankrupting businesses by extravagant spending.

I was also able to make other detailed changes which will be of particular help to small businesses. I was able to alleviate the VAT penalty regime—something that small business organisations have been asking for for years. At modest cost, I was able to take the radical measure of exempting small businesses entirely from inheritance tax. That means that in future businesses will not have to be broken up on death. That was welcomed by the Union of Independent Companies, which said:

> "The greatest thing in the Budget is the encouragement to the owners of independent businesses that they can keep their companies intact."

The Labour party talks about all its plans for business. There is no enthusiasm in the business community for the Labour party. The hon. Member for Sedgefield tried to pretend that business has not supported the Budget. It has supported the Budget, and the statements from business are clear. Business men appreciate low inflation and the fall in interest rates. They know that the fall in interest rates in the past year will eventually feed through into increased consumer demand, which the hon. Member for Sedgefield mentioned. Like his hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), the hon. Member for Sedgefield has obviously not read what was said by the director general of the Retail Consortium, who said:

> "The retail sector was looking for a Budget which would boost consumer confidence and revitalise small business while retaining sound financial good sense. We believe this Budget fits the bill."

The chairman of Dixons—I hesitate to quote this—said:

> "It was an intelligent and sensible Budget . . . a confidence building Budget."

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Is the Chancellor aware of what the Scotch Whisky Association said about the incredible 28p increase on the price of a bottle of whisky? Although I understand that the Chancellor has said from the Dispatch Box that he would fight extremely hard to harmonise the prices of spirits in Europe, he knows perfectly well that he may not be there to do that—the strong chance is that he will not. He has lumbered my hon. Friends on the Labour Front Bench with the prospect of going to Europe to argue for the harmonisation of whisky prices with one hand tied behind their backs. It was certainly stupid of the Chancellor to put 28p on the price of a bottle of whisky because that widens discrimination against spirits.

Mr. Lamont: As the hon. Gentleman said, I have made clear my absolute determination to fight for the Scotch Whisky Association in Europe and made clear our position. That is a very good reason why the Scotch Whisky Association will back and support the Government.

The economy is poised for recovery. That is not just my view. Take the view of the chairman of Williams Holdings, one of the largest industrial groups in this country, who said:

> "I think we are coming out of the recession . . . the election will signal the end of the recession."

[Mr. Lamont]

Take the words of the chairman of the Confederation of British Industry's distributive trades panel, which today published some very good figures showing the seventh successive month, according to the distributive sales survey, in which retail sales have increased. The chairman said:

> "There has clearly been an underlying increase in retail trade since last summer, making the seventh successive increase recorded by the survey."

The Government know and have done what is required to build a strong economy. Low inflation was not mentioned by the hon. Member for Sedgefield, by the shadow Chancellor or by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. It was not mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition when he spoke in the Budget debate or when he made his party conference speech.

Low inflation underpins everything. Only low inflation can enable business to compete, can enable savers to put money away with confidence, and finance investment. There can be no prosperity and no sustainable recovery without low inflation. Low inflation is what the Government have delivered. Inflation is now below the European Community average. We have also had some excellent figures for producer output inflation—an extremely important measure of competitiveness and a very good indicator of future inflation. We confidently expect that inflation will continue to fall throughout this year, and producer price inflation is expected to decline to 1½ per cent. by mid-1993. That will be the lowest level achieved for decades, as a result of the policies pursued by the Government.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton) *rose*——

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West) *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: I shall give way in a minute.

Low inflation provides the crucial building block for the growth that Britain can enjoy in the 1990s. The facts are that we have low inflation and our unit labour costs are expected to grow at a lower and slower rate in 1992 than those of any other of our large competitors.

Mr. McFall: Following the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey), the Scotch Whisky Association does not support the Government. I have a press release in my hands which states that the association reacts with "anger and dismay" to what the Government have done. The increase of 28p on the price of a bottle favours the institutionalised discrimination against Scotch whisky which has happened in Europe. The Chancellor has been lucky to meet representatives of the Scotch Whisky Association.

If the Chancellor is unfamiliar with Scotland's most famous product, I will give him a bottle of the best malt whisky from my constituency—Speakers Choice whisky. That will at least give him some consolation on the morning of 10 April.

Mr. Lamont: There is certainly one thing wrong with what the hon. Gentleman said—the best malt whisky comes from Orkney and nowhere else. The hon. Gentleman appears to be saying that it is wrong to index the duty on alcoholic drinks. If that is Labour party policy, it is extremely interesting to know.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I would not wish the House or the country to be misled. When the Government came to office in 1979, the Scotch whisky industry was in the doldrums. It had massive stocks and was running up losses. It was in difficulty and was laying people off. Today, the Scotch whisky industry is in much better shape and, although there may be differences about some aspects of taxation, there is no question but that the Scotch whisky industry wants a Conservative Government, just like the rest of the people.

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, but he might have added that the Scotch Whisky Association has done very well in the past decade in the sense that the duty on Scotch whisky has not been indexed.

I want to deal with one point in particular that was raised by the hon. Members for Sedgefield and for Dunfermline, East and by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). They said that they felt that it was wrong to borrow to finance tax cuts, as they put it. They seem to have completely forgotten that that was exactly what their right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) did in 1978. In 1978 he cut taxes and increased the PSBR to a level well above that which it will reach next year in today's money. Furthermore, he not only introduced a reduced rate band but cut 1p off income tax at the same time—yet the Opposition are anxious to call us irresponsible. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said that it would be all right if the PSBR were used for investment. He seems to have ignored one simple fact: public sector investment in the coming year will total about £30 billion—more than the PSBR itself.

It is right to cut taxes because our tax cuts are sustainable. They will last and they can be afforded. This country is now in a strong financial position. We have one of the lowest ratios of debt-to-GDP of any industrialised country in the world. We have the lowest ratio of debt-to-GDP of any country in the European Community other than Luxembourg. We are the only G7 country to have reduced its debt-to-GDP ratio in the past decade. We are going to maintain our position as a country with a low debt-to-GDP ratio, and that is not endangered by what we are proposing in the Budget.

What has been remarkable has been the way in which the Opposition have been so coy about their own policies. They told us that they were going to present an alternative Budget. One might have thought that the moment to present an alternative Budget was during the Budget debate in the House—but no, they do not want to do that. Even before the election was called, the right hon. and learned Gentleman had made it clear that he was not going to announce his alternative Budget until next week, after the Budget debate had finished. The Opposition are always afraid to have an argument. They told us that they were going to spell out their spending plans on a costed basis, but they also dropped that. Why could the right hon. and learned Gentleman not come to the debate on the Budget to present his alternative Budget? We shall be waiting with interest——

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): As the right hon. Gentleman is interested in public debate, will he engage in a face-to-face debate with me on television?

Mr. Lamont: Yes, absolutely, I will—delighted.

Mr. Smith: When?

Mr. Lamont: Any time. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, he is always inviting me up to debates with him run by his daughter at Glasgow university. I have debated with him many times and I shall look forward to doing so during the general election.

Mr. Smith: I am grateful to the Chancellor for accepting that public invitation. Why is he willing to do so while the Prime Minister is frightened?

Mr. Lamont: I hope that when the right hon. and learned Gentleman presents his alternative Budget he will tell us how many of the spending pledges that his spokesmen are promising up and down the country—bribes to every interest group—will be included in it and how many have been dropped.

Again and again, we have heard Labour Members repeating Labour's pledges. The hon. Member for Sedgefield was at it again today, and so was the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. They seem to have forgotten that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has said that the Labour party has made only two spending pledges. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East was going on about the underfunding of education and health. He was not prepared to say whether, if there was underfunding, he would increase taxes or borrowing. What is the mixture of the two?

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said of a Labour Government:

> "Over our first Parliament we will increase Britain's aid budget to the United Nation's target of 0·7 per cent. of GNP."

That alone would cost £2½ billion—two thirds as much again as the net effect of all the proposals that I announced in the Budget on Tuesday. Let us have an answer from the Labour party: is that still Labour party policy or not? Will that be included in the alternative Budget?

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr.Cook) has spoken of "pouring" money into the health service. He said of a Labour Government:

> "in the first year we shall start to tackle underfunding and shall continue to do so year on year."—[*Official Report*, 21 October 1991; Vol. 196, c. 673.]

I hope that those spending pledges will be included in the alternative Budget.

The Budget is good for the economy and good for the country. It will serve the nation well in one other important respect: it crystallizes the great divide between this side of the House and the Benches opposite. It is the choice between higher taxation and lower taxation. The Labour party has always believed in high taxation. In office, Labour has always increased taxation, and Labour has always voted against our tax cuts from whatever level we were reducing them.

Labour Members have learnt to mouth the language of free markets, but they have not yet learnt the value of lower taxes, or the importance of incentives and the expansion of choice. For them, a tax cut is a give-away. It is revealing, is it not, how they do not seem to realise that money belongs to the people who have earned it? That is why they use the word "give-away".

It is right that the country should have the opportunity to judge the shallowness of the Labour party's conversion from policies which always in the past led them to penal taxation and financial crisis. The right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) did not do much for his credibility with his response to the Budget speech. He had written a speech for another Budget—for a Budget of the kind of fiscal irresponsibility that we normally get from Labour Governments. In his rambling speech the right hon. Gentleman could not make any response to the 20p band. He did not seem to know his own policies.

The Leader of the Opposition judged himself well in the famous interview that he gave Mr. Naughtie on the "World at One". The transcript of the interview says:

> "Opposition Leader asked what would you do? Opposition Leader says: 'To cut a long story short we don't know'."

The right hon. Gentleman did not know what to say in response to the 20p income tax band. He had had seven days in which to think about it, and he has had seven years in which to frame his policies and to develop a tax policy. We know what had to happen. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East had to go on television seven hours later and tell the country what the Labour party's policy actually was.

Now we know. We know what conviction lay behind the solemn pledge by the Leader of the Opposition on 16 May 1990. He said:

> "We have no design, no intention, for raising the taxation of the huge majority of ordinary people working for their living."

Yet, at the first moment, the Opposition are determined to oppose the tax reductions proposed by the Government.

Opposition Members have attempted to give us lectures on borrowing. They seem to forget that in Labour's previous five years in office borrowing averaged 6½ per cent. of gross domestic product a year. That is £40 billion each year. When the right hon. Member for Leeds, East was Chancellor of the Exchequer, borrowing reached its peak at 9 per cent. of GDP—almost £60 billion in today's money. The process stopped only when our financial affairs could be handed over to the International Monetary Fund.

The Leader of the Opposition now seeks to present himself as a man who thinks that he can manage a market economy and manage capitalism better than the Conservative party can. That seems a little strange for a man who, only a few years ago, did not believe in markets or in the capitalist system. Just three years before he became Leader of the Opposition, he said about our free enterprise system—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members do not like this. The Leader of the Opposition said:

> "The answer to the weakness, injustice and rottenness of capitalism is not more of the same. That is like trying to clean a wound with handfuls of filth."

The Leader of the Opposition has changed his mind on the European Community, on nuclear defence and on nationalisation. He does not know which way he is facing. He does not know what he believes in any longer. He tells us that the Government are borrowing too much money, yet a few years ago he urged the Government to borrow more money.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), a lifelong borrower, dismissed the public sector borrowing requirement as "a meaningless totem". It is astonishing that the Labour party does not even know what its own policy is. A few weeks ago, it published a pocket policy guide. What is one of the key policies advocated in it? It is a lower rate of income tax—a reduced rate band. We know that the Leader of the Opposition does not write his own party's policy. From his answer in the Budget debate, it seems that he does not read it either because he does not know what his party's policy is.

[Mr. Lamont]

The key point is that the Labour party has shown that it does not believe in fighting inflation. Every tough and difficult policy decision that we have made to get inflation down has been opposed by the Labour party. Every time we have cut taxes, the move has been opposed by the Labour party. When we cut the basic rate of tax from 30p to 29p, the Labour party voted against it. When we cut it from 29p to 27p, the Labour party opposed it. They have opposed every reduction that we have made.

This country has been faced with a clear choice. We have delivered a Budget that is good for recovery and good for the British people because it cuts taxes. The people have a clear choice, and in four weeks' time we shall know that the policies put forward by the Labour party have been rejected.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 351, Noes 208.

Division No. 108] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael

Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas

Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark

Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Sir Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn

Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter

Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, Sir D. *(Calder Vly)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*

Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek

Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*

Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;
(b) for refunding any amount of tax;
(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importation; or
(d) for relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.

Mr. Speaker: I am now required under Standing Order No. 50(3) to put, without further debate, the Question on each of the remaining ways and means motions. My understanding is that hon. Members do not require a Division until we get to motion No. 23; in which case, with the leave of the House, I will put the motions before that together.

2. SPIRITS

Resolved,

That, as from 6 o'clock in the evening of 10th March 1992, the rate of duty specified in section 5 of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 shall be increased from £18·96 per litre of alcohol in the spirits to £19·81 per litre of alcohol in the spirits.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

3. BEER

Resolved,

That, as from 6 o'clock in the evening of 10th March 1992, the rate of duty specified in section 36 of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 as that section has effect apart from section 7(1) of the Finance Act 1991 shall be increased from £1·06 per hectolitre for every degree by which the original gravity of beer exceeds 1000 degrees to £1·108 per hectolitre for every such degree.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

4. WINE AND MADE-WINE

Resolved,

That, as from 6 o'clock in the evening of 10th March 1992, the rates of duty under sections 54 and 55 of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 shall be as follows—

Description of wine or made-wine	Rates of duty per hectolitre
	£
Wine or made-wine of a strength not exceeding 2 per cent.	12·60
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 2 per cent. but not exceeding 3 per cent.	20·99
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 3 per cent. but not exceeding 4 per cent.	29·39
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 4 per cent. but not exceeding 5 per cent.	37·80
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 5 per cent. but not exceeding 5·5 per cent.	46·19
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 5·5 per cent. but not exceeding 15 per cent. and not being sparkling.	125·96
Sparkling wine or sparkling made-wine of a strength exceeding 5·5 per cent. but not exceeding 15 per cent.	208·00
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 15 per cent. but not exceeding 18 per cent.	217·25
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 18 per cent. but not exceeding 22 per cent.	250·59
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 22 per cent.	250·59 plus £19·81 for every 1 per cent. or part of 1 per cent. in excess of 22 per cent.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

5. CIDER

Resolved,

That, as from 6 o'clock in the evening of 10th March 1992, the rate of duty specified in section 62(1) of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 shall be increased from £20·40 per hectolitre to £21·32 per hectolitre.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

6. TOBACCO PRODUCTS (RATES)

Resolved,

That, as from 6 o'clock in the evening of 10th March 1992, for the Table in Schedule 1 to the Tobacco Products Duty Act 1979 there shall be substituted—

"TABLE

1. Cigarettes	An amount equal to 21 per cent. of the retail price plus £44·32 per thousand cigarettes.
2. Cigars	£67·89 per kilogram.
3. Hand-rolling tobacco	£71·63 per kilogram.
4. Other smoking tobacco and chewing tobacco	£29·98 per kilogram."

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

8. HYDROCARBON OIL

Resolved,

That, as from 6 o'clock in the evening of 10th March 1992, the Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979 shall have effect with the following amendments—

(1) In section 6(1) for "£0·2585" and "£0·2187" there shall be substituted "£0·2779" and "£0·2285" respectively.

(2) In section 11(1) for "£0·0091" and "£0·0129" there shall be substituted "£0·0095" and "£0·0135" respectively.

(3) In section 13A(1) for "£0·0344" there shall be substituted "£0·0437".

(4) In section 14(1) for "£0·0091" there shall be substituted "£0·0095".

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

9. VEHICLES EXCISE DUTY (RATES: CARS ETC.)

Resolved,

That—

(1) The Vehicles (Excise) Act 1971 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In Schedule 2, in the second column of the Table set out in Part II, for "100" there shall be substituted "110".

(3) In Schedule 5, in the second column of the Table set out in Part II, for "100·00" there shall be substituted "110·00".

(4) This Resolution shall apply in relation to licences taken out after 10th March 1992.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

10. VEHICLES EXCISE DUTY (RATES: TRICYCLES)

Resolved,

That—

(1) The Vehicles (Excise) Act 1971 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In the Table set out in Part II of Schedule 1 for paragraph 4 there shall be substituted—

"4. Tricycles of which the cylinder capacity of the engine does not exceed 150 cubic centimetres	15·00
5. Tricycles not included above	50·00".

(3) This Resolution shall apply in relation to licences taken out after 10th March 1992.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

13. GENERAL BETTING DUTY

Resolved,

That, in relation to bets made on or after 1st April 1992, for "8 per cent." in section 1(2) of the Betting and Gaming Duties Act 1981 there shall be substituted "7·75 per cent.".

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

17. VALUE ADDED TAX (PAYMENTS ON ACCOUNT)

Resolved,

That provision may be made about payments on account of value added tax.

18. VALUE ADDED TAX

(PENALTY FOR SERIOUS MISDECLARATION, ETC.)

Resolved,

That—

(1) In section 14(1) of the Finance Act 1985, for "20 per cent." there shall be substituted "15 per cent.".

(2) Subject to paragraph (3) below, this Resolution shall apply where a penalty is assessed after 10th March 1992 in relation to a prescribed accounting period beginning on or after 1st April 1990.

(3) This Resolution shall not apply in the case of a supplementary assessment if the original assessment was made on or before 10th March 1992.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

19. VALUE ADDED TAX (DEFAULT SURCHARGE)

Resolved,

That—

(1) In section 19(5) of the Finance Act 1985, for the words from "and" at the end of paragraph (b) to the end of the subsection there shall be substituted—

"(c) in relation to the third such period, the specified percentage is 15 per cent.; and

(d) in relation to each such period after the third, the specified percentage is 20 per cent."

(2) This Resolution shall apply in relation to any liability to a surcharge arising on or after 1st April 1992.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

20. CAR TAX (RATES)

Resolved,

That, in relation to vehicles on which car tax becomes due after 10th March 1992 for "10 per cent." in both places where the words occur in section 1(2) of the Car Tax Act 1983 there shall be substituted "5 per cent.".

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

22. INCOME TAX (LOWER RATE)

Resolved,

That—

(1) Section 1 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (2) the following paragraph shall be inserted before paragraph (a)—

"(aa) in respect of so much of an individual's total income as does not exceed £2,000, at such rate as Parliament may determine to be the lower rate for that year;".

(3) In paragraph (a) of subsection (2) after "within" there shall be inserted "paragraph (aa) above or".

(4) This Resolution shall apply for the year 1992-93 and subsequent years of assessment.

(5) This Resolution shall not require any change to be made in the amounts deductible or repayable under section 203 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 before 18th May 1992.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

23. INCOME TAX (CHARGE AND RATES FOR 1992-93)

Motion made, and Question put,

That—

(1) Income tax shall be charged for the year 1992-93, and for that year—

(a) the lower rate shall be 20 per cent.,

(b) the basic rate shall be 25 per cent., and

(c) the higher rate shall be 40 per cent.

(2) For the year 1992-93 the basic rate limit shall be £23,700, and for that year—

(a) section 1(4) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall not apply;

(b) section 1(2)(b) of that Act shall apply as if the amount specified in it were £23,700.

(3) This Resolution shall not require any change to be made in the amounts deductible or repayable under section 203 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 before 18th May 1992.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

The House divided: Ayes 351, Noes 206.

Division No. 109] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Sir Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael

Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, Sir D. *(Calder Vly)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe,*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

24. INCOME TAX (MARRIED COUPLE'S ALLOWANCE)

Resolved,

That—

(1) Section 257C(1) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988, so far as relating to section 257A(1) of that Act, shall not apply for the year 1992-93.

(2) Section 257A(1) of that Act shall apply for the year 1992-93 as if the amount specified in it were £1,720.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

25. RELIEF FOR INTEREST (LIMIT FOR 1992-93)

Resolved,

That, for the year 1992-93, the qualifying maximum defined in section 367(5) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall be £30,000.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

37. CHILD SUPPORT MAINTENANCE AND OTHER PERIODICAL PAYMENTS

Resolved,

That provision may be made with respect to periodical payments under the Child Support Act 1991 or section 106 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 or under any corresponding enactment having effect in Northern Ireland.

38. PAYING AND COLLECTING AGENTS ETC.

Resolved,

That provision may be made about the payment of income tax in respect of dividends or coupons by persons who are chargeable persons for the purposes of Part III of Schedule 3 to the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

39. OIL LANDED OUTSIDE THE UNITED KINGDOM

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of corporation tax and petroleum revenue tax, provision may be made about the valuation of oil which is, or could reasonably be expected to be, first landed in a country other than the United Kingdom.

40. RELIEF FROM TAX (INCIDENTAL AND CONSEQUENTIAL CHARGES)

Resolved,

That it is expedient to authorise any incidental or consequential charges to any duty or tax (including charges having retrospective effect) which may arise from provisions designed in general to afford relief from taxation.

Ordered,

That a Bill be brought in upon the foregoing resolutions: And that the Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. David Mellor, Mrs. Gillian Shephard, Mr. Francis Maude and Mr. John Maples do prepare and bring it in.

FINANCE BILL

Mr. Francis Maude accordingly presented a Bill to grant certain duties, to alter other duties, to amend the law relating to the national debt and the public revenue, and to make further provision in connection with finance: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 113.]

CHARITIES BILL *[LORDS]*

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Charities Bill *[Lords]*, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Ordered,

That, if the Charities Bill *[Lords]* be committed to a Committee of the whole House, further proceedings on the Bill shall stand postponed and that, as soon as proceedings on any Resolutions come to by the House on Charities Bill *[Lords]* [Money] and Charities Bill *[Lords]* [Ways and Means] have been concluded, this House will immediately resolve itself into a Committee on the Bill.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That further proceedings of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill be suspended until the next Session of Parliament;

That if a Bill is presented in the next Session in the same terms as those in which the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill stood when proceedings on it were suspended in this Session—

(a) the Bill so presented shall be ordered to be printed and shall be deemed to have been read the first and second time, to have been reported from the Select Committee and to have been re-committed to a Standing Committee; and

(b) the Standing Orders and practice of the House applicable to that Bill, so far as complied with in this Session, shall be deemed to have been complied with in the next Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill is important to south Wales. It has had extensive consideration in the House and it has been considered for days in Committee, quite apart from its consideration earlier as a private Bill before it became a Government Bill. It means the creation of 5,000 new homes in south Wales and 25,000 new jobs. Will *Hansard* show——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. We cannot debate the Bill now. It is not exempted business. There was an objection to it, which I have taken, and there can be no further discussion on the matter.

Mr. Jones: My point of order was to ask whether *Hansard* will clearly show that the objection came from the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), who has sought to wreck this measure in an unreasonable and disgraceful way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We often go through this procedure at 2.30 pm on a Friday and the House well knows that an hon. Member is entitled to object and he does not have to declare his identity in so doing.

FRIENDLY SOCIETIES BILL

Ordered,

That the Friendly Societies Bill, now standing committed to a Standing Committee, be committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c).

FINANCIAL SERVICES ACT 1986

That the Financial Services Act 1986 (Extension of Scope of Act) Order 1992 (S.I. 1992, No. 273), dated 17th February 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Question agreed to.

FINANCIAL SERVICES ACT 1986

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Financial Services Act 1986 (Investment Advertisements) (Exemption) (No. 2) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

SUGAR AND ISOGLUCOSE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8910/91, relating to the operation of the common organisation of the market in the sugar and isoglucose sectors; and supports the Government's intention to seek, in the forthcoming review of the Common Agricultural Policy sugar regime, to maintain the viability of both the cane and beet sugar sectors in the United Kingdom, to maintain the right of the ACP countries to export cane sugar to the Community as provided for in the Protocol to the Lomé Convention, and to the United Kingdom as expressed in the terms of the Resolution of this House of 11th November 1974, while making the regime more open to market forces and beneficial to consumers, and simultaneously recognising the need for the GATT negotiations to take proper account of the trade of developing countries.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

Kashmir

10.31 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am pleased to present a petition about an important area of conflict—Kashmir. It has been signed by nearly 2,000 people, mostly from my constituency but also from elsewhere in Bradford and west Yorkshire. It calls for United Nations intervention in an area of serious conflict. That is important. I have supported the United Nations for many years, particularly, unlike the Government, the United Nations non-proliferation treaty. I have great pleasure in presenting this important petition.

The petition says:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of former Kashmiris and friends of Kashmir

Sheweth

That whereas the United Nations Security Council passed resolutions declaring that the final disposition of the state of Jammu and Kashmir will be made in accordance with the will of the people expressed through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite conducted under the auspices of the United Nations; and whereas both Lord Mountbatten of Burma, first Viceroy, and Mr. Nehru, first Prime Minister of India, solemnly promised a referendum would be held; and whereas the Indian security forces now occupying Kashmir have perpetuated gross and persistent violations of the human rights of the people of Kashmir.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will condemn the systematic mass murders, torture, arson and rape by the Indian forces of occupation in Kashmir;

promote international efforts to help refugees fleeing Kashmir and to relieve the hardship and suffering of the people who remain in the territory;

demand that India permit Amnesty International and other independent human rights agencies to enter Kashmir, with a view to investigating and reporting on human rights violations, and

calls for the withdrawal of India's armed forces and security forces from the state of Jammu and Kashmir and their replacement by an interim United Nations administration with a task of restoring law and order and as soon as practicable conducting the said plebiscite.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

A10 (Cambridgeshire)

10.34 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): On a rather less international but none the less supremely important subject, I beg to present a petition signed by more than 1,000 people, on behalf of the village of Harston in the county of Cambridgeshire, which suffers from intolerable levels of traffic on the A10 trunk road, causing nuisance to the residents from noise and pollution and —what is more important—serious danger. There has been loss of life and limb on that road. Therefore, I present the petition on behalf of those people.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will grant the provision of a bypass for the village of Harston.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Somalia

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

10.35 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise some of the issues that concern the people of northern Somalia—that is, the area which has sought independence as the Republic of Somaliland, although, understandably, it has not been recognised as an independent state. That part of Somalia has suffered terribly in what has been described as the "hidden war" over the past 10 years, and now there is the threat of a hidden descent into disaster and despair for the people of that part of the world.

I do not seek to minimise the problems of southern Somalia, but the links with the United Kingdom, and with the Somali community in the United Kingdom, are largely with the north, and it is to this country that the Issaks and the people of the north look for help. I know that my concern is shared by members of the all-party group—people such as my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon), who has described the problems experienced in her constituency.

I first came across the Somali community when I was a community worker in the docks area of Cardiff, where there was tremendous respect for the service that Somalis had given over a century or more to the Merchant Navy both in war and in peacetime.

As I have said, the north of Somalia suffered terribly under the regime of Siad Barre. There was a hidden war which resulted in destruction and death. Hundreds of thousands of people were affected and fled into refugee camps. The war led to people joining their families in the parts of the United Kingdom in which Somalis have settled, and thus to a flood of refugees to this country. We all hoped that the overthrow of President Barre would bring about unity among the opposition groups, which would lead to a fresh start and an established Government in which the people of Somalia as a whole could place confidence. Instead, the problems have become even worse. There has been a split in the south, and the people in the north have been left out of the discussions. Those people need our help, as we needed theirs in wartime, and I hope that we shall not let them down.

On 10 December the Minister answered a question of mine by saying:

> "There is no government in Somalia commanding national acceptance. Factional fighting continues, and is particularly heavy in Mogadishu. The north of Somalia, which is relatively peaceful and stable, has purported to declare independence. Local leaders have promised a referendum and elections in 1993."—[*Official Report*, 10 December 1991; Vol. 200, c. *391*.]

She also noted that the north's purported secession had not been recognised. Her description of the situation remains true, except that possibly things have become worse during the intervening period. I am glad to see that the Minister is showing that she agrees with me on that point.

I am worried about the way in which the United Nations is dealing with the situation. I received a letter from the office of Mr. Jonah which appeared to suggest that the groups at war in Mogadishu, in the south, were the two halves of a potential government. That is not so, because those are the two halves of the United Congress movement, which has no right or claim to be recognised as the Government of Somalia, either as two halves or even if it became united.

We all want peace to come to the south as quickly as possible, but there are two major fears about the situation that could then develop. I am sure that the Minister agrees that at the moment there is little likelihood of peace between the warring factions in the capital or in the surrounding area. However, were peace to come about in Mogadishu and the surrounding area, the first fear is that the Government of Ali Mahdi, or whoever leads any coalition in the south, would be internationally recognised as the legitimate Government when the leaders of the north and of other regions have not been part of the process and do not recognise that Administration.

The subsequent fear is that this could lead to an attempt by the south to dominate the north, as it did with some legitimacy but with great cruelty under ex-President Barre, leading to another horrific and bloody civil war. My understanding is that a number of nations, including the United States and the United Kingdom, have refused to recognise the Government led by Mr. Ali Mahdi. There has also been no recognition, as I mentioned earlier, of the Republic of Somaliland in the north. The problem, however, is that the United Nations reports, and some others, have referred to matters as though the bringing together of the two halves in the south would be the end of the story. It would not.

I do not think that the issues which I am raising are a matter of controversy between the parties in the House. Indeed, great interest and sympathy has been shown by the Minister for Overseas Development. On this side of the House, a great deal of interest has been shown by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and by my hon. Friends the Members for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson). My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East is sitting on the Opposition Front Bench tonight.

I am appealing not for a change of attitude but for the Government to inject a greater sense of urgency—perhaps I should say an even greater sense of urgency—into the way that the international community is responding to the situation in Somalia. I am asking the Minister to give an undertaking that, even during the election period, United Kingdom Government officials will take the lead for which our international partners, both in Europe and in the wider international community, look to us. I am asking her to give an undertaking that they will seek to persuade the international community, and the United Nations in particular, to take the responsibility that no leader in Somalia can take, that no sectional group in Somalia can take and that the people of Somalia as a whole cannot choose to exercise, because there is no mechanism by which they can choose an Administration that would give them the peace that they desire.

It is clear now that international action is the only way forward and that the alternative is a continuation of the misery, pain and death and a descent into even greater chaos. However, it must also be, as I have already stressed, the right type of intervention, which recognises the reality of the situation in Somalia.

The United Nations appears to place hope in the attempts of Mr. Ali Mahdi to form an Administration. I understand that he resigned some three times in November and December but was persuaded to continue, given encouragement from the United Nations and the international community; that there have been reconciliation meetings on some 13 occasions; and that there has been encouragement of the belief that a United Nations peacekeeping force would go to Somalia were some form of agreement to be reached. It seems, however, that a great deal of that is unrealistic.

At the moment, as I understand it, in the north-west —in the area of Somaliland—there is a Somali National Movement-led Administration which has achieved some relative peace and that further to the east and south the Democratic Front for the Salvation of Somalia is the dominant force and that as one goes further south the conflict between the forces of General Aideed and Mr. Ali Mahdi has led to relative chaos and to the killing that we have seen in recent weeks on our television screens. Further to the south and west, the Somali Patriotic Movement in the Ogaden controls some areas and there is still a residual element that supports ex-President Barre. Such a fragmented situation gives no hope that the problems can be solved from within Somalia or that peace is likely to be achieved in the short term.

I should like to draw attention to much of the information that is available from many expert individuals and the non-governmental organisations, particularly a report prepared by Mr. John Drysdale, a copy of which I have sent to the Librarian of the House. Mr. Drysdale was in the colonial service in British Somaliland and was a former consul-general and foreign affairs adviser to the Somali Government. He invested a good deal of time and effort in the affairs of Somalia and has much knowledge of it. He has tried to help Somalia as a united state in the past.

It seems from all those to whom I have spoken in recent weeks that there is a growing consensus that the civil war in Mogadishu has effectively removed any form of central Government in Somalia and any organisation with which those currently in control in the north could reach agreement, whether it be agreement for the continuation of Somalia as a single entity or agreement leading to secession of part of it, as is the aspiration of those in the north.

The almost total disruption of food and medical aid and the absolute bankruptcy and lack of public services in the south are frightening. The situation in the former north-west regions of Somalia—the former British protectorate—and the indefinite delay in recognising the independence of that area lead to serious and continuing problems. Membership of the United Nations and international recognition are precluded. Therefore, institutional aid through the World bank and the International Monetary Fund is not forthcoming. Consequently, a central bank cannot be established, trade and Government revenue are seriously curtailed, a civil service and the forces of law and order cannot be paid and development expenditure for the huge reconstruction requirements are impossible. All the work that is needed on the country's infrastructure if people are to achieve even a minimum standard of living cannot be brought about.

The visit of the United Nations Joint Agency Assessment Commission to Somaliland between October and December last year was postponed four times because of the security situation in Mogadishu. Mogadishu is more than 1,000 miles away, but the investigative visit was still postponed. The tragedy is that, because they are unable to generate revenue and do something to help themselves in Somaliland, the Government are without an administration and the group that has miraculously held the embryonic state together for more than a year is now, not unexpectedly, showing signs of instability. Because there is no international recognition and support, there is, in effect, a weak Government who are open to disruptive political forces, both externally and internally. That is why they desperately need our help.

There are places where this Parliament recognises that there is a need for action within the boundaries of what has previously been a sovereign state. We have seen that in Yugoslavia. My predecessor in the constituency, now Lord Callaghan, referred to the need for the international community to deal with the prohibition of the interference by other states in the internal affairs of a member state. Surely that must be reviewed in a situation such as this when nothing can be done from within to achieve peace and satisfactory redevelopment. We heard only this morning that about 10 children a day are dying in refugee camps such as those near Jijiga and the international situation is extremely difficult.

As the report of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee says, there is a need for international action even when a sovereign state is being dismembered. I appeal to the Minister and to the House to recognise that those in the north of Somaliland will be in a hidden state of disaster unless we take a lead and persuade the international community to give them the help that they so desperately need.

10.49 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), my co-chairman of the parliamentary Somali group, for allowing me to chip in. Parliament is at its best on such occasions. Despite all the domestic storm and stress, we are capable of adopting a cross-party approach to consider, with the ministerial grain, the particular problems of the people of Somaliland and Somalia.

In recent years the Horn of Africa has been buffeted by Marxism, civil war, famine, disease and economic chaos. As the hon. Gentleman said, there is still chaos and anarchy in the south of Somalia. There is no semblance of law and order or government. It would be absurd for the international community to do more than hope, and what little it can, to bring the conflicting sides together. However, it should not recognise the south as an independent nation with a Government in any shape or form.

The north has the one commodity that the south lacks—hope. There is a degree of stability on which we must capitalise as quickly as possible. The regime in place is, in essence, a Government with whom we can deal and whom the people of the north can respect.

What are needed now from the international community are aid, trade and political good will. With that, the tiny seed of democracy and economic management in the north will begin to grow. The United Nations, the European Community and the United Kingdom have all played their part. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Minister and her team at the Overseas Development Administration for what they have sought to achieve in the north. We now need to release more of the aid that is destined for Somalia because that could do good work in the north.

[Mr. John Bowis]

The United Kingdom has a special relationship with Somalia, which was built as a result of service in the Merchant Navy and in war time. From east London to Wandsworth and in many of our port towns, one can find Somali communities—they have taken the same route as that taken by the Huguenots.

There are five stars in the Somali flag—the stars of Somalia, Somaliland, Djibouti, Ogaden and the Somalis of Kenya. One of those stars is our particular concern, the star of the old British Somaliland. People from that part of the country feel pride in that relationship; I hope that we share that. I hope that my right hon. Friend will continue to do all that she can to ensure that the star continues to shine in that sad part of the world as we help the people of Somaliland to move towards some form of peace and progress.

10.52 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) for raising the recent deeply disturbing events in Somalia. I am also grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis). As he said, it is entirely right that we should be considering the tragedy in Somalia, which has become steadily more horrific. No one who has seen the recent television reports from Mogadishu could think that such concern, even with an impending election, is misplaced.

When the former President, Mohammed Siad Barre, fell from power just over a year ago, there was some hope, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said, that Somalia might now enjoy stability, peace and economic development. Instead, the clan groups who had opposed Barre resorted to violence to resolve their own differences. The result was anarchy and an appalling humanitarian crisis.

The hon. Gentleman is right to draw our attention to the complexity of the situation, but it is even more complex than he and my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea described. There is no generally accepted Government and the country has fallen into the hands of feuding clans, each armed to the teeth. Attention is understandably focused mainly on Mogadishu, where the worst of the fighting has taken place. There, the forces of the interim President Ali Mahdi and the United Somali Congress chairman General Aideed confront each other. Each claims to represent the legitimate Government of Somalia, but in practice each represents only a specific sub-clan.

Mr. Michael: The right hon. Lady refers to Ali Mahdi as the interim president, but surely that has no legitimacy.

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman knows that Ali Mahdi's Government is something that he states, but which we put in inverted commas because we recognise states and not Governments, so the question does not arise. Over the past year, we have sought to maintain informal contact with the main factions in Somalia, but none of the contacts has any Government-to-Government dealings. The attempt last year to form a Government commanding national acceptance failed as a result of the clan and sub-clan rivalries. Our dealings with Somalis are therefore much more complicated and reflect the fact that one must be in contact with an enormous number of different groups.

The separate clan militias throughout Somalia are each taking control of particular small regions of the country. I shall deal in detail with the situation in the north a little later, but even the Isaaq who have the heartland of the northern part of Somalia are at odds in the west with the Gadabursi and in the east with the Wasangeli and the Dolbahante. There is clan and inter-clan fighting right across the north, and the situation is very complicated and getting worse.

As a result of the fighting in the central and southern parts of Somalia, it has become virtually impossible to deliver aid to the millions affected. Food distribution in Mogadishu is at a virtual standstill. Medical supplies for the non-governmental organisation medical teams in Mogadishu working alongside the Somalis have to be flown in daily.

The security situation is now so bad that aid workers, including the International Red Cross, have been forced, for their own protection, to employ armed guards to enable them to conduct even the most minimal of relief operations. I am sure that the House will join me in praising the continuing bravery and dedication of those aid workers. Against the greatest odds, they have continued to work inside Somalia, tending to the overwhelming number of wounded and malnourished victims. We offer special condolences to the families of the aid workers and the innocent Somalis killed in this mindless fighting.

What makes the situation so very serious in Mogadishu is that there is a complete breakdown of the traditional social disciplines of Somali society. The elders are no longer respected and even the so-called military leaders have only the most tenuous control over their troops.

In these tragic circumstances, we have to look very hard for any signs of hope, but there are some signs. On 23 January the United Nations Security Council, under the British Presidency, adopted resolution 733 on Somalia. This called on the United Nations Secretary-General to increase United Nations humanitarian assistance, and to co-operate with regional organisations in seeking the agreement of the Somali factions to a ceasefire and the beginning of the process of political reconciliation. The resolution also established an arms embargo.

The United Nations Secretary-General, in conjunction with the Organisation of African Unity, the League of Arab States and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, invited representatives of the Mogadishu warring factions to New York. At this meeting on 14 February, agreement was reached for a cessation of hostilities. The parties also agreed then that a ceasefire should be formally signed in Mogadishu.

The representative of the Secretary-General, Under-Secretary-General James Jonah, visited Mogadishu last week. He succeeded in negotiating a ceasefire agreement between the forces of Ali Mahdi and General Aideed. Regrettably, once again, the ceasefire signed on 3 March has suffered the same fate as similar agreements in the past —it has not held.

James Jonah hopes that he has persuaded the Mogadishu factions to agree to the dispatch of a technical team to work out the monitoring of the ceasefire, once it gets started. The next step will be for the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council. Then it will be for the Council to consider whatever recommendations the Secretary-General may make in this respect.

We shall continue to give our fullest support to the Secretary-General and his reprsentatives in their efforts to end the fighting. It is exactly because the needs of all the Somali people are so great that I spent some time yesterday speaking to James Jonah in New York. I was able to discuss with him some of the detail, to encourage urgent action to be taken and to assure him of our fullest support for his efforts to bring about and maintain peace and some sort of order in Somalia. We warmly welcome the participation of the Organisation of African Unity in United Nations efforts. The Africans must join in the search for a proper, lasting settlement in Somalia.

Some have suggested that United Nations troops might be used in Somalia to enforce a peace or to permit secure aid distribution. It may come to that, but there is no sign yet that the Somali factions would be prepared to accept such a move, were it to be contemplated. A ceasefire cannot be imposed by force from outside, and this is the dilemma that faces the international community. The plain fact is that no Government would be prepared to put the lives of their soldiers at risk in the absence of a genuine ceasefire not only agreed to but adhered to by all the factions involved.

We shall continue to do all that we can to provide financial support for those agencies seeking to bring humanitarian relief to those suffering from the effects of the civil war in the south. We have contributed to a wide variety of United Nations, International Committee to the Red Cross and NGO programmes which address both emergency and rehabilitation needs. Since January 1991, Britain has provided over £8 million in humanitarian assistance to Somalia, of which £2·29 million was made available recently to the Red Cross and Save the Children for food and medical supplies for Mogadishu and the south. The ICRC has been implementing a relief plan with the United Nations over the past few weeks, but it is clear that a major United Nations relief effort is required in all parts of Somalia if we are to avert an even more serious tragedy.

I turn now from Mogadishu to northern Somalia where the so-called Republic of Somaliland was declared in May 1991. I understand the views of both the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend. They have shown great tenacity in arguing for the interests of the people of this region, whence the majority of the British Somali community originate. We share their concerns that the interests of this region, which suffered terribly in the fight against Siad Barre, should not be overlooked by the inevitable preoccupation with the tragic events further south. Along with the rest of the international community, we have not recognised the secession of Somaliland, but this has not prevented us from maintaining regular official contacts with representatives of the Somali National Movement, which took power in the north last year.

Nor has the lack of formal diplomatic recognition prevented the British Government from continuing to provide humanitarian assistance to the north. The region faces appalling problems. We are in very close touch with a number of agencies working in the north, and in the past year we have committed £1·87 million in emergency relief to NGOs working there. We have funded projects such as the rehabilitation of the water system in Hargeisa and Burao through Oxfam, medical programmes run by Save the Children Fund, and a rehabilitation programme in Sanaag run by Action Aid. We were also pleased to contribute to a mine-clearing programme by the British firm, Rimfire, which will help rid the region of its estimated 1 to 1·5 million unexploded mines. Most recently, I approved a grant of £150,000 to the International Red Cross for veterinary assistance to the important livestock sector. We are ready to do more. We have encouraged the European Commission to provide what aid it can to the north.

We had been able to consider this degree of assistance because, unlike the south, for much of last year northern Somalia appeared to be stable. Sadly, that is no longer the case. Fighting has broken out between clan militia in several of the major towns. Aid agencies have recently had funds stolen, their staff abused and their warehouses looted. We are urging our partners in the United Nations and the EC to ensure that full attention is given to the need to stabilise conditions in the north. Otherwise, there is a real risk that the north will go the way of the south, in a downward spiral of clan fighting, food shortages and banditry. Until the fighters see some source of revenue other than looting, peace will be hard to come by. We are discussing with the United Nations what more might be done. I am not satisfied that the United Nations agencies have yet addressed seriously enough the problems of this region. I will continue, despite the election, to do all that I can to bring real action on the part of the United Nations to the people of Somalia.

As in the south, lasting peace and reconciliation can come only from the Somali people themselves. We cannot impose it from outside. That is why we shall not lose sight of the Somali situation as a whole, in the understandable concern with the horror of Mogadishu, and also the horrors elsewhere. We hope that Somali leaders themselves will also have learnt from recent events that the international community can provide the assistance which is so desperately needed only if they also commit themselves to a policy of peaceful resolution of their disputes. I hope that that message at least can go from this House to the people of Somalia tonight. We wish them peace, but it will be a difficult job to achieve.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 13 March 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Orders of the Day

CONSOLIDATED FUND (No. 3) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Finance Bill and Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill (Allocation of Time)

9.35 am

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move,

That the following provisions shall apply to the proceedings on the Finance Bill and the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill:—

Second Reading, Committee, Report and Third Reading: Finance Bill

1.—(1) The proceedings on Second Reading, in Committee and on consideration and Third Reading of the Finance Bill shall be completed at this day's sitting and, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be brought to a conclusion four hours after the commencement of the proceedings on this Order.

(2) Any stage of the Finance Bill may be proceeded with at the conclusion of the preceding stage, notwithstanding the practice of the House as to the interval between stages of a Bill brought in on Ways and Means resolutions.

(3) On completion of Second Reading of the Finance Bill any Question necessary for the House immediately to resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House shall be put forthwith.

(4) On the conclusion of the proceedings in Committee on the Finance Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question and, if he reports the Bill with amendments, the House shall proceed to consider the Bill as amended without any Question being put.

(5) No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which proceedings in Committee or on consideration of the Finance Bill are taken.

(6) Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) shall not apply to this Order.

Lords Amendments: Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill

2. The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments to the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill shall be completed at this day's sitting and, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

3.—(1) This paragraph applies in relation to any proceedings on the Finance Bill which are to be brought to a conclusion at this day's sitting in accordance with paragraph 1.

(2) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed;

(c) the Question on any Amendment moved or Motion made by a Minister of the Crown;

(d) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded.

(3) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (2) shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

4.—(1) This paragraph applies in relation to any proceedings on the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill which are to be brought to a conclusion at this day's sitting in accordance with paragraph 2.

(2) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which have not previously been brought to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put

[Mr. John MacGregor]

forthwith the Question on any further Amendment of the Lords Amendment made by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the Lords Amendment or, as the case may be, in the Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) if Mr. Speaker is satisfied that any remaining Lords Amendment imposes a charge upon the public revenue such as is required to be authorised by resolution of the House under Standing Order No. 47 (Certain proceedings relating to public money) and that the charge has not been so authorised, he shall in accordance with Standing Order No. 76(3) (Lords Amendments deemed to be disagreed to) declare he is so satisfied and shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment;

(c) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr. Speaker which have not been disposed of, the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendments; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(d) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to the Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Dilatory Motions

5. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings at this day's sitting on either of the Bills to which this Order applies shall be made except by a Minister of the Crown, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time

6.—(1) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to proceedings at this day's sitting on both of the Bills to which this Order applies.

(2) If the proceedings on the Motion for this Order were interrupted, or the proceedings on the Finance Bill are interrupted, under paragraph (4) of Standing Order No. 11 (Questions of an urgent character which relate to matters of public importance etc.), the time at which proceedings on that Bill would otherwise be brought to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 shall be extended by a period equal to the duration of the interruption.

(3) If the proceedings of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill are interrupted under paragraph (4) of Standing Order No. 11, the time at which proceedings on that Bill would otherwise be brought to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 2 shall be extended by a period equal to the duration of the interruption.

Supplemental orders

7. (1) The proceedings on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced.

(2) If at this day's sitting the House is adjourned, or if this day's sitting is suspended, before the time at which any proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion under this Order, no notice shall be required of a Motion moved at the next sitting by a Minister of the Crown for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

8. Nothing in this Order shall prevent any proceedings to which this Order applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by this Order.

Recommittal

9.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of, recommittal.

(2) No debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit either of the Bills to which this Order applies (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

10. Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill.

11. The Proceedings on any such further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

12. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall——

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

13.—(1) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

14. In this Order "the proceedings", in relation to the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill includes proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and on the Report of such a Committee.

The timetable motion provides for debates on the Finance Bill to be concluded within four hours from now. We have already had three full days of debate. Indeed, we finished early on Tuesday night. Four hours should give sufficient further time for us to demolish the Opposition's criticisms of the Budget and to demonstrate, yet again, that Labour is a party with a fundamental belief in high taxation for everyone. It will also enable the House to get on the statute book some of the key points of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Budget.

The motion also provides for the consideration of Lords amendments to the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill within one hour immediately following the proceedings on the Finance Bill. Again, I believe that that arrangement is right for the country. Just as with the Bill relating to England and Wales, the Scottish Bill is already widely welcomed by further and higher education institutions. It will continue the Government's reforms in further and higher education, which have brought about a vigorous expansion in the places in higher education being taken up by our young people.

We heard yesterday from the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) the predictable dirge about the use of the guillotine. I wholly reject his charge that we are ending this Session with our legislative programme in disorder. The truth is quite the opposite, as the facts show. The hon. Gentleman is never very good with facts, but I shall give them to him. We are, in fact, ending this Session as we began it, with our legislative programme under firm control and in excellent order. It is yet another example of good, effective and successful Government.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I was about to give the facts, but I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Beith: I invite the right hon. Gentleman to give the philosophy behind the facts. If, as he claims, the Government's legislative programme is in good order, is not that because he applied guillotines to so many Bills, as he is now doing again? Are there any circumstances in which he thinks it inappropriate to put a timetable on a Bill from the beginning and without consultation?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already made it clear—and it is a personal view—that I believe it right to timetable Bills. I have said that the way in which that is done is still a matter for discussion. The principle of timetabling is good because it enables us to have effective consideration of legislation. No one could argue that the way in which we conducted our practices on some Bills in the past, where there has been filibustering, has been effective in ensuring proper scrutiny. I am glad that the Select Committee under my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) has followed that through.

I shall explain how that has worked in this Session. The Gracious Speech mentioned 12 Bills. I hope that, by the conclusion of business on Monday, 21 Government Bills will have been enacted. Very few Bills will not reach the statute book. If the Asylum Bill is one of those, it will be because the opposition parties have opposed various parts of that important piece of legislation, which I believe the country wants on the statute book.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I think that my right hon. Friend is interrupting what I was about to ask him. He is very perceptive. Does he agree that whatever the result of the general election—and we are buoyant by the prospect of another Conservative victory—and whichever Government come to the House, the Asylum Bill will have to be one of the first measures to be reintroduced?

Mr. MacGregor: Mind reading is one of my hobbies, but my skill does not extend to interrupting something that my hon. Friend had not yet said. I agree with him about the importance of having the Asylum Bill on the statute book. If that cannot be by Monday, I trust that it will be done soon thereafter. I hope that at least 21 Government Bills and a number of private Members' Bills will be enacted by the close of business on Monday. The Government are full of new ideas, and our first programme in the new Parliament will include many measures to build on our achievements since 1979.

There are two main reasons why we must proceed with speed, so that the Finance Bill receives Royal Assent before the House rises. First, the Bill contains a number of measures that it is essential to have in place on the statute book. The changes in excise duties contained in resolutions that the House approved last night must be enacted in a Finance Bill, otherwise the extra tax collected would have to be repaid.

The Finance Bill provides also for the renewal of income tax and for the continuation of tax relief on mortgage interest, which are also essential. If the powers to collect income tax are not renewed by 5 May, no income tax could be collected for the financial year ahead.—*[Laughter.]* That might be attractive to some of my hon. Friends and to many in the country. We have been working to ensure throughout our period of government that taxpayers pay less income tax, but I do not imagine that any right hon. or hon. Member expects no income tax at all to be collected. Also, mortgage payers would not thank us if we could not continue interest relief.

The Finance Bill makes provision for value added tax monthly payments on account, to put beyond doubt the legal position on VAT monthly returns that are currently subject to judicial review.

The Finance Bill provides also for the introduction of the new lower rate of income tax of 20p for the first £2,000 of taxable income, and for the halving of car tax—both highly desirable measures that the country wants implemented and operating as soon as possible.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Four weeks today.

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that the whole country notes that—as I understand last night's vote and that which we expect today—the Opposition oppose the 20p reduced income tax band. That will be an important issue during the forthcoming election.

Mr. Grocott: The Leader of the House must be disappointed with the public's reception of the Budget, as shown by opinion polls and City reaction.

Mr. MacGregor: Not at all. Like all good things, people will come to appreciate the Budget's provisions better the more that they study them.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I can give my hon. Friend some interesting information. In a by-election in my constituency yesterday, the Conservative candidate came top of the poll, 400 votes ahead of the runner up, and neither Labour nor the Liberals bothered to contest the seat.

Mr. MacGregor: The longer that we debate the Finance Bill and our tax and expenditure policies, the more support we will gain during the general election campaign.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): If a 20p tax band is such a good idea, why did the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe), as Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer, get rid of it in 1980? Is it not the case that the Government are reintroducing it as a bribe? The electorate understand that a 20p tax band is being reintroduced just prior to a general election to give the impression that the Tories are helping them out. If that tax band had been any good, we would have had it for the past 11 years.

Mr. MacGregor: At the beginning of this Government's first term, we faced a need to reduce a truly horrendous public sector borrowing requirement. I will make very clear later in my speech the relative position of the PSBR now. Today, the position is wholly different. The 20p band continues our policy of bringing down direct tax rates and of achieving the long-term target of a basic rate of income tax of 20p in the pound. The reference by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to a bribe is very revealing of Labour's philosophy. The suggestion that one can bribe people by enabling them to keep more of their earnings demonstrates Labour's thinking, which is, "We can spend your money better than you." That is why Labour is a party of high taxation, and why it will never understand that the electorate do not believe that they can be bribed by being allowed to keep more of their own money.

The debate of the past three days has clearly shown how wide of the mark are Labour's criticisms of the Budget. The Opposition attempt to give the impression that because the Budget contains nothing specific about capital spending and training, nothing is being done about them, but they know very well that under the present system—which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has indicated will be changed anyway—decisions on capital expenditure and training for the year ahead were announced earlier. It is not the case that those decisions—and they are substantial—are announced in a Budget.

We plan capital expenditure of about £30 billion next year, on top of steadily increasing capital programmes. We will take no lessons from the Opposition on capital expenditure. We have steadily increased it, whereas Labour cut that expenditure during its period in office.

Since 1988, capital spending on roads and transport increased by more than one third. British Rail's capital expenditure has nearly doubled, and London Transport's has trebled. Expenditure on training is in real terms two and a half times more than when we took office, which is additional to the high levels of training expenditure undertaken by industry, totalling some £20 billion. Next year's public expenditure programmes include a substantial proportion devoted to capital spending.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Lancastrians have not forgotten that the last Labour Government cut all hospital and school building in the county. It has been catching up steadily under a Conservative Government, but Lancastrians will not forget in a hurry the policies of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey).

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is right. We plan for the country as a whole a programme of more than 600 new hospital buildings. Schools capital expenditure has risen by 35 per cent. in the last two years. It is nonsense for Labour to claim that the PSBR is being devoted to income tax cuts. One can split the expenditure programme whichever way one likes.

Labour claims also that we are doing nothing for business and investment—ignoring the fact that commerce and manufacturing industry are encouraged to invest by the right economic framework, confidence in Government policies and long-term strategy, low corporation tax and good profitability. Those are the policies which ensure a good level of business investment.

We have provided all these and that is why we have seen an unparalleled investment boom. Investment in plant and machinery increased by almost 50 per cent. from 1979 to 1991 and business investment increased by almost 45 per cent. from 1986 to 1989, the fastest three-year growth since the war. Business investment in 1992 is forecast to be a third higher than in 1979. There is substantial business investment and it has been brought about by the policies that we have created.

The Labour party has ignored the fact that about £6 billion in cash flow is coming into business as a result of interest rate reductions over the past 18 months. There is a further £1 billion as a result of last year's corporation tax reduction. There is also a significant improvement in business cash flow as a result of action already taken. That is why it is right to claim that the Budget, as a Budget for business, adds to what has already been done.

The Labour party does not understand that business men's confidence to press the button to implement new investment plans depends in part on their sales forecasts. Labour behaves as if there is something deeply wrong in giving a modest boost to consumer expenditure through the tax cuts that we propose. There is no black-and-white choice between encouraging investment and encouraging sales. It is not either/or. We need a balance.

I shall use the example of the motor industry, an industry in which there is no shortage of capital investment. Indeed, over recent years it has been massive. That is why there has been a greatly improved export record over the past few years. However, the industry needs a boost to its sales. The halving of the car tax will help business and business investment, not the reverse.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I shall illustrate the public's reaction to the Budget and in so doing take up some of my right hon. Friend's remarks. Yesterday, there was a by-election in my constituency, one ninth of which was involved. In the ward there is almost exactly a 50-50 split between what might be described as private property and the public sector property. We, the Conservative party, took 50 per cent. of the vote and won the seat comfortably. Councillor Tim Bowler will be a great addition to the city council. That was the public's verdict yesterday in my Nottingham constituency.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend's return to the House will be of great benefit to his constituents, as his presence has been in the past.

The result of the by-election in Nottingham illustrates that the Labour party's approach—that a tax cut does nothing to help the economy or to help business confidence—reflects a complete misunderstanding of business investment. It is important to have increased sales and that was illustrated recently in the results of a survey that was undertaken by Goldman Sachs International Ltd. The likelihood is that between £2·5 billion and £3 billion of potential extra spending power will come into the economy between the end of December 1991 and April of this year as a result of the reduction in mortgage interest rates. The fact that about 40 per cent. of mortgages are based on annual interest rate adjustments will have a considerable impact and the adjustments are taking place now. As a result of the measures that we have taken, there has been a considerable boost to business confidence within the economy.

Because of our policies, the results of many surveys, including that of the Anglo-German chamber of commerce, which is composed mainly of German companies that are investing in the United Kingdom and of those who have invested in the United Kingdom—inward investors—demonstrate that investors believe that the United Kingdom is an attractive place in which to do business. That is the result of the Government's policies. That is also the answer to the Labour party's charge that the Budget is not one for business and that we have not been pursuing policies that are attractive to business.

The Confederation of British Industry and many other organisations have supported the approach that we have taken throughout. I noted the other day the result of a survey of the top 200 companies that was undertaken by James Capel and Co. When the companies were asked whether they thought that a Labour victory would be good or bad for the economy, 86 per cent. said that it would be bad. That is the reaction and judgment of business on the alternative policies that will be put to the country in the general election.

Criticisms about the public sector borrowing requirement come ill from the Labour party when we recall both its record in government and its published spending commitments. It is worth reminding the country, as we shall be doing constantly, that when the last Labour Government were in office, the equivalent PSBR as a proportion of gross domestic product—this is an average—was £40 billion. In the Labour Government's worst year it was the equivalent of £55 billion. Our PSBR still remains, as a proportion of GDP, the lowest within the European Community, apart from that of Luxembourg. That is why we can rightly claim to be the party which has pursued sound finances.

We have heard little from the Labour party about how well the Budget is targeted on other groups, such as the small business group in which I take a particular interest. I regret that it has not been possible to include some of the very welcome measures in the Finance Bill that were proposed by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget statement. We shall certainly be including them in legislation as soon as we return after the election.

The targeting on pensioners helps to increase spending and is important for pensioners on income support who, from October, will see an increase in their incomes of at least £5·70 a week. In some instances, it will be as much as £10·70.

I come to the crucial element of the debate, which is the shrillness of the Opposition's reaction to the proposed 20p rate for the first £2,000 of taxable income. The reaction——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. There is a disturbance coming from the Opposition Front Bench, but the debate has hardly been about the guillotine motion since it began; it has been wider than that. I have been rather tolerant this morning.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker. To judge from the interventions in my speech, the House wants to debate the motion.

The Opposition's reaction to the 20p proposal reveals them in their true colours. The proposal is worth £100 a year to almost 21 million taxpayers. It is skilfully targeted to give the most assistance proportionately to the lower paid. Seventy five per cent. of the benefit will go to those on below average earnings. The marginal tax rate will be reduced for nearly 4 million taxpayers.

Mr. Beith: The right hon. Gentleman has made a rather important point. He said that 75 per cent. of the benefit will go to people on below average earnings. Is that now the Government's definition of the lower paid?

Mr. MacGregor: No, because I was talking about skilful targeting to those on lower incomes. I was simply making a point about what the impact of the measure would be.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. Friend think that the casual disregard of £100 is because it would not even pay for the first course of the gala dinner in Park lane?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend makes his point.

It was interesting that the Opposition got into a muddle in their reaction to the 20p proposal, as they do on every other tax matter. The hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) described it as a good idea. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) said that he would support it. The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) was quoted in the Liverpool *Daily Post* as saying:

> "There may be a way we can accept this tax band because we believe the lower paid pay too much tax already."

As always, the Labour party got into a muddle and tried to retreat. In truth, it believes in and stands for higher taxes, not only for those on higher incomes, but for those on middle and lower incomes. That is demonstrated by its attitude to the 20p proposal and by everything that it says about taxes generally.

The country will be able to judge from the way in which Opposition Members vote whether the Labour party is for or against lower taxes, for or against directing the benefit of tax cuts to the least well off and for or against an economy that is competitive with other countries. We Conservatives know that the role of government is to get economic fundamentals right, to keep them right, to create conditions for growth and opportunities for enterprise and to provide scope for freedom of choice. As the Finance Bill demonstrates, we know that the money that Governments spend comes from taxpayers. We believe it right to leave people with as much of their own money to spend as is possible.

We believe in reducing taxes, increasing incentives and enhancing opportunities for all our people. The Labour party does not believe in any of those things. It will be demonstrating that again today by voting against our proposals. The country will soon judge. I have no doubt that its verdict will be the same as it has been for the last 13 years.

9.59 am

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I hope that I do not embarrass you, Madam Deputy Speaker, if I say that we think we heard a note of irony in your voice when you reminded us what the debate is about. I shall return to that point in a moment, but I begin by saying genuinely to the

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Leader of the House that, in so far as he has been involved in work on House of Commons affairs, he has been a good Leader. I thank him for his courtesy to me personally in the way that we have tried to work together to improve matters in the House of Commons—but there, I am afraid, the felicitations must end.

As you said, Madam Deputy Speaker, with a note of irony in your voice, when you reminded us of the nature of the debate and why we are here, the reason why we are here this morning is that the Leader of the House is asking us to agree to the guillotining of three Bills. In round numbers, that means that in this Parliament the Government, with their large majority, will have guillotined about 40 measures—more than twice the number of guillotines used by the Labour Government between 1974 and 1979, when we did not even have a majority in the House of Commons.

The Government will finish as they began—unable to persuade people by argument and debate, but determined to railroad their ideas through Parliament regardless. At least two or three Conservative Members are in the Chamber today who, in the past, had the courage and conviction to stand up and oppose in principle the guillotining of Bills and also to vote against measures such as the poll tax when that, too, was guillotined. The Government have never learnt from their mistakes throughout this Parliament in the way that they have approached the business of the House.

This morning's proceedings are unprecedented. The Budget debate has been curtailed and we face the savage guillotining of the Finance Bill through all its stages in a few hours today. No Government of any persuasion, however great their difficulties, ever conducted proceedings on the Finance Bill and the Budget in such a way. The right hon. Gentleman leaves this Parliament with an unenviable record in that regard, as well as in some others, to which I shall turn later.

The Leader of the House says that we have to have a Finance Bill. He is absolutely right. Despite what he said yesterday, we recognised that need from the outset—but we did not have to have a Finance Bill in these circumstances and we did not have to have a Budget debate in these circumstances. We could have had the Budget a week earlier or we could have had the general election a week later. Either way, the Government simply messed it up.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer—he was here a few moments ago, but has vanished again, no doubt having put on his Vatman cape—and the Prime Minister were responsible for fixing these dates and this timetable. What we now see clearly is that they made a complete mess of fixing the dates. The result is the guillotining of the Finance Bill today.

We see a flight from responsibility by the Government. They deny that the recession has anything to do with their policies. They deny that homelessness has anything to do with their policies—it is the fault of the homeless. Unemployment is the fault of people who do not have jobs. The recession is the fault of the Americans. The Government accept no responsibility for anything. Even after 13 years in office, with large parliamentary majorities and advantageous world circumstances, and with oil revenues in excess of £100 million, the Government leave the nation's affairs in a shambles. They leave Parliament in a shambles, too.

The Finance Bill is the most important measure to be guillotined this morning, but the Education (Schools) Bill is also guillotined, as is the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill, even though we have expressed our acceptance of the Bill in its present form. I assume that the Leader of the House is guillotining it because he is concerned about the Scottish Nationalists, but as they are not here I am not sure what he is worried about. He is guillotining that Bill without the Labour party opposing it.

The Leader of the House said that the Government's conduct of the final aspects of their business was orderly, so whatever happened to the Asylum Bill? I hope that the right hon. Gentleman was not implying, or trying to convince the House, that the Asylum Bill is not here because we oppose it. The truth of the matter is that the right hon. Gentleman was offered a compromise on that Bill by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) but the Government rejected it. The real reason why the Asylum Bill is not in the House now is because the Government have signally failed to convince the other place—a combination of Tory peers, Cross Benchers and others—that it should be allowed through. That is why the Asylum Bill has not come back from the other place—it has nothing to do with obstacles in the House of Commons and it is quite out of order to suggest anything to the contrary.

The reality is that the Government are staggering through these last few days of Parliament, desperate to get out of here before even their last act of folly—their Budget —is rumbled. They have even missed the boat on that. Their timetable has gone wrong on that, too. As reactions from the City and from people around the country show, the Budget has had a big thumbs down. The great launch for the Tory campaign has stalled. The rocket motor has fizzled out like a damp squib. How can any Conservative Member or anyone else in the forthcoming campaign believe that the person on £70 a week, whom the Chancellor told us he had in mind when he made his tax changes, will be delighted by the proposals? The tax reduction offered to that taxpayer is just under 19p per week. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said, that is equivalent to the price of a box of matches. Anyone who thinks either that that will motivate voters to support his discredited Government or that it will electrify the economy must be living in cloud cuckoo land.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: In a moment.

The truth is that even before my right hon. and learned Friend the shadow Chancellor unveils his alternative budget next week, our own proposals on child benefit, a minimum wage and attendant policies will do far more for the low paid than anything in this Budget.

Mr. Dover: If the Labour party is voting against the lower band of income tax, will it consider most carefully the fact that the main reason for it is to give every possible incentive to the unemployed to get into work? Due to the poverty trap, there has been no incentive for them to take low-paid jobs. Is this not the best way to bring about a fall in unemployment?

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman must be absolutely confused about the position of people who are out of work. They are out of work as a result of the Government's policies. If he thinks that 19p per week is all that is stopping people who are out of work from getting jobs, he is fundamentally mistaken. I can tell him from my experience throughout the country, and in particular from my experience in my own constituency of Copeland, that what he says is incorrect. There are 3,000 people out of work in Copeland. If I include the unemployment in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), there are between 6,000 and 7,000 people out of work in west Cumbria. An extra 19p a week will do nothing to create additional employment in west Cumbria. Indeed, a further unemployment calamity is coming to west Cumbria due to the running down of the nuclear industry's construction programme and a further 3,000 people will lose their jobs in my constituency. The hon. Member for Chorley (Mr. Dover) knows the building and construction industry. He knows that it is in a calamitous state across the country. Nothing in the Budget—certainly not the 19p reduction for an employed person earning £70 per week—will resolve the problems. The hon. Gentleman knows that.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East) *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I have not given way, but as the hon. Gentleman has been so courteous, I will do so now.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman assure the poor people of Cumbria that a future Labour Government would take a positive attitude to the nuclear industry and the construction thereof?

Dr. Cunningham: Yes. I did not want to be diverted to the subject of nuclear power, but, as the hon. Gentleman has mentioned it, I can say that it is important in my constituency, where it employs 14,000 people directly. The Government took office 13 years ago, full of bold, brave things to say about nuclear power, but what is their record? They started but did not finish even one nuclear power station in 13 years.

Mr. Beith: Thank goodness.

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman says, "Thank goodness." He is entitled to his point of view, but for the Government to talk as though they are the saviours of the nuclear industry is one of the long-running myths of this and previous Parliaments. If we take into account the privatisation of the electricity industry——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We are straying too far by talking about privatisation measures. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is about to return to the motion on the allocation of time.

Dr. Cunningham: That shows that I should not have been tempted to allow an intervention by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor). However, to conclude the point, the privatisation of the electricity industry above all wrecked the prospects of the industry to which the hon. Gentleman referred. That was another of the Government's terrible mistakes.

I deal again with the reason for the guillotine as you rightly reminded me to do, Madam Deputy Speaker. The motion is intended to force through the Budget proposals with the claim that somehow at the 59th second of the 59th minute of the 23rd hour, as the Government stagger out of office, they have suddenly become concerned about lower-paid people. That is absolutely bogus. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has said, in one of their first Acts the Government abolished the lower rate. Now, 12 years later—just before a general election —they are reintroducing it.

What has happened in the intervening decade? What has happened since Conservative Members voted to freeze child benefit? Were they thinking about low-income families then? Of course they were not. What happened when they trooped through the Lobbies to impose the poll tax on low-income families? Where was their concern for the low paid then? What were they thinking when they agreed to legislation that, for the reasons that we advanced, no political party in any other democracy would support? When they agreed to introduce the poll tax, what did they think about sending poll tax bills to people who had no income? That is the Government's record on taxation—to say nothing of the 2·5 per cent. increase in VAT in the last year's Budget to buy off poll tax anger.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I thought that we had come to hear about the guillotine.

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman did not come here for that purpose—he knows that and so do we.

As I was saying, that is the Government's record, not to mention imposing the highest tax burden in history on all of us as they leave after 13 uninterrupted years in office. The Government have got the Budget wrong, and they have got it wrong for 13 years. If they have not got it right in 13 years, they never will.

That is what people think. At the end of the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) will remind hon. Members of the comments of City analysts on the Budget. They said that it was a flop and gave it the thumbs down. One Thatcherite supporter in the City gave it one out of 10. It was remarkable to sit here while the Chancellor introduced the Budget and to observe the look and demeanour of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). She looked absolutely livid throughout the whole performance.

I asked the Leader of the House yesterday about the Conservative campaign guide for the coming election. I do not know whether Conservative Members have seen it, but if they would like to come to my office afterwards, they can have a copy. The guide is already out of date because it contains figures that are nonsensical. It talks about a PSBR of £10·5 billion, which is already 50 per cent. too low. It says nothing about the PSBR of £28 billion for the coming financial year or one of £32 billion for the year after that.

What happened to sound money? What happened to balanced Budgets? What about the chairman of the Conservative party who said that large borrowing was simply deferred taxation, a burden for future generations? All those arguments have gone out of the window—whoof!—because there is a general election on the way. That is what the Budget is all about, and that is why the Government have made such a reckless economic misjudgment. As my hon. Friends have said, and as the polls show today, the Budget was also a huge political misjudgment. People do not want it. It means nothing to them in the face of higher tax bills, higher poll tax bills,

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higher charges for electricity, for gas and for water, and higher petrol prices. Those higher prices will override any benefits to low-income families which might have resulted from these policies.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I will give way in a moment.

The Budget will not wash. Even the people who are struggling, as I know from my constituency experience —who are faced with schools without sufficient text books or learning materials for their children, and with the appalling circumstances which led to the tragic death of Georgina Norris—would rather have borrowing for investment, to build for the future. They know that investment for the future is the best way to get a better deal for themselves and their families, rather than a tax bribe a few weeks before a general election.

Mr. Nelson: The hon. Gentleman is attacking the Government for their imprudent level of borrowing. Will he let us into the secret of the shadow Budget to be published tomorrow? Will the level of borrowing under a Labour Government be lower or higher than that which we propose?

Dr. Cunningham: I cannot let the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) in on the secret of my right hon. and learned Friend's Budget to be revealed tomorrow because it will be revealed next week. All will be revealed. My right hon. and learned Friend made it clear in the Chamber that we shall have to work within the circumstances that we inherit. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members say that we shall have to stay with it. Of course, an incoming Labour Government—and that is what we shall have—will have to work within the circumstances that they inherit. I suspect that, as in the past, the mess of the nation's finances will be even worse when we open the books and take a thorough look, but we shall have to deal with that. The hon. Member for Chichester must contain himself for a few days more. He will discover that my right hon. and learned Friend's alternative proposals are better not only for individuals but for Britain as a whole.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman has just talked about capital spending in the national health service, with the implication that somehow or other Labour would do better. During the forthcoming election campaign, will he keep reminding the electorate that the Government have increased capital spending on hospitals by 76 per cent., compared with the 30 per cent. cut made by the Labour Government in that same capital spending?

Dr. Cunningham: Indeed, I am more than happy to respond to the right hon. Gentleman's challenge that we should debate the circumstances of the national health service during the election campaign. We know that people are deeply unhappy about the Government's policies and, notwithstanding what the right hon. Gentleman says about expenditure, he and his right hon. Friends must explain why wards are continuing to close, why emergency beds are not available and why desperately ill children are turned away from hospitals. Why is that happening, if the Government's record on health is so wonderful? Why is the number of beds available for private patients who need urgent treatment increasing while the number of beds available to NHS patients is declining? Why is that happening if the Government have made such a good job of their health service reforms?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that we have substantially increased spending on the health service in real terms, by about 55 per cent. overall. [HON. MEMBERS: "Not enough."] Labour Members, say that that is not enough. How, then, do they explain what the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is clearly saying to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook)—that the Labour party would not be able to spend more on the health service and that, because of its policies on a national minimum wage, on pay beds and on prescription charges, it would substantially reduce the amount actually spent on patients within the health service?

Dr. Cunningham: We are right at the nub of the dispute between us. This is the choice which people face. They must choose whether the money that is still available, even in these desperately difficult financial circumstances—the mess that the Tory Government are leaving—should be spent on tax cuts or on investments. That is the clear choice which we shall put to the people and we are happy to put it in those clear terms. I am quietly confident that people will see the difference and make the choice—and that choice will be for Labour. The evidence emerges again and again from the debate.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House how much the Labour party, in a quite revolting fashion, has spent on advertising which exploits the death of a child?

Dr. Cunningham: The tragedy of Georgina Norris, who was twice taken to hospital to have an operation and twice sent home, is appalling. It is a stain on a civilised society that that child should have died in those circumstances.

Mr. Gale: The hon. Gentleman does not know what the circumstances were.

Dr. Cunningham: I know very well what the circumstances were, and we stand by what we have said —the child's parents wanted the nation's attention drawn to what happened to their little girl as a result of the Government's mismanagement of the national health service. For the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) to suggest otherwise is a deliberate attempt to mislead the House and the country. I have all the correspondence here and he is welcome to see it all if he wishes.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall not allow further discussion on an individual case. We are discussing principles.

Dr. Cunningham: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker —I might have known that that was the kind of intervention that the hon. Member for Thanet, North would make.

On this penultimate day of our deliberations, the Government are desperate to get their fag-ends of legislation through—desperate to get their bribes on to the statute book—so they are guillotining our procedure. They have used the guillotine a record number of times. The Leader of the House smiles. I do not think that he should smile, because, as well as being fed up with the

Government's economic and social policy failures the people are fed up with the abuse of Parliament which has been a recurring feature of the Government's term of office. The Government are concluding their term of office with another abuse of Parliament—and that, too, will count against them in the ballot box on 9 April.

10.26 am

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The debate has ranged rather widely, but its subject is rather narrow—whether it is wiser for us to carry on discussing the Finance Bill in detail for a week or to rush on with the election now. The evidence so far suggests that it would have been better for us to go on for another week on the Finance Bill, because the signs for the election campaign appear rather depressing. There are a few exceptions—the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who has just spoken, is an obvious exception. I asked him a straight question and he gave me a straight answer. I hope that that will be a sign of what will happen in the campaign.

I asked the hon. Member for Copeland simply whether a Labour Government would be in favour of expanding a nuclear power programme and he said, "Yes." Presumably, that would be at the expense of coal-fired power stations. There are some such subjects on which it is good for politicians to give a straight answer. We know that some people feel that we should have more coal-fired power stations, while some favour gas-fired power stations and some want to cut the nuclear construction industry. At least we have had a straight answer from the hon. Member for Copeland. That is the sort of thing that we should have. There have been other signs that are not so good.

I understand that the Leader of the Opposition will be in Scotland today. We always regarded him as one of our staunch friends in the battle against all the nonsense about devolution—but now he seems to be one of its greatest supporters. It is tragic that, during the election campaign, nonsense will be talked by people who used proudly to support strong policies.

I shall ask the Leader of the House three questions. He will know that many Back Benchers have strong feelings on taxation issues and that they want to bring those feelings before the House when debating the Finance Bill. Yet it seems that, because of the guillotine, we shall be denied that opportunity. If, as we hope, the Conservative Government are re-elected, will there be an early opportunity to consider various tax anomalies?

I want to talk about simple things—for instance, beach huts, which, as my right hon. Friend probably knows, are important to the tourist industry. Suddenly, in the course of last year, beach huts became liable to VAT. That was done not by primary legislation but by some funny order that went to a Committee and it is obviously grossly discriminatory against the leisure and tourism industry. It is unfair and people are fed up about it.

We wondered how we could resolve the matter and we thought that we would be able to do so in the Finance Bill —but now we shall not be able to, which means that a great injustice to seaside areas, including Southend-on-Sea, will continue for another year unless we can have a detailed discussion on the subject.

Another great anomaly concerns the sale of second-hand furniture. It is ridiculous that, although almost every other industry pays VAT only on added value, sadly, on second-hand furniture the gross amount must be paid. That is unfair to the industry, especially to the minority of people in it who are registered for VAT.

Another anomaly concerns people with working wives. If someone who is unemployed has a working wife, it will be almost impossible to get the mortgage paid, whereas if the wife is not working the mortgage can be paid. That is the kind of anomaly which we would like to discuss on the Finance Bill, but we shall not be given the opportunity. I simply ask my right hon. Friend whether, if we approve the motion, there will be another opportunity for considering detailed points about unfairness and distortion in tax legislation.

Secondly, I believe that it would be best if, in advance of the election, the Leader of the House introduced a simple motion outlining issues on which all the parties could agree. The motion could be discussed for about three hours and those issues could be left out of party politics. We could send them for local decision making.

That is not a silly idea. Hon. Members from all parties are aware that whenever there is a general election many people face total uncertainty. I shall cite one little example, which concerns the 2,500 children in Southend-on-Sea who attend grammar schools. There are arguments for and against grammar schools. I believe that if grammar schools are abolished, the people who will suffer will be able children from working-class areas. That is a political argument which is not relevant to the motion.

What is terrible is that, at this election, the next election and the election after that, the children, teachers and parents face uncertainty. They know that if one party wins, the grammar schools will be closed. If another party wins, the schools will stay open. Is it not possible to get some agreement between the parties before the election that there are some issues that we all agree should be left to the decision of local people? That is not an attack on the Labour party or on the Liberal Democrats: it is simply a suggestion that there must be some issues that we could agree to leave to local decision making.

I hope that the House will consider that possibility instead of using the motion. I hope that the House will decide to have short discussions with all the parties to see which issues we could leave to local decision making. We should not then have this terrible position of total uncertainty.

The Labour party used to believe in nationalisation and we had terrible problems. Industries did not know where they were, the employers did not know where they were and the workers——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I have some sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman says about local decision making. However, we have had 13 years of a Tory Government who have continually undermined local democracy, local accountability and local decision making. I should have liked to hear the hon. Gentleman's voice raised more sternly when local accountability was effectively being removed by the House.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am trying terribly hard not to be political. Even if the hon. Gentleman were absolutely accurate, even if the Conservative party were a crowd of rascals who wanted to interfere with everything—I do not think that they are, because some of them are very nice blokes—surely we should not go further.

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

Why does the hon. Gentleman think that it is right that a political party should say what kind of educational arrangements there should be in an area? Why not leave it to the local people? If they want to change, let them change.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will remember that when his party used to believe in nationalisation, which it does not believe in now, the same uncertainty applied to many jobs and many industries. Happily, the Labour party has moved away from that position and from many of its former policies. Would it not be sensible to have an arrangement whereby the parties could say, "Let the people decide locally and do not let the centre do so"?

As we shall not have a lengthy discussion of the Finance Bill, people like me—I call us a growing minority—who feel that all the parties, unfortunately, are being prevented from going ahead with more flexible economic policies because of their commitment to the exchange rate mechanism, are unable to ask the Government whether there is anything in the Bill which will remove the freedom of a Conservative, a Labour or a Liberal Democrat Government to withdraw from the ERM if they wish.

Only about 11 Conservative Members voted against the decision, but the Leader of the House will be aware that there has been a big change of opinion. *The Times* has changed greatly and now says that it is in favour of a free pound. That is wonderful. It is rather like getting the Church of England to say that it is opposed to fox hunting. It is a major change in opinion which has spread throughout the House and elsewhere. There is a growing belief that, if one tries to create an artificial price for anything, one simply creates distortions elsewhere.

We see the same problems arising under the EC agricultural policy, which we cannot discuss under the motion. As artificial prices are created, one has distortions——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman oblige me by relating what he says far more to the motion? He is now straying quite far away from it.

Sir Teddy Taylor: You are quite right, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am trying to speak briefly.

I am simply trying to say to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House about the motion, which cuts the time for discussion on the Finance Bill, that we should be allowed just a little more time to answer my simple, clear question, to which I want just a yes or no answer. Is there anything in the complicated Bill, which I have just seen, which removes the freedom of future Governments of any party to withdraw from the ERM if they wish to do so?

The Government have made it abundantly clear that they do not want to withdraw. Their commitment is firm. We simply want an opportunity, which I hope we may get, to be given the answer yes or no. My right hon. Friend may find that increasing numbers of people are moving towards my position. It would be terrible if we lost our freedom.

I hope that we shall be given positive answers to my three questions before we vote on the motion. I hope that, in the forthcoming election contest, all people from all parties will give clear, decisive and positive answers—as the hon. Member for Copeland did when I asked him a simple and clear question about nuclear power. Let us hope that all the answers and questions will be as clear and decisive during the election.

Mr. Beith *rose*——

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Mr. Dennis Skinner.

10.34 am

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has had his chance already, because he was on television last night. He is a bit upset because I have got in before the Liberal Democrats. It is a great day and I am all in favour of it. The hon. Gentleman talked a bit about the guillotine a bit last night on television and he made it plain that the 20p band was going down like a lead balloon.

The atmosphere in the House today is different from the atmosphere on Tuesday. All the euphoria on the Conservative Benches has gone. I admit that when I heard the Chancellor say that he was introducing the 20p band for the first £2,000, I got out my little Labour party pocket book and I saw that the proposal was still there. Many things have been whittled away in Labour party policy reviews over the past few years, yet that policy still remains. I thought, "Here the Conservatives are, stealing our clothes. Ain't it smart?" I decided that it would not worry me, because I vote against Labour party policy from time to time.

Outside this place, within seconds, people were not taking the view that the 20p rate that many Conservative Members and some Labour Members took. I have another answer. I would have added another 5 per cent. to the 50 per cent. tax band and got the money back that way. That is still a threat if I get the job of Chancellor of the Exchequer, although I do not think that I am in line for it. It is a pointer.

The whole environment in which we debate today has changed completely. The Leader of the House talked about having to get the matter dealt with by 5 May. I must tell my hon. Friends who were not here before that if we do not get the Finance Bill on to the statute book by 5 May, all the taxes that should be collected will not be collected. If I can find a parliamentary procedural way in which to keep things going beyond 5 May, I shall be a bigger hero than Robin Hood. I am working on that one. Are any by-elections pending?

Mr. Beith: About 650.

Mr. Skinner: I am not so sure about mine. It is important that, after the initial bout of enthusiasm, the markets and the stock exchange took a completely different view. The problem that the Government must face in their dying days is not only the level of the public sector borrowing requirement at £28 billion, but the dramatic increase over 12 months.

The Leader of the House referred to the large PSBR between 1974 and 1979. He forgot to mention that part of it was due to the quadrupling of oil prices just before the Labour Government were elected. He forgot to mention that we inherited a bigger PSBR, in percentage terms, in 1974 than we left. I hope that all my hon. Friends remember that. When the Conservatives talk about the PSBR, we must realise that, in the middle of Labour's period of office, the PSBR went up dramatically, but if we take into account the beginning and the end, the PSBR was less than the PSBR that we inherited.

Over the past 12 months, the PSBR has increased from £14 billion to £26 billion. The Government have now added another £2 billion. The City is saying that that is a dangerous and dramatic increase. That is its verdict. Those in the City are also bearing in mind the fact that the Government have picked up £100 billion-worth of North sea oil tax receipts and another £42 billion-worth of privatisation receipts. It is almost incredible that a Government who have had £142 billion extra should have managed to end up with a public sector deficit of £28 billion after 13 years in which they have had all that money from North sea oil. That is the difference between the 1980s and the 1970s.

We could have done a lot with that 2 billion quid. Only 4·75 million people are now engaged in the manufacturing industry—the lowest figure ever. This year, fewer people will be engaged in manufacturing than will be working in hotels and shops. I am not knocking people who work in hotels and shops, but we must remember that Britain imports about 50 per cent. of its food. We now have a net deficit on manufactured goods and there is no way in which we can allow the manufacturing capacity of Britain to continue as it is and pay for that imported food—let alone imported coal, imported oil and imported manufactured goods; it is impossible.

My hon. Friends on the Front Bench who will inherit the positions of those on the Treasury Bench in a month's time can forget about the £28 billion, because when they open the books they will find that matters are dramatically worse than that. That is the position and there are people out there in the City who know it. They are closer to reading the books than we are and they have friends on the Conservative Benches who tell them things—some of the dries in the Tory party who may not even be voting Tory at the election. I shall not name names, but a few of them are not looking forward to the Government getting back into power. They know, and their friends in the City know, that the situation is dramatically worse than it appears.

The £2 billion could have been used to boost manufacturing industry. It could have been used to boost housing. The state of housing in Britain after 13 years of Tory government is a crying shame. They called 1979 a bad year for Labour, yet in that year we built 80,000 public sector houses. My hon. Friends and I used to complain that that was not enough; we wanted 160,000 or 280,000, but we only got 80,000. Last year, only 8,000 public sector houses were built—8,000.

There are elderly people waiting for bungalows and other forms of accommodation. I am talking not just about London, although in parts of London homelessness is worse than it is anywhere else. I am also talking about places such as Bolsover, where the housing waiting list is longer now than when I was first elected in 1970. Every one of us knows that there is a crying need for houses.

The £2 billion could have been used to kick-start the housing economy and get rid of cardboard city, which is an utter scandal. We ought to have a party political broadcast showing people in door holes in the Strand, showing the piles of bricks at the London Brick Company and the 250,000 construction workers who do not have jobs. It does not take a Pythagoras to put those three things together and put roofs over people's heads.

Yet the Tories have the cheek to talk about putting £100 per annum into the pockets of Members of Parliament and Cabinet Ministers—because that is where the money will go, despite all the talk about its going only to the lower-paid. Let us get the facts straight: if people are on family credit, the money will be taken away from them pound for pound. The 3 million people who are unemployed will not get a penny piece out of this bribe of a Budget. We have housing squalor all around us and that is one of the things that the next Labour Government will have to sort out.

There is also the question of education. Some £4 billion needs to be spent on repairs to educational establishments, but nothing has been done in that regard either.

What else could we international socialists have done with the money? We could have used some of it to help pay off some of the debts of the third-world countries. We could have used a little of it to double the amount of money that we pay in overseas aid to some of those impoverished nations. Instead, the Government have chosen to line their own pockets and the pockets of their friends out there in the City.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman is right that the £2 billion could have been well used in ways that would have helped low-paid people more than the £100 tax cut, which many of them will not get. But he has spent it several times. If he is to tackle education, investment and overseas aid and kick-start the economy, he will either have to borrow more or raise more revenue—and on that, those on the Labour Front Bench seem a little hesitant.

Mr. Skinner: I am merely giving examples of the way in the which the money could have been used. There are many options. I am not saying that we would need all the £2 billion to kick-start the housing economy. I think that the hon. Gentleman knows that. We could start to do that by using some of the capital receipts that are held by the local authorities. Then we would not even need to start on the £2 billion. But as the hon. Gentleman is an economist, he has probably missed that point. It is early in the morning and I understand his problem. He is probably having to prop up Paddy Backdown or Captain Mainwaring or whatever they call him now. I understand his difficulties.

The public know—the voters know—that we could have done a lot with that money. We could have used it for child benefit or to help the old-age pensioners. We could use it to help implement the Elimination of Poverty in Retirement Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). All those issues need to be dealt with, but instead the Government said, "Let's introduce the 20p band. That'll embarrass the Labour party. It's in their little pocket book document." Somebody said to them, "Do you remember that we got rid of it in 1980?" The reply was, "Did we?" "Yes. It was the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East." "Oh, we're not bothered about him. He's going; he's on his way. Nobody will remember anyway. They'll not think about it on the Labour Benches."

The Government abolished the 20p tax band 11 years ago. They introduced a poll tax to hammer the low paid. They cut social security benefits to hammer the low paid. They took away the death grant, the maternity grant, income support for 16 and 17-year-olds to hammer the low paid. Every time they walked into the House of Commons,

[Mr. Skinner]

they did something else to hit the low paid. Then, a few weeks before a general election, some tin-pot ideologue said, "Let's introduce a 20p band and trap the Labour party." They might have done that momentarily, but the people out there understand it for what it is: it is a dirty, stinking Tory bribe, and they will pay the penalty for it at the general election.

10.47 am

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): The House has just heard a vintage performance from one of its favourite performers. I remember the day when I had to congratulate the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on his maiden speech, and I did so with great sincerity. I forecast then that the House might hear from him occasionally in the future. *[Laughter.]* That prediction was absolutely right and I am sure that many Treasury forecasters would like to be able to emulate its accuracy.

I want to say a few words about the guillotine motion, you will be glad to hear, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who has a nice line in affable invective, began his speech by paying a graceful tribute to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. As I have served on a number of House of Commons Committees, I should like to associate myself with those words. For a very long time, the House has not had a Leader of the House who has devoted more time to its affairs. My right hon. Friend has been a particularly effective Leader of the House and I should love to see him in the job again after the general election, although he deserves promotion because of what he has achieved. The hon. Member for Copeland has been an excellent shadow Leader of the House and I wish him many happy years in that position.

We had the usual synthetic rhetoric about guillotine motions. I have never been an enthusiast for guillotine motions introduced by either party, as the hon. Member for Copeland knows, but this is one occasion on which I speak quite gladly in support of such a motion. I have one reservation: we have been given only four hours. In common with hon. Members on both sides of the House I have cancelled all my constituency engagements, so I could willingly have managed another two.

That reservation notwithstanding, I support the guillotine motion. The hon. Member for Copeland and other hon. Members know that all we are concerned about now is to tidy our business, make sure that the Finance Bill is passed, and get to the hustings. We are anxious to put the respective cases of the various parties. I am glad that the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) is nodding his head. It is absolutely necessary. It is important that we get back to the country. Dissolution must take place on Monday. I, for one, am delighted to pursue a vigorous campaign in support of policies in which I have great faith.

Mr. Tony Banks: Unfortunately, that belief will not be shared by the electorate.

Mr. Cormack: It has not always been the case—the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is right.—but I am delighted that it now is.

The sooner we can conclude our business tidily and in good order, the better. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has my full support. In spite of all that the hon. Member for Bolsover said a few moments ago with great eloquence, fervour, passion and sincerity, as the House has heard from me and my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), yesterday these were two tests of public opinion in by-elections. They are real tests of real voters' feelings. In both cases there was a resounding victory for the Conservative party.

I have great faith in the policies that we will put forward in the general election. I want to get to the hustings as quickly as possible. The sooner we can finish our business today and wrap up the formalities on Monday, the better. The hon. Member for Copeland, for all his invective, knows that I am absolutely right and he, in his heart, agrees with every word.

10.51 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): We probably could have finished our business a couple of hours earlier if we had not had this timetable motion. We could have got on with dealing with the Finance Bill instead of spending several hours discussing whether we should discuss it and, if so, at what length. The fact that we have it illustrates the attitude which the otherwise genial and affable Leader of the House displays to the conduct of parliamentary business. One of his phrases should chill any support of democracy to the bone. He said to his hon. Friends, "If we do not have the Asylum Bill here today and do not have it on Monday, it is because Opposition parties are opposing some parts of the Bill." I thought that that was what we were here for—to find out what features of Bills will not work very well or were wrong in principle, and oppose them, make it difficult for the Government to get them through, and subject them to the most careful scrutiny. The fact that somebody has thought of engaging in that act—in some cases the people involved, horror of horrors, are actually Conservatives; in this case, Conservatives in another place—has caused the Government such apoplexy that they produce a reason not to proceed with the Bill.

When Governments are brought under pressure as at the end of a Session, it is normal for them to try to seek accommodation, rather as the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), to see whether parties can agree on parts of the Bill that are important and should go ahead and it is in the general interest that they should go ahead. That process has gone on at the end of every Parliament I have served in. I have taken part in discussions with Ministers in previous Parliaments. It is funny that, all of a sudden, what the Liberal Democrats think becomes terribly important because the Government have realised that they cannot get their Bill through if we subject it to any scrutiny. Under previous Governments there were discussions designed to get maximum agreement between the parties on what could go ahead. That could have occurred in respect of these proceedings.

The timetable motion is particularly vicious. It is a "Heads I win, tails you lose" motion. It contains the provision that the proceedings

> "shall be brought to a conclusion four hours after the commencement of the proceedings on this Order."

The object is quite simple. It is to escape the requirement that the House of Commons has traditionally had, that if a Government are to timetable a Bill there should be some obstacle to their doing so. The obstacle is removed, because if we discuss the timetable motion all the time taken is lost from the discussion of the Bill.

I favour the timetabling of Bills. It is a sensible way to proceed. I was a member of the Committee chaired by the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), to which the Leader of the House gave evidence. I was also a member of the Procedure Committee, chaired by the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). Both Committees recommended that there should be a timetable procedure for all Bills, but one based on a mechanism of consultation which ensures that the Government do not have total control over the amount of time available and the way in which it is divided, because if they have such control it is too easy for them.

There is nothing in the proceedings of the House to prevent the Government from coming forward with a motion such as this, saying that proceedings on the Finance Bill shall end five minutes after they have begun —indeed, five minutes after the order to discuss the timetable has began. There is absolutely nothing to prevent them from doing so, other than the possibility that there may be more than a handful of determined democrats on the Conservative side of the House.

Whenever such issues arise, and whenever we criticise timetable motions, the Leader of the House says how valuable the Bill is and that everybody agrees what a good Bill it is. That is not the point. Parliament must ensure that legislation on the statute book has been properly discussed and considered and is in a fit state of law to be put on the statute book. That will not happen if parliamentary procedures can be manipulated by the Government to suit their own convenience. That is what they are able to do with such a motion. That is why I oppose the motion, both the way in which it is being used and its form.

The Leader of the House has explained that the motion is necessary in order to consider the Finance Bill. It is the thinnest Finance Bill I have ever seen. I am accustomed to sitting on Finance Bill Committees and carrying around a half inch thick Finance Bill and endless notes on clauses. This is a slight document. We could have disposed of the Bill fairly quickly. Perhaps there could have been a case for the timetable motion which set aside reasonably short periods in which we could have dealt with Second Reading, the principal clauses of the Bill, enabled hon. Members to vote against one or two features of it, and end the proceedings in perfectly good time. The Leader of the House chose not to do that because he prefers the nice easy device of saying, "I decide how long it is. Nobody else has any say in the matter. If they dare to challenge the timetable, that will be taken off the time available to discuss the Bill."

That is a disgraceful way to run a Parliament. The next Parliament will not accept that treatment. That is because there will be plenty of Liberal Democrats who will be determined that Parliament should not be run in that way. I hope that members of other parties will feel that that is not the way to run Parliament and will take on board the recommendations of the Committees which have examined the matter in detail, and ensure that we do not consider business in this way in future.

What I say applies not only to the dying days of the Session, but to the way in which the Government handle business all the time. These proceedings are much like those that we have had on many other Bills. Far from being in a hurry to have an election, the Government were putting the election off for as long as possible. They had all the time in the world. The Prime Minister did not want an election date. It used to be said that one of the Prime Minister's great advantages is being able to choose the date for the general election, but I get the impression that lately it has been one of the Prime Minister's main handicaps. He has had to go to bed each night wondering, "How can I put off having a general election? I wish that I did not have that awful decision." That has ceased to be one of his principal advantages. The Government are organising a closing-down sale: "Everything must go. Buy now before the end of today's business."

Mr. Greg Knight (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): Get on with it.

Mr. Beith: The Government Whip, the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) says, "Get on with it." The Government Whip is responsible for the timetable motion which ensures that, if any hon. Member actually wants to debate the details of the Bill, there is no provision to enable him to do so. Coming from the cesspit of the Government Whips office—*[Interruption.]* I am almost quoting the Prime Minister's words from the Dispatch Box yesterday. He said that Mr. Speaker seemed remarkably untainted by the years he spent in that evil institution. That is only the slightest of paraphrases. When hon. Members get into the Whips Office and into the office of the Leader of the House, they spend their lives devising ways of making sure that matters are not discussed and that there is no trouble. It is like a fire brigade equipped with a foam that is blown over the proceedings of Parliament with the sole objective of ensuring that the Government get their business through with as little proper consideration as possible.

We are considering a measure which has been introduced at the end of a Parliament and at the end of a term of office of a Government who chose to get rid of the same measure in the early years of their office. How can they come before the House today and say that we must hurry up and introduce a low tax rate band without any detailed discussion of its disadvantages because there are only a few minutes left in which to do it? They have had 12 years in which to explain why they were wrong in 1980. The Government have had 13 years during which, if a lower rate tax band would have been a great advantage, they could have allowed all the low-paid workers whom they believe will benefit from it to enjoy it—but no, it is simply part of the last minute closing down sale.

During the debate there has been much discussion about the public sector borrowing requirement and the need to resolve matters today in the light of what the future PSBR might be. Here there is a problem for the Labour party. The Government are spending £2 billion on the lower rate band. The Labour party and my party agree that that is not a good way to behave in the present circumstances and that the measure is not an effective way of helping the low paid. The Labour party could spend that £2 billion on education, on investment to kick-start the economy or on the national health service, but it could not spend it on all three. If it did, the effect on any one of them would not be significant.

It is our judgment that education needs an injection of about £2 billion to make up just some of the current deficiencies and shortcomings. It is our view that a great deal more than £2 billion needs to be injected in the way of investment in the economy to bring us quickly out of

[Mr. Beith]

recession. We believe that such an injection could bring us out of recession if it got the construction industry moving, but it is not possible to spend the same £2 billion three times over, so the Labour party is faced with the prospect of borrowing more—not allowing the Conservative Government to choose the borrowing requirement for it —or raising more revenue by increasing taxes, or possibly both.

The Labour party has an added problem. The Finance Bill and the Budget contain provisions for receipts from privatisation, which flow through every year and are part of the Government's assumptions about their borrowing requirement. I reckon that the Government will take about £1 billion per year from selling shares which they now hold in industries that they have already privatised. That is a significant sum of money.

Presumably, the Labour party will not have that money from selling shares. Presumably it would not sell shares in the already privatised industries. In that case, it would have not £2 billion but £1 billion to spend. It would save only £1 billion by not introducing the tax reduction and could use only that sum for spending purposes.

So the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has a great deal to think about between now and Tuesday if he is to find some way of making £1 billion stretch over all the problems that he has correctly identified, and on which I agree with him. The huge gap in the fabric of our society which we have to repair in the ways that I outlined last night, needs to be filled. It will not be filled by the Finance Bill. Those who would most benefit if we attended to creating jobs in the economy and getting out of recession would be the very low paid, who will benefit to only a limited extent from the key feature of the Finance Bill.

If we had time to discuss the lower rate band in detail today, to obtain evidence from the Institute for Fiscal Studies, or to consider the leader in today's *Financial Times*, we would see what an inadequately and ineffectively targeted measure it is. The Finance Bill is fairly pathetic. We could have disposed of it in a couple of hours, without the need for the guillotine motion.

11.3 am

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I shall be brief. There is a procedural point, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), on which we must have an assurance from my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. We must have an assurance that this guillotine motion does not set a precedent. Following the report of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House, there is a strong body of opinion in the House that we should move towards allocation of time for all legislation.

It is fairly unusual—although not an absolute precedent—for a Finance Bill to be guillotined. The Procedure Committee and the Select Committee on Sittings of the House have accepted that the allocation of time for legislation should ensure that all clauses are properly debated. As Chairman of the Procedure Committee, I stand absolutely by that premise. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will endorse that when he replies. This allocation of time motion does not ensure that all clauses will be properly debated.

The House understands—as, I believe even the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed accepts—that there is a desire to finish up the business, ensure that taxes can be collected and get on the hustings. That is a fair excuse and a good reason for the allocation of time motion. However, we must ensure, and I must ask my right hon. Friend to give an undertaking, that this motion will not be taken as a precedent for allocation of time motions in normal circumstances. It may be claimed that any allocation of time motion is not normal. If we are to move towards some allocation of time for all or most legislation at the start, we must ensure that it does not follow the precedent set today.

I congratulate the shadow Leader of the House, who has been almost revolutionary in moving towards reform of the procedures of the House. I am grateful for the support that he has given to the Procedure Committee. Of course, I have thanked my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House on more than one occasion for the excellent way in which he has attempted to ensure that our procedure is more reasonably and properly carried through.

However, it cannot be accepted that an allocation of time motion should form part of the time scale that it allocates to legislation. That is the danger of this motion, if it were copied in any other circumstances. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed made that clear. It is possible that at the end of four hours we would not be able to debate any clause of the Finance Bill. That has not happened because, under the terms of the motion, the opening speeches and most of the other speeches have been allowed to go much wider than the allocation of time and to deal with the whole of the Finance Bill. Procedurally, that is not what an allocation of time motion ought to be about. Therefore, in procedural terms, such motions should not be emulated.

Mr. Beith: It could easily happen that a Government legitimately believe that an Opposition party intend to frustrate the proceedings on a Bill—say, the Finance Bill. The Government could therefore table a timetable motion such as this one. Government Back Benchers who did not want the Bill to be discussed could then deliberately occupy the whole of the time allocated by the timetable motion, thereby preventing discussion on the Bill.

Sir Peter Emery: In theory, that is right; but the opposite case is that so long as the Chair does not call successive Members from one side, the opportunity is given, even with this allocation of time, for Opposition Members to raise any matter on the Finance Bill that they wish. Although in theory what the hon. Gentleman says is true reductio ad absurdum it is not correct in practice.

As it is possible to debate the Finance Bill, I shall spend two minutes on an aspect of the 20 per cent. band which has not been discussed. It is important in my constituency and many parts of the south-west. The 20 per cent. band is normally talked about in relation to low-wage earners. Another section of the community willl benefit considerably from that band—pensioners who have saved all their lives and put by a little money. They paid taxes on that saved money and hope to have a little extra in addition to their pension from their savings after they retire. They often have a decreasing income as a result of the ever-increasing cost of living and they will welcome the 20 per cent. band. It is a direct benefit to some extent to those pensioners who have saved and live on their pension and their savings. It will be of particular benefit to many people in the south-west.

That argument has not been mentioned in the House and it ought to be understood and appreciated. In closing, will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House give us his assurance that this type of allocation of time motion will not be used as a precedent in any move forward associated with the recommendations in the reports of the Select Committees on Procedure and on Sittings of the House?

11.9 am

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) need have no fears. The Government have had their time—13 years—and it is up. That is why they come to the House today as a Government on their uppers—buffetted, battered and bewildered. We can see that by the state that the Financial Secretary is in. They are bewildered by the reception that their Budget has received throughout the land, and especially within the square mile.

I have here a little list which follows something that the hon. Member for Honiton said. The Leader of the House has a fair amount of responsibility for much that is on it, because it is a list of all the Bills that have been truncated by the Government since they took office in 1979 and back to 1945. When one examines the list, one realises that this is only the third time in the history of the House that a Finance Bill has been truncated in this way. We are to be allowed four hours, while in 1968—when the House first truncated a Finance Bill—three days were spent on recommittal, four days on Third Reading and there were 10 sittings in Committee.

In 1975, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) spoke in such a debate—about 17 years ago almost to the day—when four days were allowed for Third Reading. In all those other instances there was an opportunity for the House to consider the substance of the Bill, an opportunity to peruse it and to study it.

I was amused, as were other Opposition Members—and, I fancy, some Conservative Members—at the opening words of the Leader of the House, because he told us that the Budget was a document which improved with the reading. That was the explanation of why it has taken so long to receive wider appreciation. We know that this morning the Government trail three points behind in the polls. We know that the Budget has been poorly received wherever it has been read. If it is a document that improves with study, why are we not being given more time to study it? Surely, if one uses that argument, the more we study it the better the Government will do in the opinion polls and the greater will be their opportunity to win the next general election, or so they believe. It does not make sense to truncate the Bill in this way.

The Leader of the House went on to say that another reason why the Bill should be pushed through in this way is because we had an opportunity to consider it during the two-day debate on the Budget. Anyone who believes that any contribution that we heard from the Treasury benches and the Conservative side of the House assisted that debate in any way, has not heard the speeches that we heard.

We only have to recall the lamentable performance of the Chancellor of the Exchequer last night. His speech consisted of a number of readings from a variety of responses by Tory hacks, posing as industrialists, up and down the land. They were Tory to a man—there was not a woman among them, because no woman reading the Budget would see anything in it for her. His quotations from those Tory hacks were reminiscent of a fading impresario. That was the guise of the Chancellor of the Exchequer last night—a fading impresario, knowing that his production was dead in the water, seeking by selective quotes to talk it up, in the hope that more people would attend the show.

I wish that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had read a little more widely. I wish that he had opened the *Financial Times* the morning after the Budget to read the little item that I have here. I am anxious that the Leader of the House should have the opportunity to see and to study it. Indeed, I intend to give it to him so that he can respond appropriately when summing up. It says simply: "Economists give their ratings". Six exconomists—a broad cross-section of the City, none of whom could be described as "youthful scribblers"—

Mr. Greg Knight: Useless scribblers.

Mr. Boateng: We shall let them know about that. Mr. Bill Martin, a well-known supporter of many of the Government's policies in the past, gives the score "1 out of 10". He said:

> "The budget will not act as a significant stimulus to the economy. The budget deficit is almost certainly out of control."

Mr. Kevin Gardiner of S. G. Warburg Securities gave it "4 out of 10" and said:

> "The chancellor was neither bold nor coherent. It was rather a mismash."

So it goes on, and it does not get any better.

However, one has to be fair, so let us look at one higher mark. Mr. Gavyn Davies of Goldman Sachs gave the Government "6 out of 10", saying:

> "It falls between every conceivable stool. It does not put Labour on the spot and it does not transform the Conservatives' electoral position."

The Budget's contribution to that has been to make them slip further in the polls. Those were the reviews in the City on the following day. Is it any wonder that the Government want to truncate the debate?

I did not hear any response to the valid constitutional argument of the hon. Member for Honiton and the valid constitutional arguments of my hon. Friend the shadow Leader of the House. There has been no response from the Government Benches about the propriety of what they are seeking to do.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover will remember—he was on the Government Benches at the time—the nature of the contribution made by Conservative Members during the debate in March 1975 on the truncation of the Finance Bill. I have read his contribution——

Mr. Skinner: You are not going to read it, are you?

Mr. Boateng: I shall not embarrass my hon. Friend by reading it, out, save to say that it is well worth reading. Conservative Members made a number of contributions —a number are voices from the past. Two former Chancellors spoke during that debate. The right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) was among them, as was

[Mr. Boateng]

his predecessor. They spoke against the use of a guillotine on Finance Bills. They produced a variety of constitutional arguments why it was totally improper and absolutely wrong ever to use such a guillotine. They are figures of the past. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover said, to some extent they can be put to one side, because that is precisely what their party has done to them.

One other person spoke with great force and vigour in that debate against the Government of the day for introducing a guillotine motion in relation to the Finance Bill. Who might that have been? Let me say this: he is a former chairman of the Conservative party.

Mr. Skinner: The right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit).

Mr. Boateng: The right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) is another figure from the past. We can discount him. This person is still hanging around. That is surprising, bearing in mind the muddle and confusion that he has created in every Department of state that he has ever sought. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] My hon. Friends recognise the person, and I suspect that right hon. and hon. Gentlemen will also recognise the person. In those days, that person was going under the guise of the hon. Member for St. Marylebone. Since then, he has been translated into the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker). Yes, I speak of no less a person than he.

The right hon. Gentleman is very much around and will undoubtedly be very much in evidence on the hustings during the next few weeks. I hope that he is very much in evidence, because every time that man shows his face on the hustings or on television, it is another vote for us. The more the Tories put him forward, the better it will be. He should be a member of the A-plus team, because he can only benefit our campaign.

What did the right hon. Gentleman have to say on 4 March 1975 during the allocation of time motion on the Finance Bill? He said:

> "I end very much as I started"——

that is not something that he always does or says in a speech——

> "by regretting the need for guillotine motions in general; but the particular character of this guillotine motion makes it unique. Since the war only one Finance Bill, that in 1968, has been guillotined. I believe that that was a very regrettable precedent because the unique power that we have"——

blah, blah, blah. He went on in the usual vein:

> "It is because we have the right to deny the executive of the day, whether Tory, Liberal or Conservative, Supply before there has been adequate debate or redress of grievance."

Characteristically, the right hon. Gentleman, by talking about "Tory, Liberal or Conservative" omitted altogether the Labour party. Indeed, he was subsequently taken to task by the House for that omission—a characteristic omission, because for him, we on this side of the House have no rights. Those who represent the interests of the people are not to be regarded. It was a Freudian slip.

The right hon. Gentleman continued:

> "If we surrender that right we are surrendering one of the very reasons that have brought us into being as a legislative House. For these reasons I very much oppose this guillotine measure."—[*Official Report*, 4 March 1975; Vol. 887, c. 1331.]

That is the right hon. Member for Mole Valley. We look forward very much to seeing in which Division Lobby he will pass in a few moments' time. Will he adhere to his principles? Will he stand firm and fast? If he does, it will be the first time we see him do anything of the sort. I suspect that he will vote to impose a guillotine on this Bill. In doing so, he will deny the British people redress for their grievances.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Boateng: Not at the moment.

The right hon. Gentleman will deny the homeless, the jobless, mothers of young children who want an increase in child benefit and pensioners the opportunity to have their grievances properly aired in this Chamber today. But we will go out and about on the hustings and do more, much more than truncate the timing of this debate: we will truncate for the foreseeable future the political future of that discredited and redundant Government opposite.

11.23 am

Mr. MacGregor: I thank the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and my hon. Friends the Members for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) and for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) for their kind remarks about me in my role as Leader of the House. I am glad to have this opportunity to thank the hon. Member for Copeland for the courteous and constructive way in which he has made it possible for us to work together on the affairs of the House. We have made considerable progress in several directions, and I pay tribute to him for the part that he has played in that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) asked whether there would be some opportunity to discuss other detailed points of taxation, including the taxation of beach huts. I cannot promise him that beach huts will feature immediately in the next Finance Bill, but when the House returns we shall have the opportunity to have a second Finance Bill which will implement the other areas of the Budget and no doubt my hon. Friend will wish to table his amendment on beach huts then.

My hon. Friend the Member for Honiton raised a procedural point on this allocation of time motion, and the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) made heavy weather of it. My hon. Friend made a fair point. It is fairly obvious to the whole House that this Finance Bill is being considered in rather unusual circumstances. That destroys the whole of the hon. Gentleman's argument when he complained about my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. My right hon. Friend's remarks were made in relation to a large Finance Bill well ahead of a general election, so the position is not comparable.

It was interesting that the hon. Gentleman wanted to continue debating this Finance Bill. I suspect that that is because at the back of his mind he would rather postpone going to the country at this election. He has every reason to do so from his point of view. I hope that that is an appropriate answer to my hon. Friend's question.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The point I wanted to make to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) was that the debate in March 1975 was followed by an election. The Labour party lost its first by-election when it was in government, and virtually every other by-election until 1979. Labour Members should therefore be rather more careful about their approach to finance and taxation.

Mr. MacGregor: As I must be brief, I shall not respond to my hon. Friend's point.

In response to the hon. Gentleman's comments about the reactions to the Budget, I have a whole string of favourable responses from large sections of industry, including the CBI, which I do not have time to repeat but which put it in the right context. Just as the hon. Gentleman's response was a travesty of the general reactions to the Budget, so were the remarks of the hon. Member for Copeland about the economy as a whole.

During the overall period of Conservative government, the United Kingdom economy has grown faster than that of almost every other economy in Europe for most of the 1980s. GDP, investment in manufacturing and productivity have grown faster than in Germany or France in the 1980s. There has been an increase in real take-home pay for a married couple on average earnings with two children. It is up by £78 a week at today's prices. The majority of pensioners have seen an increase in their real living standards of over one third and there has been a heavy concentration of Government resources on less well-off pensioners, including £700 million to the over-80s on income support. We have seen 4 million families buying their home for the first time. There are a third more businesses than there were in 1979. We have seen an increase of more than 1·5 million in the self-employed. A higher proportion of the work force is in employment than in any other European country, except Denmark. Our manufacturing industry has taken a greater share of world trade in each of the past three years.

I have already referred to the massive increase in business investment, capital investment and training. One aspect of that is inward investment. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) in his speech on Wednesday fantasised about the thoughts of Japanese business men and what they say about the economic policies that we have been pursuing. He does not need to fantasise. We see what they think from their reactions in surveys when they have invested here and, above all, in their practical actions and the amount of inward investment that they have made here, accounting for more than half of all Japanese investment into the European Community in the latest year for which figures are available.

Those are the actual reactions of business men to our economic policies. It is that solid record of economic achievement that has led the CBI to say that Britain is now incomparably better placed to met the competitive challenges of the 1990s than it was at the start of the 1980s. This Budget carries that process on.

My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South refered to yesterday's local by-elections, in which we saw a good response. That also shows that the contortions that the Labour party has performed over its tax proposals and spending commitments in recent weeks mean that the people of this country do not trust Labour. They can be sure that the Labour party is the party of high spenders, high taxers, high borrowers and high inflation. That is why I have no doubt what the response will be when we go to the hustings. The Budget will help us in that process.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 321, Noes 149.

Division No. 110] **[11.30 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael

Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Sir Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh

Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir D. *(Calder Vly)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Neil Hamilton.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Huw
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*

Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Ter[illegible]
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Robert Wareing.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall apply to the proceedings on the Finance Bill and the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill:—

Second Reading, Committee, Report and Third Reading: Finance Bill

1.—(1) The proceedings on Second Reading, in Committee and on consideration and Third Reading of the Finance Bill shall be completed at this day's sitting and, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be brought to a conclusion four hours after the commencement of the proceedings on this Order.

(2) Any stage of the Finance Bill may be proceeded with at the conclusion of the preceding stage, notwithstanding the practice of the House as to the interval between stages of a Bill brought in on Ways and Means resolutions.

(3) On completion of Second Reading of the Finance Bill any Question necessary for the House immediately to resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House shall be put forthwith.

(4) On the conclusion of the proceedings in Committee on the Finance Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question and, if he reports the Bill with amendments, the House shall proceed to consider the Bill as amended without any Question being put.

(5) No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which proceedings in Committee or on consideration of the Finance Bill are taken.

(6) Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) shall not apply to this Order.

Lords Amendments: Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill

2. The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments to the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill shall be completed at this day's sitting and, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

3.—(1) This paragraph applies in relation to any proceedings on the Finance Bill which are to be brought to a conclusion at this day's sitting in accordance with paragraph 1.

(2) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed;

(c) the Question on any Amendment moved or Motion made by a Minister of the Crown;

(d) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded.

(3) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (2) shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

4.—(1) This paragraph applies in relation to any proceedings on the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill which are to be brought to a conclusion at this day's sitting in accordance with paragraph 2.

(2) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which have not previously been brought to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment of the Lords Amendment made by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the Lords Amendment or, as the case may be, in the Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) if Mr. Speaker is satisfied that any remaining Lords Amendment imposes a charge upon the public revenue such as is required to be authorised by resolution of the House under Standing Order No. 47 (Certain proceedings relating to public money) and that the charge has not been so authorised, he shall in accordance with Standing Order No. 76(3) (Lords Amendments deemed to be disagreed to) declare he is so satisfied and shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment;

(c) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr. Speaker which have not been disposed of, the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendments; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(d) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to the Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Dilatory Motions

5. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings at this day's sitting on either of the Bills to which this Order applies shall be made except by a Minister of the Crown, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time

6.—(1) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to proceedings at this day's sitting on both of the Bills to which this Order applies.

(2) If the proceedings on the Motion for this Order were interrupted, or the proceedings on the Finance Bill are interrupted, under paragraph (4) of Standing Order No. 11 (Questions of an urgent character which relate to matters of public importance etc.), the time at which proceedings on that Bill would otherwise be brought to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 shall be extended by a period equal to the duration of the interruption.

(3) If the proceedings of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill are interrupted under paragraph (4) of Standing Order No. 11, the time at which proceedings on that Bill would otherwise be brought to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 2 shall be extended by a period equal to the duration of the interruption.

Supplemental orders

7. (1) The proceedings on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced.

(2) If at this day's sitting the House is adjourned, or if this day's sitting is suspended, before the time at which any proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion under this Order, no notice shall be required of a Motion moved at the next sitting by a Minister of the Crown for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

8. Nothing in this Order shall prevent any proceedings to which this Order applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by this Order.

Recommittal

9.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of, recommittal.

(2) No debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit either of the Bills to which this Order applies (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

10. Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill.

11. The Proceedings on any such further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

12. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall——

  (i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

  (ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

  (iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

13.—(1) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

14. In this Order "the proceedings", in relation to the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill includes proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and on the Report of such a Committee.

Finance Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

11.41 am

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. David Mellor): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This short Bill contains those Budget measures that the Government consider it essential to pass into law before Parliament is dissolved and they put the Budget changes implemented on Budget day beyond legal doubt. I shall set out for the House what each of the clauses contain and then say something about the principal point of controversy, the reduction in the rate of income tax to 20p for the first £2,000 of income.

Clauses 1, 2, 3 and 4 confirm changes to excise duties implemented on Budget day. Clause 1 confirms the indexation of duties on alcohol—the rise of 4½ per cent. that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced. Clause 2 confirms the increase in duties on tobacco by about indexation on pipe tobacco and by 10 per cent. on cigarettes and other tobacco products. Clause 3 covers duty on petrol, diesel and other oils and confirms the indexation of duty on petrol and unleaded petrol and the rise in duty on leaded petrol by 7½ per cent. All those changes, as is normal with excise duties, came into force at 6 o'clock on Budget day. In addition, at midnight on Budget day, vehicle excise duties on cars went up to £110; clause 4 confirms that change. It also reduces the duty on small tricycles from £50 to £15—a small but welcome change to the users of those tricycles.

Clause 8, which reduces car tax from 10 to 5 per cent. —we know that that has already had a beneficial effect on the retail sales of motor cars—falls into the same category. So, too, does clause 7, which cuts the rate of VAT serious misdeclaration penalty and default surcharge. The lower rate of serious misdeclaration penalty has effect from Budget day. The lower maximum for default surcharge has effect from 1 April because this penalty is linked to monthly accounting periods.

The House gave provisional statutory effect to these changes on Budget day, but, under the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968, they must be confirmed by a Finance Bill before Parliament is dissolved. If not, Customs and Excise would be obliged to repay the extra tax that it had collected.

Clause 5 concerns another excise duty, betting duty. The reduction from 8 to 7 per cent. will have effect from 1 April, which is a convenient date for bookmakers who pay tax monthly.

Clause 6 deals with monthly payments on account for the largest VAT traders. I should perhaps say a word or two of further detail about that. I am sure that the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), having recovered from his exertions earlier this morning, is interested in this.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): We are waiting for a joke.

Mr. Mellor: If the hon. Gentleman is looking for a joke, I will show him a mirror. That is just to show that I am awake and not entirely reliant on my brief.

Last autumn, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced that, with the completion of the single market, some 90,000 businesses which bring goods and services into the United Kingdom from the rest of the EC would benefit from changes to VAT accounting procedures, but the reintroduction of the system known as postponed accounting carries a once-off cash-flow cost. So as not to increase the public sector borrowing requirement in 1992-93, my right hon. Friend announced that the largest VAT payers would be required both to account for and pay VAT monthly from the autumn of 1992.

A number of companies have suggested that the requirement to make monthly returns as well as monthly payments imposes a needless burden, so my right hon. Friend the Chancellor acknowledged in the Budget that there was something in this point and agreed to drop the requirement to make monthly returns. Therefore, companies will now be asked only to make monthly payments on account. In the meantime, some companies have raised questions, as they are fully entitled to do, about the Government's powers in this area and have instituted proceedings for judicial review. With some six months to go until monthly payments are to be introduced, it is important to end uncertainty. Businesses require a clear basis on which to plan and that is provided for in clause 6, which puts beyond doubt the Government's powers to require some traders to make monthly payments on account.

The two remaining substantive clauses deal with income tax. Income tax must be renewed each year and, if that is not done, no income tax can be collected. The tax has to be renewed by 5 May every year. There would not be time to be sure of doing this after the election, so clause 10 reimposes income tax for 1992-93. Nearly 25 million people pay income tax and most never see an income tax return. They pay all their tax through PAYE and each year the Budget requires the Inland Revenue and employers to undertake a major recoding exercise for everyone on PAYE.

If the Government had renewed income tax before the election and done nothing else, all the income tax allowances and the basic rate limit would have been raised under the statutory indexation provisions. The Revenue would have had to undertake one recoding exercise to implement those changes and a second after the election to implement any changes contained in the second post-election Finance Bill which would be necessary. That would have been wasteful for the Inland Revenue and employers and confusing for taxpayers. That is why the Government have concluded that it is right to ask Parliament to confirm all the major income tax changes in the Budget and that is why clause 9 provides for the introduction of a lower rate of income tax, chargeable on the first £2,000 of taxable income. It also gives us a chance to establish a serious difference of view on this matter between the Conservative party and Opposition parties.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): In discussing the effect on the Inland Revenue, will the Chief Secretary confirm or qualify the report in the *Financial Times* this morning that the Inland Revenue will need 800 additional staff to deal with all the pensioners who, in order to obtain the lower rate band for their savings, will have to put in a claim for the difference between the standard rate and the new lower rate? Is the figure of 800 initial jobs in the Inland Revenue correct or will it be a lower figure? If so, can the right hon. and learned Gentleman say what it will be?

Mr. Mellor: The figure is not correct. I do not have the exact figure, but it will be a great deal lower.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): It is astonishing that the Chief Secretary does not know that figure, as the additional staff required is one of the strongest arguments against the proposal for a lower rate band. I am in favour of lower rate bands, but I accept that that costs a considerable amount in payments for additional staff. The number of civil servants in the Inland Revenue has been reduced. I do not know how they will cope unless there is a large increase in numbers to deal with the large number of inquiries from those who have paid tax at 25 per cent. on dividends, interest or whatever. Even with quite small sums, they will want to reclaim the difference between the 25 per cent. and the new 20 per cent. band. Inland Revenue officials could be dealing with sums as small as £5, £10 or £20, which are out of line with the amount of time that such claims will take to process.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that the Inland Revenue anticipates a need for up to 300 additional staff in the first year and possibly more in subsequent years, depending on the take-up rate. The right hon. Gentleman's intervention makes clear the Labour party's extraordinary intellectual contortions. On the one hand, he says that he favours a reduction in the tax rate, but, on the other, he made a lengthy intervention putting the case against that. The fact that he is here shows that he is willing, ready and able to vote against the proposal. I find his position unconvincing. Indeed, my respect for him would be enhanced if I thought that he also found that unconvincing. I am sure that he does in his innermost thoughts, but I leave it to him.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Was not the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) Financial Secretary to the Treasury when the Labour Government reduced the rate of income tax? He knows that the Inland Revenue can cope with that. Is not the real point the fact that, whereas under his Labour Government the standard rate was 30p and the reduced rate 25p, now the standard rate is 25p and the reduced rate 20p?

Mr. Mellor: As I have reminded the House before, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne was a Treasury Minister throughout the chaos and confusion of Labour's last period in office.

As well as renewing tax, clause 10 sets the lower rate at 20 per cent. and overrides indexation for the basic rate limit and the married couple's allowance for those under 65. The other allowances—personal and age-related allowances—are indexed under the statutory provisions.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I wish to raise a matter of some urgency as Easter is the traditional time for weddings. When double taxation relief was abolished on 31 August 1988, the consequence was that if a couple living together subsequently decided to marry, the tax cost to one or other of them on a £30,000 mortgage would be about £750. Does the Chief Secretary think that the Bill should include a minor change to enable such people to be married without being penalised? There is currently an adverse tax consequence in legitimising one's children.

Mr. Mellor: I am not aware that couples are penalised in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggests. However, he makes a perfectly fair point and I shall have it investigated. I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will be able to deal with it when he replies to the debate.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): I note that the Bill includes no reference to the important and progressive changes in inheritance tax for independent family businesses, which were proposed by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. His proposal was well received throughout the small business community. It is important that businesses are passed down to the next generation so that they can grow under that and subsequent generations. The current levels of taxation, although better than previously, are still quite heavy. What is happening with that proposal? Has my right hon. and learned Friend any idea of the Opposition's views? The small business community will want to know Labour's thinking. Will it support the Government's important proposals?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend speaks with authority on these matters and I well understand his point. After the election, we will have to introduce another Finance Bill with at least 75 pages dealing with a range of issues, including the important one mentioned by my hon. Friend. On the question of what the Opposition might think—or what their view is this morning, because it changes so often—I am sure that the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) will be only too happy to deal with that in her speech.

Clause 10 also sets the limit on mortgage interest relief at £30,000. The limit must be set each year, but it is no increase on what has prevailed for some time.

I want to say a few words about the principal matter of controversy, which is the 20p tax band. There has been an astonishing volte face by the Labour party on that matter. As recently as 25 February, the shadow Chancellor, the right hon. and learned Gentleman for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), was reported as saying that we should have a lower starting rate because that would be fairer to people at the bottom. Within a matter of a few days, he and his party have been prepared to eat their words and vote against the proposal—as they have already done once. So that people are not mistaken, they are poised to do so again. They are ready to sacrifice the least well-off on the altar of a false and superficial commitment to fiscal probity.

During our debates on the Budget, the Opposition have failed to tell us why they are taking that view. No doubt, one reason is that they are probably too busy thinking up new taxes to levy. They have failed to give a proper account of why they are behaving in that way. Instead, an alleged commitment to and concern about the public sector borrowing requirement has emerged. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), who served in the Treasury for all those years, can confirm that under the last Labour Government there was never a time when there was not a PSBR. If the Labour party believes that there should not be tax cuts while there is a PSBR, we can be absolutely sure that there will never be a tax reduction under a Labour Government. The only issue is by how much taxes will rise.

Mr. Boateng: We never said that.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman should be cautious, because that is certainly what the Opposition have said. Rather like some of the clients that the hon. Gentleman used to defend in his days in court, they want to change their story before they give evidence the next time. We shall be only too interested to hear today's story.

Mr. Boateng: I do not——

Mr. Mellor: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would allow me the courtesy of giving way to him before he speaks——

Mr. Boateng *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman should resume his seat. If he asks me nicely, I will give way.

Mr. Boateng: I need no lessons from that colossus of the petty sessions on how to defend an indefensible case. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has done that every single day of this Parliament's life.

Mr. Mellor: That was not much of a political intervention, but it was a fine bid for the Sir Donald Wolfit acting award.

In so far as the Labour party has a case on this issue, its entire basis is that the PSBR should not be increased to reduce taxation. If that is not Labour's argument, it is hard to see what shadow of an argument it has. Happily, we will hear the Opposition's view in due course, but it is already clear that under the last Labour Government the PSBR was higher on average than it has ever been under this Government, and it only temporarily fell to 3½ per cent. in 1977-78 following International Monetary Fund intervention.

In an astonishing move that destroyed whatever claim the Opposition make to being qualified to pass judgment on such matters, the PSBR was then permitted—notwithstanding that the economic cycle was moving upwards, at a time when a prudent Government would have put further pressure on the PSBR to bring it down into balance, as we succeeded in doing in the 1980s—to increase from 3½ to 5¼ per cent. once the IMF's back was turned, so that the Labour Government could increase public expenditure and finance substantial tax cuts. There was a 2p cut in income tax and reductions in value added tax.

The shadow Chancellor was a member of that Labour Cabinet and was perfectly happy with that action, whereas the Leader of the Opposition—then a Back Bencher—was ranting, in opposition to his own Government, about the reckless nature of the proposals that they were carrying into effect. We should not hear too much more about fiscal probity from Labour Members.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that if, by some strange development, Labour's concern about the PSBR were to be genuine and if the Liberal Democrats were also serious about it—I believe that their 1p on income tax is hypothecated to education—does not that cast considerable doubt on Labour and Liberal Democrat pledges in respect of pensions, child benefit and various other benefits? Would both parties keep faith with the electorate?

Mr. Mellor: Labour needs to answer several questions, and the fact that it chose not to produce its shadow Budget until after Parliament has been dissolved—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) is here again with that laugh of his, which he must practise in the bathroom every morning. It is about as fake as the canned laughter that one must endure on those awful television comedy shows. The funny thing is not that I have misspoken but that the Opposition think that it is funny that we appreciate that even when Labour did not know that Parliament was to be dissolved, it nevertheless timed the publication of its shadow Budget for the day after the end of the Budget debate. What is the point of Parliament? The Opposition are always complaining that Ministers make announcements before bringing them to the House.

The Opposition did that in the belief that their Budget would escape scrutiny. As always, they were over-optimistic. They are right only to be properly pessimistic about the ability of their proposals to withstand scrutiny. It is a reflection of the chaos and confusion into which Labour has sunk that it feels compelled to produce a shadow Budget at all. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said earlier——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I ask the Serjeant at Arms to investigate a report which I have just received of a burning smell that seems to be coming from one of the Government Benches. Meanwhile, the Chief Secretary may continue.

Mr. Mellor: I will continue even as the flames lick around my ankles, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I shall direct a little cold air on them, in the hope that they will die down. I have been interrupted by many things in the House, but never before by an outbreak of fire. That is going a bit far. Obviously there are no lengths to which Opposition Members will not go to prevent democracy working properly.

Mr. Boateng: The burning started on the Government Benches.

Mr. Mellor: We shall find out whoever was responsible. My only fear is that you are about to be asphyxiated, Madam Deputy Speaker.

In September, the hon. Member for Copeland said that Labour would not produce a shadow Budget, but it has done so—not because Labour feels any need to be more candid with the electorate but because Labour has been driven to it by the number of holes punched in its proposals over the past eight weeks.

My hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) asked about the PSBR. Among the muddles that Labour needs to clear up—*[Interruption.]* I wish that I could have the attention of Labour Members for a moment. Are they worried that they will get burnt to death?

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I was just discussing my insurance policy.

Mr. Mellor: I shall keep a sepulchral silence on that.

Mr. Brown: For once.

Mr. Mellor: Indeed. It would be helpful if the hon. Member for Derby, South will clarify Labour's view on the PSBR when she addresses the House. The PSBR has reached its present level because of a fall in receipts occasioned by the present economic downturn and by necessary public expenditure commitments which the Government feel it is their duty to sustain over the cycle but which the Opposition—erroneously—have always condemned as derisory.

The shadow Chancellor admitted in his article in *The Mail on Sunday* two weeks ago that the PSBR would rise under Labour—but it would be for virtuous spending. Labour would take a convenient chunk of expenditure, dub it virtuous and say that it would then be all right to borrow for that purpose. However, on "Newsnight" this week, the hon. Member for Derby, South said that Labour had no plans to increase the PSBR. A lot turns on that —all the commitments that Labour has made to interest groups throughout the country to spend more money on this, that and the other. They will be rendered nugatory if Labour stick with the PSBR as it now is, unless the party is prepared to increase taxes.

We know that Labour is prepared to increase taxes to a significant degree, but the question remains: how significant—or are Opposition spokesmen merely hoping to con the electorate into voting for Labour, knowing full well that Labour does not have the slightest intention of undertaking any of the expenditure that it has pledged? That is a real case for the Labour party to answer. The hon. Member for Brent, South should do what he did when he practised law—get a barrister to answer. We look forward to hearing the shadow Chancellor give his account.

Why has Labour decided to oppose the 20p tax band? It stems from an urgent and overwhelming desire to spend, which we know about, but also from Labour's desire to hide a number of its other spending pledges behind the notional availability of revenue—if Labour really is prepared to penalise those whose taxable incomes begin as low as £3,500 per year, by increasing their marginal rate of tax by 25 per cent.—so that it will then be able to peg on to that a large number of public spending commitments. They include, most ludicrous of all, the cost of implementing Labour's minimum wage proposals, which are meant to benefit the very people from whom Labour would raise taxes to pay for them.

I am sure that all the graduates on the Labour Benches of the Robert Maxwell school of creative accounting will be only too ready to ensure that money is spent not once, not twice, but many more times. I believe that Thames area water is consumed seven times before it reaches us here. Similarly, Labour's taxes will be spent time and time again in the election campaign, as promise is overlaid by promise.

Labour's original proposal was to soak the rich. Its definition of rich began with a person having an income of £20,400—which includes police sergeants, deputy head teachers and middle management, and that is pretty well the average wage for people working in my constituency and those of my hon. Friends the Members for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) and for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) and others in the south.

The shadow Chancellor has been criticised over that policy and I suspect that one of the reasons for his shadow Budget is to give him the opportunity to respond to criticisms of Labour's proposed national insurance hike and 50 per cent. rate. I wonder whether the Labour party is proposing to move away from some of those policies. A climbdown would involve it in soaking the poor to save the rich. Is that why the Labour party requires money from those on £3,500, £4,000, £5,000 or £6,000 a year? Does it want to have a few more resources to allow it to cover its tracks on national insurance contributions or the 50 per cent. taxation proposal? That demonstrates the ludicrous situation into which it has put itself.

The Labour party's attitude to what people might do with the extra money that they will have in their pockets as a result of the change in taxation is an interesting one. What is its attitude to our belief that people have a right

[Mr. Mellor]

to keep more of their money? The Leader of the Opposition talked about borrowing for a day at the races, as if putting more money into the pockets of those who are at the bottom of the income scale is giving them money for a day at the races. I was enchanted. The more that we see of the right hon. Gentleman during the election, the better.

When I returned home last night I wished quietly as a consenting adult to turn on BBC2 to get my nightly dose of Jeremy Paxman. It is something that I cannot go to bed without. I found that "Newsnight" had disinterred the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey). I hope that the right hon. Gentleman appears a great deal during the election, too. No one more typifies the abject failure of the Labour Government than he. He was asked about the 20p rate and he said, from the position of the quite comfortable old age that I dare say he is now enjoying, that he was against it because

"it would be spent on imports."

He then said that it might not be spent at all.

What do the Opposition think that they will gain by making these offensive and patronising remarks about ordinary people making normal spending decisions? Those people are entitled to have a little more money in their pockets. If they work hard, they are entitled to earn money and to spend it in ways that they choose to enhance their lives. They are not to be patronised by failed retired Labour politicians because they might choose to buy a radio made somewhere other than in the United Kingdom rather than, according to the Labour party, pursuing some allegedly socially more desirable objective. It reminds me of the old attitude, "Don't give them a bath because they will put coal in it." It seems that the Labour party is saying, "Don't let people keep money in their pocket because they might do something with it that we do not approve of." That is astonishing. It is the attitude of an aristocratic elite. The Labour party is the "people's party". Labour Members are the people whose sole purpose in this place is, allegedly, to represent the interests of the very people whose faces they propose to grind down by increasing the marginal rate of taxation by 25 per cent.

I support the tax changes because they represent a further step on a road that has brought about so many benefits to our country in the past decade or longer. That can be summed up with one statistic; the average family, even when we knock out the effect of the ravages of inflation, is £70 a week better off—it has £70 more spending power in its pockets—than it was in 1979. We know that that same family's living standards barely grew between 1974 and 1979. Money wages may have increased by 100 per cent., but the tide of rising prices meant that there was no real benefit at the end.

What has this meant in terms of the enlargement of the lives of those in all sections of our community? I am thinking about the way in which wealth has been created throughout society. There are now 10 million shareholders, 65 per cent. of whom are not in the professional and managerial classes. That is a real revolution in popular capitalism. Nearly 70 per cent. of the public are now home-owners. In this decade 4 million families have become home owners. This has come about because of the Conservative party's instinctive understanding of the basic beliefs of the British people. How many people go to the surgeries of my hon. Friends and say, "My great ambition for me and my children is to be a tenant"? If we had not rescued council tenants from perpetual tenanthood under the Labour party, that would have been their prospect.

We know that 76 per cent. of homes have central heating, that 90 per cent. have colour televisions and that two thirds, from a standing start in 1979, when the technology was barely known, have videos. The number of people taking foreign holidays has doubled since——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mellor: I shall carry on for a while.

The number of people taking foreign holidays has doubled since 1981. That is the revolution in which my right hon. and hon. Friends and I will have so much confidence during the next three weeks. Whatever the ups and downs of the economic cycle, people realise that we have managed to improve the wealth and prosperity of the nation. We have done so by running a successful and dynamic economy. That has been achieved partly by—*[Interruption.]* I have now emptied the Strangers Gallery. It is one of those days when I should have stayed in bed. I was sorely tempted to do so. Perhaps it would have been the best decision. Usually it is necessary for the doors of the Strangers Gallery to be locked when I am speaking.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have been told by the Serjeant at Arms that fumes in the area of the Strangers Gallery are causing discomfort and that the Gallery has been evacuated for the time being.

Mr. Mellor: Would that that opportunity had been offered to us on the Floor of the House. The least that I can do at this stage is to give way to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

Mr. Winnick: A short time ago, the Minister said that no one tells his Member that he wishes to be a tenant. Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman's surgeries are different from mine and those of my right hon. and hon. Friends. In most instances, people come to see us because they have housing problems. At my surgeries and in correspondence, 70 per cent. of the matters with which I am asked to deal are housing problems. The people who come to see me cannot afford to buy. They would be unable to do so even if interest rates were lower. They are desperate for somewhere to live. These are single people and families with one child or even two children. They have to wait years because since 1979 there has been a sharp decline in the number of council dwellings. If it is right to sell council dwellings—we are not in dispute about that—why should not those dwellings be replaced so that the people whom I have been describing are not punished and can be housed?

Mr. Mellor: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman made that point. He has allowed me to make it clear that no one comes to my advice centre—I suspect that this is true of his—saying that his ambition is to be a tenant. I accept entirely, however, that there are people who will be tenants. I accept also that there is a need for tenanted accommodation. There is an argument about how that should be produced.

The conversion of the hon. Gentleman to accepting the selling of council houses would not have occurred, I think, if it had not been for the success of the Government's policy. He would certainly not have thought of the idea.

The atmosphere in the Chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker, is pretty awful. I am finding the fumes irritating. I know that I should be the last one to want to resume my seat, but——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. On that basis, I shall suspend the sitting for 10 minutes.

12.18 pm

Sitting suspended.

12.28 pm

On resuming——

Mr. Mellor: As I was saying, Madam Deputy Speaker, the tremendous increase in prosperity throughout society during the past 13 years was due in part to the fruits of a successful, dynamic economy during the 1980s. It was also due to the Government's constant attention to reductions in the direct rate of tax: 3p off in the first Parliament, 3p off in the second Parliament and 2p off plus the 20 per cent. band in the third Parliament. If we go back to that typical family, which is £70 a week better off, more than £20 a week of that is accounted for by the tax that it no longer has to pay but which it would have had to pay if the rates of taxation that prevailed under the Labour party had been continued.

The debate provides us with the chance to make clear a great difference between ourselves and the Opposition. They proceed under a fundamentally false assumption. Taxation is a takeaway, and a reluctance to tax is not a giveaway or a bribe. We cannot emphasise that point too much.

The Opposition say that public services are underfunded, but, in deference to the time problems, I shall not deal with that issue in detail. I merely point out, as I did during the Budget debate, that the health service and all other substantial public services have gained enormously from increased public expenditure, the better direction of that expenditure and the more effective management that has been possible under the Government.

On health, we know that the Labour party would have to spend £1 billion extra on the minimum wage and on getting rid of charges and competitive tendering before a penny could be spent on patient care. That, of course, explodes the myth that the Labour party would spend wisely the money that it would get back out of tax cuts.

I had a good illustration of that this morning as I was coming from my home in Putney through the borough of Lambeth to Westminster. Wandsworth has a nil community charge under Conservative-controlled council. Lambeth has a community charge of £449.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Pillock.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman, with charm, says, "Pillock" but the pillocks are the members of Lambeth council, not us. I wonder when he will be prepared to do something about it. Is he embarrassed by the fact that Lambeth has a community charge of £449? He is now tight lipped—not even the word "pillock" escapes his poetic lips. If he is not embarrassed, he should be, because I have the 1992-93 figures of Government assistance per head to those two London boroughs. Wandsworth, which has a nil community charge, gets £1,424 per head from the Government. Lambeth, with a community charge of £449, gets £1,628 per head from the Government.

We know that far from spending wisely the money that it is not prepared to let the public keep, Labour will scatter it around as it is scattered in Lambeth, Haringey, Hackney and various other boroughs. People said that the pathetic fallacy was believing that animals think like human beings. The truly pathetic fallacy is that people could believe that the Labour party would spend more wisely than they could spend it themselves.

To sum up, we have established the real difference between the parties. The Labour party began by believing that the rich began at £20,400. No one below that, it said, was to be inconvenienced by its tax proposals. We now learn that a single wage earner is rich, starting at £3,500 a year. That is the point at which the Labour party proposes to increase the marginal rate of tax by 25 per cent. It is a rake's progress as the Labour party moves from Robin Hood to Robbin' Everybody.

Mr. Dobson: That is very original.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman has come alive again, like something out of the Hammer films that used to delight me as a child. Truth, not originality, is the name of the game. Originality is what the hon. Gentleman makes up. In any event—and certainly in political terms—it is not a compliment. The hon. Gentleman is a past master at it. He owes his facts to his imagination and his jokes to his memory.

If the Labour party is prepared to increase the marginal rate for the least well-off, what does that tell us about what it might be prepared to do about the 25 per cent. rate? After all, Labour opposed the reduction from 33p to 25p every step of the way. We must now ask ourselves, what other tax plans is Labour concealing up its sleeve to satisfy the restless desire of each and every member of the Labour Front Bench to spend.

Mr. Tim Smith *rose——*

Mr. Mellor: I am just about to finish.

I welcome the opportunity for the Labour party to confirm its complete addiction to the taxation of each and every person in the community. No one is safe, and we shall prove that this afternoon.

12.34 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): We can be under no illusion today that those of us who have been fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are speaking for the benefit of anyone except those present in the Chamber, for *Hansard* and for posterity. None of us will nurture any illusions about what the media will report of today's debate.

Nevertheless, in the Finance Bill, the Conservative party is offering a "buy now, pay later" Budget for a "buy now, pay later" election. It shows that one cannot teach an old Government new tricks. It is, after all, the same stunt that they pulled in 1983, when they cut taxes a month before the election and spending a month after. It is the same stunt that they pulled in 1987, when they cut taxes before the election and the spending promised at election time never materialised.

As a Second Reading of a Finance Bill, this must be one of the oddest in history—odd even before we had the fire, and heaven only knows why that happened. Four hours for all the stages of a Finance Bill from start to finish—including a debate on the guillotine motion—is certainly a

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

most extraordinary precedent, even for this Government. It is an extraordinary precedent and an extraordinary procedure, due not to accident or misfortune but to the sheer incompetence and mismanagement of the Government, who cannot get right even the timing of the election.

On Second Reading, the House weighs legislation, considers the circumstances with which it is designed to deal and its fitness for the purpose. One only has to consider this cursory Bill to realise that the circumstances with which it is designed to deal are the problems that the Government face in getting from here to 9 April. It is visibly designed to deal not with the country's circumstances but with the narrow purposes of the Conservative party.

In many ways, the Bill characterises the Government's approach. The Secretary of State for Employment said that this Budget would be a Budget for jobs. It is not. The Chancellor said that it was a Budget for recovery. It is not. The Bill contains some measures that will be of help to business, and we welcome them, but the problems with which they are designed to deal were created by the Government. Some of the measures, such as those for car tax, will alleviate the strains of the recession that the Government have caused. However, it is only under this Government that the overall burden of taxation on cars and on people has become so high that the measure is needed. The weight of the car tax plus the value added tax that they have more than doubled in their 13 years in office have made taxes on cars so high.

The Bill contains other measures, such as the easing of the business rate. The Government introduced the business rate, ignored the cries of small business and then, miraculously, on election eve they listen at last. Then they expect credit for easing problems that they, and they alone, created.

There are no other measures of any weight to promote recovery. Why? The answer can be found in the Red Book. Yet again, the Government tell us that recovery has already begun and will accelerate from the end of this month. We certainly hope that they are right, but, of course, that is what they told us last March, last April, last May, last June, last July, last August, last September, last October, last November, last December, last January and last February.

What is holding up the recovery? The Government are. It is held up by the uncertainty of waiting and waiting while they have tried and failed to find a favourable time to go to the country, by the damage caused by their prolonged use of high interest rates to squeeze out inflation which they fuelled for so long, and by the fear of the unemployment that they have fostered and to which they remain supremely indifferent.

In their private briefings, Conservative Members and Ministers still tell the press, "Unemployment didn't lose us the election in 1983 or 1987, and it won't lose us the election this time," as if that were all that mattered. Of course it is all that matters—to them. Never mind the costs to the country directly or indirectly—such as the £8,000 per person unemployed. Never mind the devastation to millions of individuals and millions of families. There is nothing in the Bill that begins to tackle the problems of unemployment, nothing to stimulate the construction industry and nothing to deal with skill shortages, which are damaging in themselves as well as damaging to the prospects for inflation. There is nothing to build for the longer term and nothing directly even for families with children—although there is what I can describe only as a sop for some pensioners.

Seventy-five per cent. of pensioners do not pay income tax—they do not have big enough pensions—so they cannot benefit from the lower band. The Government have given an increase in a means-tested benefit, but they must know that the poorest pensioners of all are the million or so who will not claim means-tested benefits because they were raised in a generation which regards such benefits as charity, so they live below the poverty line. The Budget does nothing for them.

The main measure in the Budget—as the Chief Secretary implied at the end of his speech, it is the only measure that the Government care about—is the tax cut, which, we are told, has been carefully targeted. Ministers, including the Prime Minister, who sat smirking on the Front Bench as the Chancellor revealed the mechanism of the tax cut, are so thrilled with their own cleverness that they have given the game away. The tax cut is carefully targeted not on the poor, but, as Ministers told Lobby journalists, on trying to embarrass the Labour party. Well, it does not.

What a revealing glimpse those comments give us into the minds of the men who govern us. Here we are in the depths of recession, with, high unemployment, negative growth—with, at best, the prospect of a return to low growth—record bankruptcies and record home repossessions. What weighs on Ministers' minds? What keeps them awake at night? They ask themselves not, "What can we do to solve the problems of the country?" but, "How can we dish our opponents?" Where is the vision? Where is the foresight? Where, even, is the responsibility? Plainly, those qualities are not to be found in the Cabinet. And the Government have the gall to say that we are not fit to govern.

The Government have had 13 years of unbroken and secure rule. They have had more than £100 billion from the North sea, where we made the investment and they have reaped the returns. They have made billions of pounds from selling the family silver. Three times they have doubled inflation between elections. Three times they have raised interest rates between elections. This is the third time that they have cut taxes before an election, and three times they have broken their promises after elections.

Mr. Tim Smith: The hon. Lady says that the Government have no vision, yet, for a long time now, the Government have been committed to achieving a 20 per cent. basic rate of income tax. What does the hon. Lady think would be the best way of doing that—to cut the standard rate or to introduce a lower band for low-paid workers?

Mrs. Beckett: I am so glad that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman. His intervention speaks for itself. I mention vision, and what comes into his mind is money.

The Bill represents the way in which the Government will end—not with a bang but with a whimper of a Finance Bill. That whimper is not loud enough to drown the cries from outside the Chamber, such as the cries of youngsters with no job, no home, no security, no prospects and no hope. There are the cries of the pensioners who are slipping further and further behind the standard of living of people in work, and the cries of the sick, who cannot make themselves heard above the racket of Ministers boasting about their record on the health service. There are the cries of the victims of crime, which is at record levels—those are the people who have been exposed to the full consequences of the creed that the Conservatives have preached for 13 years—"Look after yourself, and the devil take the hindmost."

One of the few things that the Chief Secretary said with which I could agree is that the Bill throws into relief the nature of the choice before the British people. The Government say, "We shall take less from you in taxation, and that will leave you free to make your own choices." They mean choices such as what kind of health care to buy, and how much, and what kind of education to buy, and how much—choices such as how much pension to buy, and what kind of transport to use. "Make your own choices," the Government say to the people of this country, "because you are on your own."

For most people, even for those in work, those are choices which they cannot exercise on their own. In the days before we contributed to fund a national health service, a national education service and nationally guaranteed pensions—the good old days when income tax was only a few pence in the pound; the days to which Conservative Members tell us that it is their vision to return us—harsh experience taught our forebears—at least, the Opposition's forebears—the limits of the freedom that today's Conservative party extols.

Our forebears found that to survive, and certainly to prosper, they had to work together. They set up their own schemes to which each contributed a little when he or she could, so as to help one another when that was needed. That worked, so we, as a country, made it the basis of so much that people take for granted today, such as the health service, the education service and so on.

The tax system is the structure for that pooling of resources. We neither want nor propose a harsh tax system. We want a tax system that is fair and seeks, as nearly as possible, to treat people in the same circumstances in the same way. We shall make proposals and lay them before the country in the next few days, and we want everyone to see them. The structure of taxes that we propose will be designed not to fuel the politics of envy, but to fund the ethics of community.

This is not the right Finance Bill for this time. It is time for a different Finance Bill; it is time for a Labour Government.

12.47 pm

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): The speech of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) was both depressing and patronising. That might not be so exceptional in itself, were it not intended to perpetrate yet another fraud on the British taxpayer and on the electorate. The hon. Lady sought to criticise a wholly welcome measure which reduces taxes, but she did not spell out her alternative. She sold the pass by not delivering the secret Labour Budget which is apparently to be declared after Parliament has prorogued. What sort of choice has anyone listening to the debate here or outside the House if we are not to be privy to Labour's formula for success? What are the Labour party's credentials for criticising the Government?

I believe that the Budget was a winning Budget for taxpayers and for business, and that the Finance Bill—the provisions of which are wholly welcome—should have been nodded through the House. I was dismayed and shocked that the Labour party and other Opposition parties could find fault with and question a Bill which will bring relief to businesses and individuals throughout the country. I certainly welcome the Bill wholeheartedly, as I welcome the whole strategy underlying my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Budget. I should tell my right hon. and hon. Friends the Treasury Ministers that I especially welcome the intention behind the Bill—to ensure that central to our economic policy is a determination to reduce the rate of inflation and keep it low.

I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be interested to know that this week, for the first time in nearly 30 years, the latest figures announced show that our rate of inflation is lower than that of Germany. Britain is now leading the way in the European Community with policies determined to pursue sound currency, low inflation and low interest rates. Those who seek to pursue policies of higher taxation, of redistribution towards the centre and of the devaluation of currency will find that the inevitable consequence will be higher interest rates borne by individuals, by mortgage payers and by businesses throughout the land. Only by making our centrepiece a determination to restore sound money and to keep down the rate of inflation can we regenerate sustainable growth, the prosperity that it brings and the jobs that will be derived from it.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): I wish that the hon. Gentleman had not repeated the slur on Germany. Does he not find it remarkable that the German economy is as strong as ours despite having taken on a decrepit country and welded it into its own economy, while this Government have made our economy into a decrepit economy?

Mr. Nelson: The new Germany may be held back in its progress by the socialist domination of part of it in the past. I was not knocking Germany—my point was that we now have a lower inflation rate than Germany has, and people should know that because it is very good news. All that we heard from the hon. Member for Derby, South was the carping, the criticism, the self-effacement and the deprecation for which the Labour party has made its name and which is so injurious to public and international confidence.

I especially welcome the introduction of the 20 per cent. band. I hope that, even in the short time left, we shall have an opportunity to vote on the clause which implements it. The proposal will be the litmus test for the public to see where the Labour party really stands. The logic of Labour's position must be to vote against the proposal. Labour will then have to go to the public and argue that the return of a Labour Government would not result in a significant increase in taxation. That would perpetrate yet another fraud on the public and it is right that we should decry it.

The Bill follows a Budget which brought one measure of relief on which I especially congratulate the Government. Those of us who represent constituencies in the south of England, where the recession has been hard and deep, are conscious of the impact of the recession on the cash flow of many businesses, especially small

[Mr. Nelson]

businesses. Even with the transitional arrangements, the impact was especially marked when the uniform business rate was introduced.

With Conservative colleagues in Kent, Hampshire, East Sussex and West Sussex, I wrote to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, went to see him and approached the Prime Minister and others. We urged the case for freezing the transitional element of the UBR so that an additional burden was not placed on such businesses in the forthcoming year. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has announced such a measure, which is wholly welcome in my constituency and elsewhere and shows yet again that the Government listen to people. The Government respond to representations made to them. The Government are not unbending. The Conservative party heeds the voices of those who express concern and it adjusts its policies. That worked for my constituents and the representations were listened to. I thank and congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

I should appreciate an answer from my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary on one narrow point. The relief brought with the reduction in the car tax will be of immeasurable help to the car industry, to employment and to the national economy. However, one aspect has aroused concern among many dealers who have already bought cars in stock and among many finance houses that have bought cars for sale through dealerships. They have had to pay the full rate of car tax, although people who buy those cars after the Budget date will expect to pay only the 5 per cent. rather than the 10 per cent. rate of car tax. With the large stock of cars currently held by dealers and by leasing and finance houses, there will be some perverse results if there is not a change. Just as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor was good enough to listen to the reasonable concerns expressed by business about the UBR, I hope that in the limited time that, rightly, we have to debate the matter, some further relief can be announced or some clarification given about the car tax on vehicles that have not yet been sold to buyers but are held in stock by finance houses and dealers. If the Government do that, it would help to get the economy moving even faster than the Budget and the Bill will.

The Bill is a winning Bill for my constituents, for businesses in my area and for the economy as a whole. It follows the Conservative policies that we have set from the beginning of this Parliament. It is wholly prudent, it reduces taxation and it draws out the fundamental differences and the choice for the electorate at the election. The Bill is worth supporting and it goes to the heart of what we in the Conservative party stand for.

12.55 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) advanced the astonishing proposition that the Bill should go through on the nod without any debate. He then proceeded to give two clear reasons why it should not. First, he made a perfectly legitimate inquiry about the detailed application of the car tax provisions, on which he hopes to get a useful answer which might be of some assistance to his constituents. Secondly, he talked about provisions for small business and about the uniform business rate. He was obviously ignorant of the fact that such provisions are not included in the Bill. One purpose of this debate is to discover what the Bill actually contains.

My first question to the Financial Secretary is: why are provisions on the uniform business rate not in the Bill? Does he doubt whether the Labour party, if in office, would implement the provisions? They are important provisions. If he entertained any doubt, that was all the more reason why such provisions should have been included in the Bill because there would then have been no doubt that they would be enacted.

The Financial Secretary may argue that the provisions are complicated. One of the ways in which he could have got round part of that difficulty would have been to accept our proposal—which is similar to his, but a little greater in cost—to freeze the 4·1 per cent. increase in the UBR. That could have been achieved with fewer legislative complications than the arrangements he described. I agree that the transitional provisions should be extended and we welcome that part of the Budget. However, it would have been far better for that provision to be included in the Bill and I hope that the Financial Secretary will tell us why it is not.

It is important that business should get that relief. It will not be a massive stimulus to the economy, but it will save some small businesses from going to the wall and it will relieve the cash flow problems in others. I welcome the fact that something on an equivalent scale to what we asked for is being done.

Much has been said about the lower rate band at 20 per cent. The truth is that the lower rate band is abolished by Conservative Governments when they come into office and reintroduced on the eve of their departure. That has happened in this case. The lower rate band was abolished by the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe). Conservative Members should remember that he said:

> "The case for the lower rate band was never at all clear. The 25 per cent. rate was not the effective marginal rate for more than a small number of full-time adult workers. For those on lower incomes an increase in the personal allowance would always have been more valuable than the lower rate band, and the existence of this lower rate band added significantly to the complexity of the tax system."

He mentioned another advantage of abolishing the lower rate band. He said:

> "there will be a valuable staff saving of 1,300 persons."—[*Official Report*, 26 March 1980; Vol. 981, c. 1475.]

When I challenged the Chief Secretary this morning on the point, he could not tell us how many extra staff would now be required simply to enable pensioners to reclaim their lower rate. Now that the composite rate has thankfully been abolished—it is right that it was—pensioners who want to take advantage of the lower rate band on their savings to get the £100 will have to apply to the Inland Revenue for it at the end of the tax year. Those applications will have to be processed, so to dispense the £100 or less, the *Financial Times* estimates that 800 additional jobs will be required. The Chief Secretary said that the increase would be 300 jobs in the first year and perhaps more in the second. No doubt, we shall get a precise figure later. It is probably the greatest job creation element in the Budget. That does not seem to me to be the most productive area in which to engender jobs. I would much rather we were engendering jobs in more productive sectors of the economy.

Mr. David Nicholson: The hon. Gentleman is being unfair. A few weeks ago when we were debating the impact of the business rate, he and I made the same recommendation. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has done exactly what he and I recommended and that will help jobs.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman must have missed the first paragraph of my speech. I welcomed what the Chancellor had said he would do and pointed out that it was not in the Bill and that it would have been very much better if it had been. The hon. Gentleman should not intervene in speeches that he has not heard or has not listened to.

The best demolition of the lower rate band appears in this morning's editorial in the *Financial Times*. The point is made clearly:

> "If the Government wishes to offer the flattery of imitation, it should restrict itself to Labour's good ideas and not its bad ones."

In a Budget dictated mainly by the priorities of partisan politics, the Government have selected the least effective means of targeting help to the low paid because it happens to have been espoused by the Labour party. It would be hard to imagine a more ludicrous basis on which to make Finance Bill and Budget decisions.

We are talking about £100 for those whose income carries them right through the lower rate band. That is everyone in the Chamber—you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our Clerks and our Serjeant at Arms. Many low-paid people earn less than that income band and therefore will not get tax relief on the full amount. They will not get £100 and some people who do get it will have some of it deducted from their family credit. For many of them, the benefit will be much less than £100.

Spent in investment measures, that money would have brought more help to those people. That money spent on measures that would give some of them better-paid jobs would have been a great help. That money would have been spent more effectively providing employment for their children and families in the construction industry and in the trades and professions that can gain from an advance in the construction industry.

The Government have revealed in their Budget a PSBR of £28 billion and have sought to criticise those of us who argue for an even higher figure. I have argued that, if we are to secure investment, we need a combination of revenue-raising measures and a PSBR of £30 billion. The Government had better not launch an attack on our £30 billion proposal, because their PSBR proposal for next year is £32 billion and our proposed £30 billion includes money for measures that would give us a return in future years.

The truth about the Budget is that it offers no hope of getting Britain out of recession, no hope of reversing the pattern of decline in manufacturing industry and no hope of providing what is needed to make industry prosperous and competitive in future. It is a political gamble. It is not a measure of economic commitment and progress at all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The Front-Bench spokesmen intend to restrict their winding-up speeches to five minutes each. If those hon. Members who have been rising would do likewise, it should be possible for me to call them all.

1.3 pm

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): Even though this will be my last speech in the House after 23 years here—not for the first time, to a Chamber that is nearly empty—I shall not detain the House by adding my praise for an excellent Budget which will help those most in need and boost our economic recovery.

I should like merely to express a reservation about clauses 3 and 4 which deal with fuel taxes and car tax. Although I warmly welcome the wider differential between lead-free and leaded petrol, I should have liked a similar differential in respect of diesel fuel. Such a measure is much needed and would have provided a stronger market signal to consumers to use an environmentally more acceptable and desirable fuel.

Other countries have provided such encouragement. In a number of reports on the threat of global greenhouse warming and energy efficiency, the Select Committee on Energy has made such recommendations. In making proposals for tackling the difficult question of energy and transport, the Government's own White Paper, "Our Common Inheritance", makes similar suggestions. Moreover, the European Community has been advocating from Brussels that member states promote diesel rather than petrol. A slightly wider differential in the tax regime would have triggered a stronger signal.

We are all aware that energy and the environment are increasingly matters of great international concern. We also know that energy use in the transport sector is the fastest growing, the most difficult to tackle and the most polluting. Had we introduced such a measure this year, we should have provided the right signal to consumers. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will consider introducing one after the election. I hope that he will seriously consider giving this important environmental boost through the Budget and the fiscal system and encouraging more use of diesel for the sake of reducing global greenhouse warming emissions and other emissions.

1.5 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): It is claimed that this is a Budget for recovery, but mocking that claim is the news from my constituency this morning that the INMOS company is definitely to close its operation there and move its production to Agreti in Sicily and Roullet in France. The Finance Bill contains many measures which will affect my constituents—on car tax and income tax, for example. The very cars that are the subject of that tax—intelligent cars—have at their heart a thing called a transputer, as will colour fax machines and the miraculous virtual reality high-definition computers that will be selling in vast numbers over the next decade. Where in the Finance Bill is the commitment to British industry to allow a product that is British invented, British designed and the result of investment by a Labour Government to continue to be manufactured here? The transputer is about to take off internationally, but it will be manufactured outside Britain. This is not a Budget for recovery but a Budget for the Conservative party.

Following this morning's announcement, redundancies will be announced immediately and will continue to be announced for a long time. Already, 400 jobs have been lost and 450 more are to go. Although that is a devastating blow for Newport, it is also a mortal blow for the sunrise

[Mr. Paul Flynn]

high-tech industries in Britain generally, because the transputer—the miracle computer on a chip—is going. We shall become the customers—the buyers of the transputer and its applications throughout the world. That British invention will be manufactured in Texas, Malta, Singapore, Sicily and France. It is an utter disgrace.

This morning, the Chief Secretary did not tell jokes as he did last time. Last time, he told one parrot joke and one haggis joke. I can understand his not wanting to tell a parrot joke because of the sensitivities about Polly Peck. The right hon. and learned Gentleman also accused the Labour party of being anthropomorphic and said that we attributed to animals the feelings of human beings. It struck me forcefully this morning that, when he leaves Parliament in a month's time, the Chief Secretary can get an alternative job delivering gorillagrams without the aid of a monkey suit. It also struck me, when our sitting had to be suspended because of a fire elsewhere in the Palace that the event was reminiscent of what happened many years ago when a repressive Government burnt the Reichstag and made van der Lubbe the fall guy. When the Government collapse in burning ruins in a month's time, the fall guy will be the present Prime Minister.

1.8 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): This is a sensible and prudent Budget. It is such a prudent Budget that it has upset Labour Members. The Budget is being implemented when we do not have the crisis that Labour had in 1976 and 1978. We have not had to cut the hospital building programme as Labour did in 1976. We do not have the situation which occurred in 1978, when taxes were so high under the Labour Government that they led to massive strikes and inflation. Surely, the point about the Budget is that income tax reductions and job creation go side by side.

The Budget will produce a further £2 million of disposable income in my constituency. That money will be welcome. Such money helps the Dover ferry industry. Every tax reduction under the present Government has resulted, two years later, in significant increases in passengers and freight carried by the Dover ferry industry. I have every confidence that this tax reduction will result in more freight and passengers using the Dover ferry industry.

I also commend to the House the reduction in the uniform business rate, which has been achieved by freezing the transitional element. That will be good for small businesses and the many shopkeepers in my constituency.

Of particular interest to me is what the Budget does for pensioners. Less well-off pensioners will receive benefits through the income support mechanism. Under Labour, not only was the inflation calculation fiddled in 1976 so that pensioners lost out, but inflation destroyed every pension increase that the Labour Government gave between 1974 and 1979. Pension increases and promises of pension increases in election campaigns are not worth the paper they are not printed on unless they are real pension increases and inflation rates are low. That is the only way to give pension increases. That will be achieved by the Finance Bill because this is a prudent and sensible Budget. The measures are recognised by the City of London and the outside world community as prudent and sensible.

1.11 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I do not know how Conservative Members were able so easily to convince themselves that the Budget is enormously popular. There were no street parties in Newham and no dancing on Stratford High road when the Budget was announced. The Budget means very little to the people I represent in the east end of London. What will the Budget do for jobs? What will it do for people who find that what little has been given to them will be reclaimed through the withdrawal of means-tested benefit? That is the whole point. The Budget means nothing for the real problems of people in my area.

Since 1979, unemployment in the London borough of Newham [illegible]s gone up by about 326 per cent. We have seen an 84 per cent. decline in job vacancies. We have an unemployment rate of 18 per cent. in the London borough of Newham. We have lost about 40 per cent. of manufacturing jobs. The Budget will do nothing whatever to address those real problems.

The day after the Budget, a cordial gentleman stopped me on the street, as they often do in my area, and said, "Give 'em a good kicking, Tone." Those were his precise words. Obviously, I cannot endorse the proposed action, but I sympathise with the sentiment. The people of the east end have been kicked around by the Government for 13 years. They want an opportunity to give the Tories a good kicking, and on 9 April that is exactly what they will do.

1.13 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) says that the lower rate band means nothing. If it means nothing, why was it Labour policy until a few days ago? We knew that Labour wanted to tax the higher paid. We now know that Labour wants to tax the lower paid as well. That should come as no surprise to anyone who remembers the record of the last Labour Government, because that is the best indication of what a future Labour Government are likely to do.

In 1974, only a few days after the general election, the standard rate of income tax was increased from 30 to 33 per cent. In the Budget of 1975, it was increased again from 33 to 35 per cent. By 1976, public sector borrowing had reached 9 per cent. of GDP. It was so huge that the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), had to go to the International Monetary Fund and Britain had to be bailed out. It was only when the IMF imposed some discipline on the Labour Government that things started to return to a more sensible arrangement.

It was in the following Budget, in 1977, that the standard rate of income tax was cut from 35 to 33 per cent. As a result, public sector borrowing went up once again. If it was right to do that in 1977, why was it wrong to do it in 1992? We have not been told. If it was right, at the end of the previous Labour Government, to have a lower rate band of 25 per cent., why is it wrong to have a lower rate band of 20 per cent. now? We have not been told.

The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) complained that I mentioned money during proceedings on the Finance Bill. I found that rather strange. The Government are committed to reducing the standard rate of income tax to 20p in the pound, and that is a very welcome target. Opposition Members do not seem to understand that it is not their money—it is taxpayers' money—and we need to keep to a minimum the amount that we tax people in order to pay for decent public services. That is the object of the Budget. The Budget is a step on that road, and I welcome the Finance Bill.

1.15 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): It is not surprising that the country's reaction to the Budget has been negative. The country knows what every hon. Member knows—that the Budget was determined not by the country's needs but by the needs of the Conservative party and the Government's wish to be re-elected. It is a negative Budget, and that is why it has been rejected by the country.

Let us consider, for instance, the small increase that was given to pensioners on income support. Any help for pensioners is to be welcomed, but that increase, which has been given to a relatively small number of pensioners, is derisory compared with what pensioners have lost as a result of the decision in 1980 that pensions would no longer be increased in line with earnings.

What have pensioners lost? For a single pensioner, it is £17 a week—I emphasise "a week"—and for married pensioners it is £26 a week. That is how pensioners have been cheated by the Government. Of course, there were also the changes in housing benefit in 1988. That is the year, incidentally, when the top rate for income tax was reduced from 50 to 40 per cent. At the same time, many people on relatively low incomes found that, as a result of the changes in housing benefit, they had to pay far more in rent and poll tax.

Pensioners—admittedly single pensioners—in my constituency receive about £60 a week, but they must pay £10 in rent and poll tax. That is totally unfair. Even the increase announced in the Budget will be subject to means testing. Not all pensioners on income support will get that £2 or £3, because they will pay more in rent and poll tax.

My region, the west midlands, has been devastated as a result of Government policies. There have been two major recessions. We lost many jobs in the early 1980s. In the first recession, in the early 1980s, 280,000 manufacturing jobs were lost in the west midlands. In the black country, 70,000 jobs were lost.

Far too many people in my part of the world find that they cannot get jobs. If they have reached a certain age group, their chances of getting work are remote. In the metropolitan part of the west midlands—Birmingham, Walsall, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Solihull, the very heart of the west midlands—more than 40 people chase each vacancy. There is no sign that there will be a significant change as a result of present policies.

Of course, there has been no help for the construction industry. Eighty-one per cent. of building firms in the west midlands expect less work in the next 12 months and 78 per cent. of such companies expect to employ fewer people. That is the dismal scene. That is why we are so concerned. That is why we wanted a Budget for the country's future and not the future of the Conservative party.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): Does my hon. Friend agree that perhaps even in Beaconsfield, the constituency which the hon. Member who spoke before my hon. Friend represents but will not represent for much longer, there are many people who hated or disliked the Budget? The hon. Gentleman has been disregarding them for years, but on 9 April he will get the message about the Budget loud and clear.

Mr. Winnick: One thing is absolutely clear: the Government will get the message on 9 April. We have been waiting for the election for some time. When the Prime Minister succeeded the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), he did not have the courage to go to the country. He did not have the courage to go to the country last June or in the autumn. Now, with only three months before he is forced to go to the country, he has screwed up enough courage to call the election. We welcome the election. I notice that, after the Budget, the latest opinion poll shows a 3 per cent. Labour lead.

The past 13 years have been a nightmare for Britain and its people and certainly for those who have suffered most such as the unemployed, the low-paid and pensioners. Time and again, in every Budget up to now, they have seen how a Tory Government have benefited the rich and penalised the poor. So we welcome the election. On 9 April, the people of Britain will decide.

When people ask me whether I am optimistic, I immediately go back to 1983 and 1987. Frankly, I do not deny, and my colleagues would not deny, that we knew that we stood no chance in those two elections. When we left the House of Commons, we knew only too well that the opinion polls were right and that, unfortunately, we would see the return of a Tory Government. But the people have now decided. That has been shown in by-elections and local elections. They want a change. They will vote Labour in millions more than they did in 1983 and 1987.

The Government are a dying Government. They will end their life on 9 April. We shall have a Labour Government to determine the progressive policies to rebuild our country.

1.21 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): In proceedings on the previous four Finance Bills on which I and my hon. Friends have served, we were able to tackle clause by clause and issue by issue the case that the Government made. We were able to table amendments. Through reasoned argument rather than weight of numbers, we secured change in those measures.

This occasion deprives us of the opportunity to secure any change in the measures before us. Indeed, it deprives us of the opportunity even to table amendments so that we can discuss the changes that we would like to see. That is a fundamentally undemocratic way to proceed. It is made much worse by the intervention by the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson), who is not in his place. He said that we should not discuss these matters and that the Finance Bill should be put through on the nod. That shows a complete contempt for the democratic process.

It was not surprising to me that, as the Chief Secretary to the Treasury tried to justify these things, we could smell the flames of sulphur coming up around him. So confident is the Conservative party of the strength of its argument that it is bullying through a Bill of 11 clauses containing all the major tax changes, without allowing any opportunity to discuss amendments. It is putting the Bill through on a guillotine with only two hours of debate. That is not evidence that the Conservative party has great confidence in its arguments.

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

I should like to deal with several issues which arise from various clauses, but I cannot, so I shall concentrate on the main question, which is, of course, the lower rate tax band. The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) asked why, if the Labour party believed in a lower rate tax band in the past and had a policy proposal to introduce one for the future, it intended to vote against such a proposal now. In asking the question, as he probably most certainly knows, he answers it.

The reason why we oppose the lower rate tax band is not because we are against it in principle. We are not. It is because we are against it now. We are saying that resources should not be borrowed, thereby effectively increasing the public sector borrowing requirement, to fund a tax giveaway. That is effectively what the Government are doing.

Mr. Tim Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: No, I shall not give way, because time is short.

The Government argue that somehow the lower rate tax band can be afforded and will be repaid over the cycle. I return to the argument that I put to the Chancellor yesterday. The argument is set out in the Government's Red Book. The Government clearly say that there will be a public sector borrowing requirement for the forecastable future. In other words, there will be a PSBR over the cycle. On the Government's own evidence, the Budget will not be balanced over the cycle. An on-going, and in my view unhealthy, deficit is forecast for the future.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury had the cheek to say that we had changed our minds. [HON. MEMBERS: "What minds?"] I am talking about the minds. The hon. Gentlemen must keep quiet. What about the minds of Conservative Members? They always opposed the lower rate tax band on the grounds of cost and efficiency. They said that it would be too expensive. They opposed it because they said that they would prefer a streamlined tax system and did not agree with extra bands. They admired the elegance of the two rates, which in time they said they hoped to see reduced to one.

The hon. Member for Beaconsfield argued previously against an extra tax band. He said that the eventual objective of the Conservative party—although one would not think it from reading the Red Book—was a 20 per cent. basic rate. He used to use that as an argument against lower rate bands. He now stands that argument on its head and uses it—as, of course, he has to—as an argument for lower rate bands.

The Conservative party always advances the argument that the tax rate for everyone should come down to 20 per cent. It does not argue for a special lower rate band. Indeed, the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) said when he abolished it that the case for the lower rate band was never clear. However, solely for reasons of expediency, it seems that the case is becoming clear to Conservative Members.

It is reasonable to ask why the Government are introducing the lower rate band. Are they doing it to help the poor? Does anyone really believe that the inventors of the poll tax are doing it to help the poor? There are much more tax-efficient ways of helping the poor. The Conservative party has not adopted those methods.

The Chancellor has claimed that every average single-earner family will gain £2·64 per week as a result of the Budget, but 72p of that is as a result of the annual indexation of allowances in line with inflation. Again, the quarter of a million people in tax-paying families on family credit gain less. They lose 70p in benefit for every £1 that they gain in tax cuts. Moreover, the increases in excise duties which we are voting through without amendment or any real chance of discussion will cost such people an extra £1·56 per week on average. So the result is a net loss for the low-paid of 76p per week.

In those circumstances, it is the most grotesque hypocrisy for the Conservative party to say that the lower rate band is intended to advantage the poor. It is clearly nothing of the kind. It is not intended to be anything of the kind. It is being introduced for one reason only—to confuse the debate about taxation in the run-up to the general election. It is intended specifically to confuse the debate about the Labour party's tax policies.

The Chief Secretary said that he wanted to hear the Labour party's Budget proposals. Of course, after the general election, the House will have an opportunity to discuss the Labour party's Budget. It will be formally presented to the House, with a proper Finance Bill. The measures will be discussed in detail, not bullied through on a guillotine. My only regret—I have to say that it is not an overwhelming regret—is that the Chief Secretary and the Financial Secretary will not be present to hear our Budget.

1.28 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Francis Maude): The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) asked why the important provisions on the unified business rate are not contained within the Bill. They relate to a tax introduced under the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and not under an ordinary Finance Act. They would have to be amended by a separate Act, which we propose to introduce after we are re-elected.

On excise duties, and especially the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) in his valedictory remarks to the House, we have increased the differential between leaded and unleaded petrol. We have also increased, in cash terms, the differential between unleaded petrol and diesel. I hope that he finds that a welcome development.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) mentioned car tax. He was right to do so, and I may be able to give some comfort. The reduction in car tax has been widely welcomed and I am happy to say that it has already given a substantial boost to the motor industry. In a few cases, as my hon. Friend pointed out, tax had already been paid by manufacturers and importers at the higher rate before the Budget. Some traders would therefore stand to lose.

I am pleased to be able to tell the House that Customs and Excise have introduced an extra-statutory class concession to enable refunds of car tax to be made in respect of chargeable vehicles held by dealers as 10 per cent. tax-paid stock and unsold to final consumers on 10 March 1992. Those refunds will ensure that such vehicles will bear an effective car tax rate of 5 per cent., and will bring consistency of treatment to manufacturers and importers, who opt to deal on a tax-paid rather than a tax-free, sale or return, basis. I hope that that announcement is welcome to the House, as I am sure it will be to the industry.

Much of the debate has focused on income tax. It is right that it should, and we have been treated to some remarkably dishonest speeches and some contempt by Opposition Members.

The Labour party asks us to believe that it now reckons that 25 per cent. is right for the basic rate of income tax. Labour Members tell us, hand on heart, that a Labour Government would not increase the basic rate of income tax. They say that 25 per cent. is just about right and that they will not put it up, adding, "There is no need to do so. We wouldn't want to do anything like that."

In that case, when we reduced the basic rate of income tax from 33p to 30p, why did Labour Members vote against it? Do they now admit that they were wrong to oppose that reduction? When we reduced the rate from 30p in the pound to 29p, why did they oppose it? Do they now admit that they were wrong? When we reduced the tax from 29p to 27p, they opposed it. Do they now admit that they were wrong and that we were right?

Mrs. Beckett *rose*——

Mr. Maude: If the hon. Lady is prepared to stand up and admit that, every time that we reduced the basic rate of tax, they were wrong to oppose it, and to apologise to the House and to the country for what the Opposition have done, we will happily accept their apology.

Mrs. Beckett: Sadly, the Financial Secretary will not have the opportunity to repeat these remarks, but I recommend that he reads the book by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is now chairman of the Conservative party, in which he says that the case for further tax cuts has been much over-egged and that there should not be further tax cuts. At that stage, the top rate of income tax was 60p in the pound and the standard rate was 30p.

Mr. Maude: If that is the best that the hon. Lady can do by way of an apology to the nation, she has some further learning to do. Every time that the Government have properly reduced the basic rate of tax, Labour has opposed it. Now Labour Members say that they have changed and that they do not want to increase the basic rate. Why, then, did they oppose it? They owe the House and the country an apology, but the House and the country will not believe them. They know that a future Labour Government, like every other Labour Government in history, would increase the basic rate of income tax. We know that because they are giving a signal of it today. We are introducing a lower rate for the lower paid, as an important first step towards a 20 per cent. basic rate for everyone. What does the Labour party do? Labour Members say that they will increase the rate, despite the fact that it has been their stated policy to move towards it. They are saying that, although they believe that it is a good idea, they will oppose it because they want to increase the tax on the lower-paid.

As every Labour Government increased the basic rate of tax for everyone, a future Labour Government would do the same, because they do not know any other way. They would increase the basic rate of tax for the lower paid, the middle paid and the higher paid—for everyone—because they believe that the money that people work hard to earn does not belong to the people. They believe that it belongs to the Government.

Every time a tax is reduced, the Opposition think that it is a giveaway. I have news for them, and the British people who work hard for their money have news for the Labour party: they believe that it is their money, and they want to decide how to spend it and what to do with it. That is what they are telling the Labour party.

It being four hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion relating to the Finance Bill and Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill (allocation of time), MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question already proposed from the Chair, pursuant to Order this day.*

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 9 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 10

CHARGE ETC. FOR 1992-93

Motion made and question put, That the Clause stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 325, Noes 143.

Division No. 11] **[1.36 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy

Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Sir Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Stokes, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir D. *(Calder Vly)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, Sir A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Edwards, Huw
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric

Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 11 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 58 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill

Lords amendments agreed to. [One with Special Entry.]

Education (Schools) Bill (Allocation of Time)

1.50 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move,

That the Order of the House [30th January) be supplemented as follows:

Lords Amendments

1. The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting and, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be brought to a conclusion two hours after the commencement of the proceedings on this Order.

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

- (a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment of the Lords Amendment made by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the Lords Amendment or, as the case may be, in the Lords Amendment as amended;
- (b) if Mr. Speaker is satisfied that any remaining Lords Amendment imposes a charge upon the public revenue such as is required to be authorised by resolution of the House under Standing Order No. 47 (Certain proceedings relating to public money) and that such charge has not been so authorised, he shall in accordance with Standing Order No. 76(3) (Lords Amendments deemed to be disagreed to) declare he is so satisfied and shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment;
- (c) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—
  - (i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;
  - (ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;
  - (iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr. Speaker which have not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the Amendments; and
  - (iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;
- (d) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to the Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3. Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on the Bill.

4. The proceedings on any such further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

5. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

- (a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;
- (b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—
  - (i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;
  - (ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and
  - (iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

6.—(1) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

7.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments or on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and on the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a Minister of the Crown, and the question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

I hope that the Opposition will not claim that the Education (Schools) Bill has not been given full scrutiny by Parliament or that they require longer than the two hours that we are making available for the House to consider amendments made in another place. The Bill has had more than 40 hours of debate in the House and more than 30 hours of debate in the House of Lords.

I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) will remind us that the Bill was guillotined on Report, but he should also remember that that was done in curious circumstances. We had first agreed that it would be reported in one day, but the first day was taken up with delaying tactics and most of the second day was taken up with talking about the guillotine motion. The Bill was, ultimately, fully debated in Standing Committee without any need for timetabling. The final sitting agreed for Committee discussion was not used and the Bill had more than 36 hours of Committee debate.

There was full debate on the Bill in another place. We responded to suggestions with flexibility and tabled amendments at the request of the Opposition, sometimes, in the other place. We have accepted the results of Divisions there that were carried against us. The Bill as it now stands should be reasonably non-controversial and widely welcomed, if the Opposition now support the fundamental aspects of the parents charter.

The Government were defeated twice in the House of Lords and propose to accept those defeats. I have with me the parents charter. The changes made in the House of Lords do not alter one word of the document. It has been fought ferociously up and down the country by some elements of the Labour party, who have refused to distribute it to schools as they say that it is some sort of political document.

In so far as I understand the Labour party to have an education policy at all, I think that it is now converted to the idea of league tables for schools so that the public are aware of the comparative performances of different schools. I hope that it is converted to the idea of independent inspection and the notion that inspectors' reports should be sent unsolicited to parents.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): No.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): No.

Mr. Clarke: In that case, some members of the Labour party, including the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) who speaks for one of the more reactionary sections of the Labour party, will continue to argue that education, at least in Newham, should remain a closed world without a great amount of information being given to parents or the public in that borough.

Mr. Banks *rose*——

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I believe that we shall find that the country is anxious to receive the benefits of the parents charter and that we can now proceed, in a fairly rapid debate, to take the Bill on to the statute book. I admit that there are many issues to be encompassed by our debates. The Bill secures regular inspection to high standards; reasonable, published reports to parents; follow-up action by governors; and comparative tables of key information to parents. The changes made at this stage are largely those of organisation, not substance. The parents charter Bill is now ready for enactment.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that two of the most important aspects of the parents charter are that people will know the staying-on rates of children at school and, in districts such as London, they will also know the truancy rates?

Mr. Clarke: They will know the staying-on rates, the truancy rates and the examination results of all the schools so that it will be possible to compare the performances of all the schools that are in similar circumstances.

The hon. Members for Newham, North-West and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) exploded with rage when I mentioned those provisions, and appeared reluctant to have such information given to the parents of Newham.

Mr. Banks *rose*——

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a moment, but that is all of a piece with the attitude of both those Newham Members who have used the difficulties in Stratford school as an excuse to try to get rid of Mrs. Snelling, who has done a great deal to improve that school. They are still demanding her head on a salver because she defied the Newham Labour party and Newham council by giving the school grant-maintained status, which she successfully achieved. Having criticised the voice of Newham when it barracked me, I shall give way to it.

Mr. Banks: I hope that I shall talk about Stratford school later in the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and I wanted to challenge the Secretary of State's reference to independent inspectors. Is he saying that, in that sense, Her Majesty's inspectorate is not independent? If so, that is a slur on HMI.

Mr. Clarke: HMI will continue to carry out inspections, and always would under the Government's proposals. HMI has never gone in for systematic inspection of all schools and reporting to parents. Indeed, it would have taken it more than 100 years to produce individual reports on primary schools at the rate at which it was going. The Government proposed that the inspection of schools should be carried out by inspectors registered with HMI—some would be local government inspectors, some would be outside consultants and experts approved by HMI.

We accepted amendments that proposed that HMI should have a veto over a school's choice of inspectors. Their lordships have taken the matter further and stated that HMI should not only register for the inspectors carrying out the systematic inspectors but should select the inspectors in the case of each school. The Government are prepared to accept that. I think that the principal practical difference will be that more schools will choose independent, non-local authority inspectors than would otherwise do so. HMI would be unlikely to choose local authority inspectors in every case, whereas the average body of school governors would be likely to choose the local authority inspectors in its district if the local authority had inspectors that come up to HMI standards, which quite a few local authority inspectors would do.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): That is a slur on local authority inspectors.

Mr. Clarke: Everyone considers local authority inspection to be patchy and of variable standards, and that has always been the opinion of HMI. I think that that view is widely accepted by those involved in the subject.

In future, under the Bill, all inspection will be carried out by people who comply with the criteria laid down by HMI and meet HMI standards. We are prepared to start on the basis that HMI will select the inspectors for each school. As a result, the parents charter Bill is now ready for enactment. It is a great change in the culture of education in this country. It has not been rushed through but has received all the necessary scrutiny. I hope that, now, the Opposition will not try to make it fall victim to time-wasting and delaying tactics.

Mr. Spearing: I confirm that my outburst and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was targeted not only at what the Secretary of State said but at the fact that he did not have the courtesy to give way. What he said about inspectors was clearly a reflection on the independence of the existing inspectorate. He may be quite right in saying that inspectors cannot go to all schools, but that is a different issue.

On the subject of what the Secretary of State asks of the inspectors, is he aware that, despite his ministerial colleague stating that Stratford school was working well —or words to that effect—the Secretary of State's answer to us was that the last time that an inspector of his

[Mr. Spearing]

Department went into that school was 1991? If he has not received any reports on that school recently, how can he tell the House accurately how that school is progressing?

Mr. Clarke: If the outburst of the two hon. Members was caused by taking my reference to independent inspectors as an attack on Her Majesty's inspectorate, that was simply a complete misunderstanding on their part. The hon. Member for Newham, South will know that the Bill makes Her Majesty's inspectorate more independent of the Government than hitherto. In future, Her Majesty's chief inspector will be a much more powerful and independent watchdog figure than he was before and than he would be under Labour's proposals. The Labour party would promptly make him subordinate to a new quango of the great and the good and the usual educational interests that it proposes to set up. We are setting up the post of HMCI, who will have an important role in monitoring inspection of schools and advising the Government—that has never been threatened by the Bill. He will play a key role in the selection of those inspectors who carry out the parents charter type inspections of 6,000 schools a year and report to parents.

I have always believed that inspectors should be independent of schools. I do not think, as Labour appeared to believe until it voted otherwise in the House of Lords, that all the inspectors should be employed by a local authority to inspect only that local authority's schools and should then be expected to be critical of that local authority if there were failings when they reported to parents. The system that we envisage is much better and the whole education world will be opened up to much more independent, open scrutiny. That can only benefit the good schools and the many dedicated teachers we have, as it will identify weaknesses and correct them, and build on strengths school by school. That is why I hope that the Bill will proceed without any further delay of the rather absurd kind that we had on Report.

2 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I am sorry to disappoint the Secretary of State, but we oppose this guillotine. If anybody wanted any convincing about our justification for opposing it, he need only look at the Amendment Paper and see that the Secretary of State is expecting the House to debate 38 groups of amendments and amendments to amendments in eight separate debates, and have votes, within a single hour. That shows an arrogance and a contempt of democratic procedures which have typified this Administration. The guillotine is doubly unacceptable, given that the Bill and the amendments were not delivered back to the House until this morning and hon. Members on both sides had only a few hours in which to table amendments to amendments and to consider the merits of amendments made in the other place.

The Secretary of State said that it had been agreed that the Report stage in the House of Commons should last one day. I should put it on record that there was never any such agreement either between the Front Bench teams or through the usual channels. Such an agreement was neither entered into nor even sought by the Minister of State or by the Government Whip. We ran into two days solely because of the incompetence of the Government Whips Office.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Opposition filibustered.

Mr. Straw: We had no need to do so, as 23 debates were to be squeezed into one day because of the incompetence of the Government Whips Office, who did not understand that there was no way in which those 23 debates could conceivably be contained within the six hours of debate allocated.

Thirteen years ago, this Administration came to power promising that they would "promote higher standards" in basic educational skills. Today, the public learned more of the truth of the Government's failure to achieve that promise and their neglect of a whole generation of the nation's young. A major study, including work by the National Foundation for Educational Research, shows Britain bottom of the class in terms of shortages of primary school books, almost bottom on shortages of secondary school books and just one from bottom on overcrowding of classrooms. We are in a worse position in comparison not only with our major competitors, but with Hungary, Portugal, Jordan and even Slovenia.

Four weeks ago, we learned in another NFER report that reading standards for seven-year-olds had shown an alarming decline of three months in the four years since 1987, when the latest and largest round of experiments on other people's children were introduced under the euphemism of "reforms". Last week, we saw the Secretary of State wriggling, squirming and blaming everyone but himself for yet another damning report by HMI, showing that 20 per cent. of children continue to be poorly taught in reading.

In an unusually candid admission last year, the Secretary of State told the House that after 12 years

> "we still lag behind our competitors in the participation of our school leavers in further education and training, and their achievement of useful qualifications."—[*Official Report*, 21 March 1991; Vol. 188, c. 432.]

To answer that dismal record, the Secretary of State introduced his so-called parents charter and the Bill on which he is now seeking to curtail discussion. It was Lord Beloff—a Conservative peer, and one who, as the Secretary of State would concede, is no wet—said that the Bill was:

> "the silliest Bill that any Parliament has ever had to consider."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 11 February 1992; Vol. 535, c. 634.]

He went on to say that the other place had never been given "the slightest indication—"

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he cannot quote a Member of the other place who is not a Minister. Therefore, will he please paraphrase?

Mr. Straw: Certainly, I will paraphrase. He said——

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Paraphrase.

Mr. Straw: Of course I will paraphrase. I will do every justice to the noble lord. He considered that their lordships could see no sign of any thought having gone into the Bill. Should Conservative Members wish to ensure that my paraphrase is close to the words used, I refer them to the *Official Report* of the other place of 11 February 1992 at column 635.

Lord Beloff, whom I believe that the Secretary of State just described as dotty—I am sure that Lord Beloff will be interested to have that on the record, as it shows what little honour there is among those in the Conservative party

—was correct. As the elements of the Bill were examined in this House and in the other place, its core simply dissolved. The truly bizarre proposition was that schools should be allowed to pick, choose and pay their own inspectors from the ranks of private, money-making consultants, with the power of local education authorities to make inspections in schools when things went wrong removed altogether, and with HMI reduced in size and therefore in facility and ability from 475 members down to 170.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Arthur Daley school of inspection.

Mr. Straw: I dare say that my hon. Friend has a few Arthur Daleys in his constituency.

Mr. Banks: That is all right so long as they vote for me.

Mr. Straw: I would expect nothing else, as I was brought up in the same area and I have some knowledge of, and affection for, such car dealers. I would far rather be on a desert island or in a voting booth with an Arthur Daley than I would with that lot on the other side.

Mr. Burns: Arthur Daley is on our side.

Mr. Straw: I think that even Arthur Daley would be ashamed by the claims that we shall hear from the Conservative party over the next four weeks.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: I will give way on the Arthur Daley point.

Mr. Clarke: Given that this extraordinary description of the provisions appeared to satisfy one or two of the more eccentric of their lordships and also the hon. Gentleman, will he explain how Arthur Daley was meant to get the approval of HMI to get on the register of HMI in the first place so that he could be selected by the schools? Will he explain why HMI would not have used the veto given by the Bill to overrule an unwise choice by the school? As he knows, the amendment that has been carried in the Lords does not change a great deal other than the mechanics for selecting the inspectors.

While the hon. Gentleman quotes my noble Friend Lord Beloff in his general judgments of the Bill, is it not the case, when one moves off this provision, that the Labour party is now thinking of being in favour of league tables, outside inspections, reports to parents and all the other policies embodied in the Bill?

Mr. Straw: I shall deal with our policy in a moment. The Secretary of State shows an ignorance of the detail of his own Bill. The reason why Arthur Daley would have been able to slip through the original scheme was that only the registered inspectors—those in charge of each of the inspection teams—would have been subject to any scrutiny by HMI. That point was understood by both sides of this House and, more to the point, by both sides of the other place. Because there would be only 40 registered inspectors responsible for checking on up to 3,000 to 4,000 inspectors, all sorts of dodgy characters would be likely to get though the net.

The Secretary of State could not be bothered to serve on the Standing Committee. He always likes to travel light, and he had not bothered to consider the detail of the Bill. There were some extraordinary admissions in Committee by the Minister of State and the Under-Secretary of State about freelance inspectors who would be roaming the country—*[Interruption.]* I am pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) here for what will be his last debate on education in this place.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I would not miss it for the world.

Mr. Straw: Of course not.

The proposal was for roaming, specialist inspectors who would be inspecting provision for the deaf in Devon one day and, if they could find a train, going to Durham the next day. The Minister of State and the Under-Secretary of State admitted in Committee that schools would be allowed to pick and choose their inspectors according, not least, to the particular dogma that a school was following. I guess that the Under-Secretary of State has fled to Darlington to try to garner a few votes before his defeat on 9 April. I am surprised that he is not here, as he seemed very attached to the Bill. I wonder whether he will have much to say about it during the next four weeks.

The Under-Secretary of State made the stunning admission in Committee that if a school was following a kind of discredited dogma, which the Secretary of State certainly does not share, of having children sitting around tables not learning anything, with progressive education and all that, it could choose inspectors who shared that dogma. Quite what that would do to raise standards, I am not sure. No one could explain how such a Bill would raise standards. Virtually no Conservative Member with any knowledge of education, from left or right, volunteered anything in detailed support of the Bill.

One reason why it is preposterous for the Secretary of State to railroad the Bill through the House in the dying days of this Administration is that it has come back to us in a markedly different form. The other place inflicted two major defeats on the Secretary of State. We need much more time to consider those changes and their impact on the rest of the Bill. Amendment No. 111 in the other place —amendment No. 11 here—removes the right of schools to pick and choose their own inspectors and relaces it with a power for the senior chief inspector to appoint the inspectors.

As I said earlier, the Secretary of State travels light and does not pay attention to the detail. For a long time he misled himself, if nobody else, about the nature of Labour's policy on inspection. As became manifest in Committee, the officials had read the fine document, "Raising the standard", as had the two junior Ministers. The document sets out our proposals for an education standards commission which will take HMI under its wing, and for those inspectors on the commission to supervise and direct the work of local inspectors who would be at arm's length from the local authority. That proposal is fully consistent with amendment No. 111 in the other place. That is precisely why my noble Friends Baroness Blackstone and Lord Peston moved the amendment and those associated with it. Had the amendments been inconsistent with Labour policy, they would not have done that.

I understand from your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that rather than paraphrase I can directly quote a Minister in the other place. I am glad to have that approbation.

Mr. Burns: The hon. Gentleman is learning.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman is right about that. I always thought that the rule was the other way around, but now I know differently.

Mr. Flannery: Does my hon. Friend agree—I hope that the Secretary of State does—that it is difficult to find any member of the general public, throughout the country, who agrees with the Bill? Almost the entire teaching profession is opposed to the Bill. It would be charming of the Secretary of State if he could tell us who, other than the Tory party—driven to the wall as it is—agrees with the Bill.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend is exactly right. To encourage individuals and organisations to come forward, we offered a generous prize of a week in Europe to any Government Member who could name a single organisation that supported the Bill.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) always accuses me of not studying Labour policy closely. I take out my microscope from time to time. to try to scrutinise it with considerable care, but it is difficult to see that speck of policy. The hon. Gentleman argues that the Bill, as amended in another place, is consistent with Labour policy. I assume that, despite the hon. Gentleman's wish to have more time to scrutinise the Bill, he supports the system of schools inspections as amended by Labour peers. I do not believe that is so, and that the amendment received Opposition support in another place because a collection of 1960s peers happened to be hidden away until half-past nine in the evening, when it was voted on. It does not bear the slightest relation to Labour's policy during the earlier stages of the Bill.

If the hon. Member for Blackburn is trying to persuade me that the Bill as amended is now consistent with the amazing document that Labour published, presumably he is also saying that it has Labour's approval.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State should hold himself, if he can.

Mr. Tony Banks: That would be more than he could bear, I should imagine.

Mr. Straw: Yes, but I was about to tell the Secretary of State that the Lords amendment was fully consistent with Labour policy. Regrettably, not every one of our amendments was carried, so the Bill is not in quite the shape that would allow us to support it.

I allowed the Secretary of State to intervene because I thought that he was going to pop up with the name of an organisation that supports the Bill—perhaps that which represents parents in his own constituency. The Bill is apparently meant as a parents charter, but the body that speaks more for parents than the Secretary of State is the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations. Two days ago, it wrote to all right hon. and hon. Members pleading with them to oppose the Bill because of its serious effects on our children; the NCPTA rightly believes that the Bill will damage children's education.

When the amendment was considered in another place the Minister of State, Baroness Blatch, said—I presume with the approval of the right hon. and learned Gentleman, and according to a brief provided by the Department:

> "The amendment seeks to tear the heart out of the Bill by substituting a centralised regime in place of a system based upon choices by governing bodies. The noble Baroness"—

Baroness Blackstone—

> "said that I would be likely to proclaim this a wrecking amendment. It is just that. It would replace the Government's preferred scheme with another scheme . . . it totally invalidates the scheme which is set out in the Bill . . . I want Members of the Committee to realise that the amendment removes a key element of our proposals, namely that those choosing the inspectors should also be responsible and publicly answerable both for the current state of the school and for taking action on the recommendations which flow from the inspections."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 2 March 1992; Vol. 536, c. 662.]

The following morning, in a radio interview, the Secretary of State blamed the trade unions for the Government's defeat in another place—though how they managed that, no one quite knows. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is usually fluent even when he has a weak case —and a great deal more fluent at any time than the Prime Minister. However, on the "Today" programme, he was apoplectic to the point of incoherence. Asked whether he ought not to be grateful to the Lords for saving him from an act of folly, he said that

> "we are intending, as the Labour Party . . . to the object . . . in face of objections from the Labour Party, to open up inspection to the outside world."

He spent the rest of the interview burbling, trying to explain away the depth of his defeat in the House of Lords. The BBC transcript is an accurate reflection of what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said and how he said it.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Straw: I will give way to the Secretary of State in a moment. Even the *Daily Express*—which normally takes orders from Conservative central office like a lamb—deserted him. Its editorial on Wednesday told him to think again, and the right hon. and learned Gentleman went to ground on the Thursday. The House and the country having been told that the Lords amendments tore the heart out of the Bill and removed a key element of the Government's proposals, it was on the Friday that the right hon. and learned Gentleman issued an incredible and laughable statement in which he said that he would accept the amendments. He said that they were only minor matters in the context of the inspection of schools. Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman will explain what change took place between the Minister of State saying that the amendments would tear the heart out of the Bill and the Secretary of State, saying that they were only minor matters.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: First, I advise the hon. Gentleman to get a better audio typist. He keeps insisting that I was apoplectic with rage—that is always his description—but I was rather amused by the farcical performance in the other place, with so many Labour and Liberal peers rushing out of bars in the middle of the evening to vote for an amendment which I continue to insist bore not the slightest resemblance to Labour party policy before that day. The hon. Gentleman continues to claim a great triumph, but if he reads the parents charter from cover to cover he will understand that the two great victories in the other place do not change a word in the charter. I am still waiting to hear which bit of the charter the Labour party is still against, if it is continuing to oppose the Bill.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State did not answer the question that I put to him. I asked him how an amendment which apparently tore the heart out of the Bill turned into a minor matter on Friday last week. The amendment did tear the heart out of the Bill, and I suspect that it tore a bit of the heart out of the Secretary of State.

The other amendment that was agreed to in another place reflected an argument that was resisted almost to the bitter end in this place. It took up the sensible suggestion that in some circumstances local education authorities should be given power to inspect between cyclical inspections to fill the void in the orginal scheme presented in the Bill.

Other parts of the Bill are as objectionable as they were when the measure was first introduced. It is now riven by an incoherence between those parts of it that would implement Labour policy and those that contain the undiluted dogma of the Conservative right. There is a need for more time so that we can try to bring together the two parts of the strange animal with which we are left.

I will again paraphrase the words of Lord Beloff, who was damning of the idea of what could be described as commercial inspections of schools. However, commercial inspection, or the privatisation of the inspectorate, remains in the Bill, as does the emasculation of the inspectorate. For example, clause 15 provides that a local authority's inspection service must be entirely self-financing from the tenders, if any, that it wins under the four-year cycle of inspection. If an authority fails to win sufficient tenders, there can be no local inspection service in a given area. There is no power and no funding arrangement to run a local inspection service if the local authority does not win tenders.

Amendment No. 21 would provide the local education authority with power to inspect between cyclical inspections, but that has to be inspection by an officer of the local authority. I ask the Secretary of State whether that officer can be one of the LEA inspectors, if there is a self-financing LEA inspection service. If there is not, where will the expertise come from? The amendment is explicit. It provides, as I have said, that inspections must be undertaken by officers of the authority. In areas where there is no local authority inspection service, we are likely to end up with inspectors without the necessary expertise having to try to inspect schools where there are problems. Those are crucial issues that we do not have time to debate.

Mr. Spearing: Can my hon. Friend confirm that that leads to the conclusion that all these measures to diminish or even eliminate local authority inspection, whatever their merits, have been introduced by the Secretary of State to pave the way for the disappearance of local education authorities altogether? Has the Secretary of State ever denied that that is his real purpose?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It is a very good idea.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Lady, who is always ahead of the Secretary of State, says that it is a very good idea.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It would be a good idea in Lancashire.

Mr. Straw: On the front page of *The Times* this morning, there is an article stating that the Secretary of State has it in mind to replace local education authorities with a new, centralised bureaucracy to run those schools that have opted out. At a time when everybody else is devolving the administration of education and giving power to local communities, we find that the Secretary of State for Education and Science is introducing new systems of centralised control.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman used the word "bureaucracy". As he well knows, I have been visiting the schools in my constituency where, time after time, headmasters have said to me that they could not imagine what the county ever did with that money. They also said that they are using the money that they have been given to spend on administration to do all sorts of other things. They told me that they wonder what on earth the county did with that money when it had it. The trouble was that the bureaucracy was so overweening. We should be delighted to get rid of the Lancashire education authority.

Mr. Straw: The only reason why the hon. Lady wants to get rid of Lancashire education authority is that her party failed to win control of Lancashire in successive county elections.

The Secretary of State spoke at length about the parents charter leading to the provision of information to parents. Our position on that is clear. To answer a direct question that he put to me, we did not vote in Committee against clause 16 stand part. Had he wished to salvage the wreckage of the Bill by getting rid of the ludicrous arrangement that we have ended up with for inspection, by including a provision that would have allowed information to be given, he could have had the Bill. The Secretary of State must have been aware of that, because we did not vote against clause 16. He could have had the Bill, despite the fact that clause 16, for all the propaganda that he has tried to make out of it, provides few additional information-giving powers on top of those provided for in the 1986 and 1988 Acts. He knows that the powers that he has already exercised in respect of the provision of information on the key stage 1 tests derive from the 1988 Act, not from the Bill.

What makes an even greater mockery of this guillotine is the fact that, in my view, no sensible Government would begin to implement the dog's breakfast of an inspection system provided for in the Bill. When we form the next Government, we shall move quickly to establish, by means of our educational standards Bill, an education standards commission which will be powerful and independent of Ministers. It will report to Parliament and bring within its ambit Her Majesty's inspectorate. Moreover, it will supervise and direct the local inspectorate. It will also inspect local education authorities. That will provide parents and governors with new guarantees of education standards for their children and with real power to seek redress from the commission when standards fall.

I hope that during the next four weeks the Secretary of State will not try to con people about the independence of the inspectorate under his proposals. He is the person who will be given the power in the Bill to appoint the senior chief inspector. I hope that he has taken time to find out about the headhunting that is going on for the new senior chief inspector. To my certain knowledge, all kinds of people with absolutely no knowledge or experience of education are being approached by these headhunters to put themselves forward as potential candidates for the job.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Under Labour's proposals, which the hon. Gentleman always accuses me of neglecting and failing to study, Her Majesty's inspectorate would be made subordinate to the new quango that would be set up. HMI

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

would be made less independent than it has ever been in its history. It is absurd for the hon. Gentleman to defend the independence of a body that he proposes to destroy, if he is ever able to implement his manifesto.

Mr. Straw: I suggest that the Secretary of State talk to the First Division Association which represents Her Majesty's inspectors and has said on the record——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is a union.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State says that it is a union, but it represents virtually every one of Her Majesty's inspectors. Of course, they are placed in a difficult position because they are officials and it is difficult for them to speak out. I shall not quote the comments of any individuals because they are officials and answerable to the Secretary of State. That is the constitutional position, but I am entitled to quote the First Division Association which represents them and has excoriated the proposals on behalf of the inspectors, 95 per cent. of whom are members of the FDA. It believes that our proposals would greatly strengthen the independence of the inspectorate, and I shall tell the Secretary of State why.

When the Secretary of State sits on the Opposition Benches dealing with the education standards Bill, it will become clear to him that under our proposals the constitutional position of the senior chief inspector and Her Majesty's inspectors will be similar to the relationship between, for example, the controller of the Audit Commission and the Audit Commission, or that between the Comptroller and Auditor General in the House and the Public Accounts Committee.

Throughout the proceedings on the Bill, we have said that the appointment of a senior chief inspector under the Bill should first be subject to approval by the Civil Service Commission, a proposal which was resisted, and to submission to the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, which was also resisted. If the Secretary of State had been interested in ensuring that the senior chief inspector was independent, he would have accepted at least one of those modest safeguards. Every inspector knows that it was the Secretary of State's intention to emasculate and undermine the inspectorate because it has told the truth year after year about the failure of the Government's policies in the past 13 years.

The Times this morning carries an interview with the Secretary of State. It begins:

> "Ministers have failed to convince the public that their education reforms are necessary to raise standards in state schools, Kenneth Clarke, the education secretary, has admitted."

The Secretary of State need look no further than himself and his Government if he wants to know the reasons for his failure to convince. No Secretary of State for Education and Science has been less popular with teachers, parents or the public than this one. No education policies have received less popular support than those of this Government, and there has rarely been a bigger gap between the levels of public support for the Conservatives' education policies and support for ours. No other Bill to privatise the inspectorate of local schools and to emasculate Her Majesty's inspectorate could do more damage to standards in schools.

The guillotine motion is a fitting epitaph for a dying Administration, whose educational failure is now admitted even by Ministers who perpetuated their wretched policies and allowed our education record to become a national humiliation. For that, they will be driven from office on 9 April.

2.32 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I oppose the guillotine motion—I usually do oppose them—but I shall be happy for the guillotine to be working overtime on Tory heads on 9 April. I shall be happily knitting new Labour party policies as their heads fall into the buckets of sawdust.

On 10 March, I presented a Bill that provided for fixed-term elections, for compulsory attendance at polling stations and for a public holiday on general election day. I gave 9 April as the Second Reading date. I can only assume that that announcement caused the Prime Minister to panic and to announce the general election for 9 April. However, it raises one significant point.

What we have seen this morning is no way to run a country. During the business statement on Thursday last week, the Leader of the House announced the business knowing full well that the business being announced would not be played out in the House. I am not suggesting that that was dishonesty on his part. I suppose that he had no choice but to announce it, although we all knew that we would end up with this unholy, miserable shambles as a way of trying to get legislation through the House. This is not the way to do it.

Guillotines are never satisfactory, although one can understand that they might be necessary in certain circumstances. When guillotines are brought in simply because the Government have now decided that there is no alternative but to go for an election on 9 April, we see clearly that party interest is being put before the national interest. It is about time to raise the wider issue of fixed-term Parliaments, which would certainly mean that no Parliament would end in this way, in this—

Mr. Straw: Shambles.

Mr. Banks: —in this undignified shambles, as my hon. Friend says.

Mr. Straw: Does my hon. Friend also accept that, if we had fixed-term Parliaments, discussions on such a Bill might not end without anyone present to represent the Liberal Democratic party? In view of what the Liberal Democrats said about the Bill, is it not extraordinary that not one of them is here now?

Mr. Banks: That is a good point, although I assume that the Liberal Democrats have a much larger mountain to climb than most other hon. Members, and have rushed off in a panic to try to garner a few votes.

This is not the way to run a Parliament, and I am pleased that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition—soon to be Prime Minister—made it clear at the Labour party conference that the Labour Government will introduce fixed-term Parliaments. That was a significant constitutional announcement, although it did not get the sort of coverage that it should have had. A Prime Minister in waiting is saying that when he is in office, he will give up a power that Prime Ministers have hitherto clutched jealously to themselves, and treated as precious —the ability to decide when to hold an election, in order to maximise party advantage.

One cannot blame a Prime Minister for maximising party advantage, but it is unseemly and undignified. It undermines democracy and gives rise to much cynicism among the electorate when they see what is going on. The Prime Minister loitered so long that, had he been the former Director of Public Prosecutions, he would have been arrested for loitering with intent. However, he was the Prime Minister and he could choose his time to the best of his ability—although even then he managed to box himself into a corner.

I oppose the guillotine and hope that, in the next Parliament, with a Labour Government, fixed-term Parliaments will be introduced. Then no Parliament will end in this sort of shambles.

I understand that the Secretary of State for Education and Science will be a player in the next Parliament—as the new Leader of the Opposition. I am sure that he would make a good Leader of the Opposition, and I am sure that in the new Parliament he—or whoever else becomes the Leader of the Conservative Opposition—will make a lot of noise about the curtailment of discussion on radical measures of great significance.

I believe that one of the reasons why the Bill has encountered such problems in the House of Lords has something to do with Stratford school in my constituency. The problems arose when their lordships started considering the idea of so-called independent inspectors being appointed by schools. Can the Secretary of State imagine what sort of inspector would have been appointed by the existing governors of Stratford school if the original provisions of his Bill had become law?

The Secretary of State should think carefully about the matter, because the Education Reform Act 1988 was also guillotined, and it was clear then that the Government had not thought through what might happen if a situation arose such as that involving Stratford school. There were no provisions to deal with that possibility, and now the Secretary of State finds himself in a corner over Stratford school. We have asked the following question many times, but I shall ask it again. Why was Stratford school allowed to opt out, and grant-maintained status given, whereas Walsingham school, in Wandsworth, was refused?

I remind the Secretary of State that about 96 per cent. of parents at Walsingham school in Tory Wandsworth voted to opt out. The proposal was overwhelmingly supported by parents and governors at the time, yet it was turned down. Why? Walsingham school, like Stratford school, was facing closure. Will the Secretary of State tell me why Walsingham school was turned down, yet Stratford school was allowed to opt out?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: As the hon. Gentleman knows, when parents vote in favour of opting out, the matter comes to Ministers for decision. Ministers allow some applications and disapprove others according to the best judgment we can make in the light of consultations about the likely success of the school. In the case of Stratford school, the judgment was plainly correct. Mrs. Snelling and her staff have built up a rundown school from 150 to 600 pupils. They plainly have the support of the overwhelming majority of parents, and they are raising educational standards in the area.

Does it remain the position of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that Mrs. Snelling should be sacked? I understand that he and his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing)—I accept that they come from a rather different direction from some of the governors—are as anxious as some of the governors that Mrs. Snelling should be removed from the school. They believe that the school should be returned to Newham and closed because they are so furious that Mrs. Snelling divided Newham Labour party and was one of those who took the school successfully to grant-maintained status.

Mr. Banks: I will answer that point, but I must come back to the original question I posed, which the Secretary of State did not answer. Of course I know that the Secretary of State had discretion to refuse or accept an opt-out proposal. The fact is that the two schools did not face closure because of vindictive local authorities. The two local authorities are completely different. Both schools faced closure under reorganisation proposals set out by Lord Joseph, the then Secretary of State, so that both authorities should reduce surplus places.

Stratford school did not face closure because anyone wanted to close it. Closing a school, like a hospital, is not popular. The Secretary of State knows that. We did not want to close the school. To get two new schools in the south of the borough in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), where the population is growing, it was necessary to close the school. We were doing what the Government wanted us to do.

We visited the then Minister of State and put it to her that the parents thought—we do not blame the parents —that they could prevent the closure by going for opt-out. Surely even the Secretary of State at the time of the 1988 legislation did not think that opt-out would be used as a way in which to avoid a reorganisation accepted by his Departmenmt. That is the point. When we saw the Minister of State, she was very reasonable, and we came away expecting that the school would close because it was required to close.

We then saw the completely different approaches which the Department adopted to Walsingham school and to Stratford school. We came to the obvious conclusion that political dogma was at play. That is what it was all about. I have no dobut that the then Prime Minister threw a bit of a trantrum, and started handbagging the Secretary of State and saying that there were insufficient closures in Labour areas.

We had a change of junior Ministers, and the present Minister of State was brought in to deliver an opt-out. He delivered the opt-out in Stratford in my constituency, which is a solid Labour area where the Tories have nothing to lose. We have a lot to lose. Community relations in our area are suffering. That has nothing to do with the local authority. It has to do with the arguments between the governors, the head teacher and the staff.

The Secretary of State talked about the school being built up again from 160 pupils. It was being run down because we were taking pupils out and putting them in other schools in preparation for the closure. That is what it is all about.

I will address the question put to me by the Secretary of State. I said—this is my opinion as the constituency Member, not the opinion of the Labour party—that,

[Mr. Banks]

because of the bitterness created by the decision, which now floods through the area, it would be in the best interests of the children and of the community if the governors and the senior staff concerned stood down so that we could start again. There will be no vindictiveness by the local authority. Why should we want to be vindictive?

When we have a Labour Government and my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Staw) is Secretary of State, we shall expect to see a number of things. The first is a full HMI inspection of the school to see exactly what is going on. We do not even know what is going on in the school at the moment, because, as the Secretary of State admitted, there has not been an inpection since 4 December 1991. There must be a full inspection. Stratford school must then be returned to the control of the local community.

The Secretary of State and other Ministers portray local authorities as alien forces imposed upon us by a totalitarian regime. In fact, they are bodies of people elected by the local community. If Conservative Members do not like the fact that some local authorities are Labour controlled, it is up to them to do something about it within the democratic system. People in Newham do not vote Tory, because they do not like Tories. They can hardly be blamed for that. My constituency is a Tory-free zone and will remain so for the foreseeable future, for no other reason than that the people of my area cannot see anything that the Tories can usefully do for them.

Another question that I want to ask the Secretary of State is this: was he advised by his own civil servants at the time of the application for the Stratford opt-out that it was non-viable and should not be allowed? I should like him to answer that question yes or no, because I have asked it in the House a dozen times, and no one has answered it.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Ministers do not give answers about advice that they receive from their civil servants. That is a convention which Ministers in any Government will always defend. If the hon. Gentleman is asking about the judgment that the application was viable, which was the judgment made by my hon. Friend the Minister of State and me, I can only say that events have vindicated that judgment. The number of children in the school has grown from 150 to 600, and the parents are backing Mrs. Snelling and the staff, who are presiding over a steady improvement in standards.

The difficulty is that, when the opt-out decision was taken, Newham council launched personal attacks on Mrs. Snelling, took property from the school and barred the then governors when they wanted to go in to prepare for the take-over. The hon. Gentleman and his allies in the council still demand the removal of Mrs. Snelling, but the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is so doubtful about the bona fides of some of his supporters in the council that he yesterday made it clear that, in the unlikely event of our having a Labour Government, he would feel it necessary to pass legislation to protect some of the people involved in grant-maintained schools against the kind of personal come-back that they would otherwise get from some Labour councils.

Mr. Banks: The Secretary of State is misleading the House, and he is certainly misleading himself, if he believes the rubbish that he has just come out with. What is the point of stirring up trouble in one's own constituency? Why would we deliberately cause trouble in our own area? It is nonsense to suggest that. Neither the local authority nor my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has said that Mrs. Snelling should be removed as the head teacher of Stratford school. What I have said is that, in the interests of everyone and in an attempt to return to some sort of equitable basis, we should ask all the main players—which I say means the head teacher, senior staff and governors—to stand down in the interests of the kids and of my school.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making the position clear. Is it not true, however, that the Secretary of State has not been using the independent inspectorate that is available to him in the past two months? The Minister of State claimed last week that the school was now running well. How can Ministers make such statements when the Secretary of State has not used the offices of the independent inspectorate—which he agrees is independent—to find out the facts? Does not that show added irresponsibility on the part of the Secretary of State?

Mr. Banks: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The Secretary of State has just parroted a load of allegations about Newham council and the school, but he cannot possibly know anything about it, as neither he nor his Ministers have been anywhere near the school, and as the inspectors have not been anywhere near the school. The right hon. and learned Gentleman must be getting the information from the newspapers or from a few Tory parents in the area. He is certainly not getting the facts, and he will not send the inspectors in to find out exactly what is going on in the school.

What is happening at Stratford school is disastrous. I used regularly to visit that school and brought pupils from it to the House. The pupils are now going home in tears, seeing their school crawled over not by Ministers but by the media. They see the police there daily because of the threats of violence. There is an atmosphere of intimidation. That is not the way to run education in Stratford or anywhere else, and the Secretary of State stands condemned for having created that situation in Stratford.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman ought to know that Her Majesty's inspectors went to the school in December. He will also know that one of the two governors whom I have appointed is the recently retired senior chief inspector from HMI. He is a very respected public servant, with whom I have an excellent working relationship and in whose judgment I trust.

Mr. Banks: The point has still not been addressed that the inspectors went in on 4 December and it is now 13 March. The Secretary of State is being negligent of his duties by not having ordered them to go in.

I realise that the time is now drawing to a close. However, in the circumstances of this guillotine motion, remembering the mistakes that the Secretary of State made in 1988, he should withdraw the motion and allow us to proceed properly and discuss the various amendments.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 302, Noes 72.

Division No. 112] **[2.49 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bra[illegible] Martin
Brazier, Jul[illegible]
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Sir Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Sir Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir D. *(Calder Vly)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gordon, Mildred
Hain, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hoey, Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
McWilliam, John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Mowlam, Marjorie
O'Hara, Edward
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ray Powell.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Order of the House [30th January] be supplemented as follows:

Lords Amendments

1. The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting and, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be brought to a conclusion two hours after the commencement of the proceedings on this Order.

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

- (a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment of the Lords Amendment made by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the Lords Amendment or, as the case may be, in the Lords Amendment as amended;
- (b) if Mr. Speaker is satisfied that any remaining Lords Amendment imposes a charge upon the public revenue such as is required to be authorised by resolution of the House under Standing Order No. 47 (Certain proceedings relating to public money) and that such charge has not been so authorised, he shall in accordance with Standing Order No. 76(3) (Lords Amendments deemed to be disagreed to) declare he is so satisfied and shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment;
- (c) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—
    - (i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;
    - (ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;
    - (iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr. Speaker which have not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the Amendments; and
    - (iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;
- (d) as soon as the House has agre[illegible] disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment move by a Minister of the Crown relevant to the Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3. Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on the Bill.

4. The proceedings on any such further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

5. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

- (a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;
- (b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—
    - (i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;
    - (ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and
    - (iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposal.

Supplemental

6.—(1) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

7.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments or on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and on the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a Minister of the Crown, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Education (Schools) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 2

FUNCTIONS OF THE CHIEF INSPECTOR FOR ENGLAND

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, line 1, leave out ("and")

3.1 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this we may also discuss Lords amendments Nos. 2, 6, 7, 13 and 14.

Mr. Clarke: I shall speak with comparative brevity on the amendments, which I recommend to the House, because we are restricted on time. The Opposition have spent the first hour of the two hours available to us this afternoon protesting about the lack of time to consider the Bill. Had they not protested at such length, they could have spent two hours on the Bill's terms. The progress of discussions on the Bill has been bedevilled in that way before. The fact is that they have little to say about it. They prefer to occupy the time available by arguing about procedure because an hour would be difficult to fill if the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) sought to express his full thoughts on the matter before us.

I trust that the amendments will not be especially controversial. They were tabled by the Government, in response to concerns in another place that, under the Bill as drafted, it might have been possible for chief inspectors and registered inspectors to neglect to report on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The amendments were suggested from the Cross Benches and were accepted with support from both sides.

Although those matters were mentioned in section 1 of the Education Reform Act 1988, as essential purposes of the school curriculum, and although inspectors are already required to report on educational quality and standards, the Bill did not expressly draw attention to them. The amendments place clearly on the face of the Bill a duty for inspectors to report on those important matters.

Parents will receive an objective assessment of what their children's schools do to ensure that a pupil's development is encouraged and of how effectively they meet their aims. I stress that we are not asking inspectors to judge what values a school espouses, but only to report on how such matters are tackled.

I believe that the amendments are acceptable and recommend that the House agree with them.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): It does not lie in the mouth of the Secretary of State to complain about shortage of time, although no doubt he will do so, because the guillotine is his. He determined that we should have such little time.

We, too, support the amendments, which are sensible. As the Secretary of State said, they clarify a matter which was of some concern to their lordships.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 2, line 15, leave out "on matters of good practice"

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendment No. 8.

Mr. Clarke: Let me make it clear that I am not complaining about the lack of time; I am merely pointing out that these guillotines come to the Opposition's rescue. They could not fill the time if we allowed an open-ended debate.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: I will in just a second.

On the Further and Higher Education Bill, for example, we passed a guillotine with the most generous provision of time, but I understand that the Committee adjourned for lengthy dinners and early nights and did not occupy the time provided. There is a paucity of policy from the Opposition. As far as I can see, they do not seriously disagree with the Bill, although the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) goes rambling off on his standards commission and the rest. We need a guillotine to save the Opposition from the embarrassment of lengthy debates on these matters.

Mr. Haynes: I am not surprised at the right hon. and learned Gentleman speaking in that fashion. He appears to be in a hurry. He was not in a hurry to go upstairs and sit in on the Committee stage of the Bill. Now he has the opportunity to talk about the Bill and to put us in the picture about what it is all about, so that we understand. There is no need for him to rush. He can take his time.

Mr. Clarke: I am taking my time because I do not think that the Opposition have anything to occupy the hour which they are determined to occupy and which is left to them under the guillotine procedure. The Bill went through the Committee smoothly. I think that the hon. Gentleman was a member of it.

Mr. Haynes: The Secretary of State was not on the Committee.

Mr. Clarke: I was not on it. It is interesting that the official Opposition Members on the Standing Committee did not press the policy that was eventually carried by their noble Friends. When Labour and Liberal peers in another place carried an amendment in an ambush in the course of an evening, the Labour party appeared gratefully to grasp it as a policy. The Government have agreed to it, with the result that the Bill will reach the statute book in a short time.

The amendments should give rise to little controversy. They remove from the Bill the specific suggestion that chief inspectors must give guidance to registered inspectors on matters of good practice in relation to the carrying out of school inspections and the writing of inspection reports. The Opposition in another place suggested the amendments, which commanded general support.

The qualification that stood previously in the Bill was superfluous and the amendments are in keeping with the independent role that we have given to Her Majesty's chief inspector through the Bill's provisions. Both the hon. Member for Blackburn and I place weight on the independence of HMCI. My contention is that the Bill

[Mr. Clarke]

with the amendments gives HMCI greater independence than previous holders of such an office have ever enjoyed. The hon. Gentleman's policy, explained a few moments ago, would make the inspector subject to a new quango. The inspector would lose the right to report directly to the Secretary of State; he would do so indirectly through the quango. Under Labour's proposals, HMI would lose its independence in a way that cannot be compared with what has happened at any time in its long, distinguished history.

It is wrong to suggest that the Bill was introduced by me or any of my right hon. or hon. Friends out of hostility to HMI. The Bill places HMI in a new key role and gives greater independence to that office than it has ever had before. The amendments are consistent with the Government's policy.

Mr. Haynes: I do not know whether the Secretary of State will get away with that. He argues in the same way every time. He knows as well as we do—*[Interruption.]* I am referring to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, not to you Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Comptroller of Her Majesty's Household (Mr. David Lightbown): Order.

Mr. Haynes: It is the hon. Gentleman who is out of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am on my feet, not one of the Government Whips.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman has always complained about inspectors' reports on schools because to his mind they have gone in the wrong direction. The inspectors have often been critical of the Government's policy on schools. After the inspectors visit the schools and submit their report, the Government hide it for I do not know how long before we can see the damned thing.

Mr. Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Haynes: I shall give way to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. He cannot be allowed to get away with what he just said. He has a lot to learn, as he will be in opposition when he gets back in, if he gets back in.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman and I will behave with our usual courtesy towards each other in what are, I regret to say, his last days in the House. I shall miss him when he ceases to represent Ashfield, which is so near my constituency.

The hon. Gentleman made a wild allegation, which is untypical of him, that in the past I had criticised HMI reports. During my entire time in office I have never disagreed with any of HMI's reports. I have published them and I have agreed with them, although I may not always have agreed with the interpretations placed on some of them by my political opponents. I have never objected to the advice that I have received from HMI or to its reports, and it is a complete myth to claim that I have. The Bill strengthens HMI; it does not weaken it.

Mr. Haynes: The right hon. and learned Gentleman must not travel down that road. I thought that I had made my swan-song last night, but he pulled me into the debate —he always pulls me in with the comments that he makes. He cannot kid me about the inspectorate and its reports. He might not have said what I claimed at the Dispatch Box, as that would have embarrassed him, but it has been said elsewhere. The right hon. and learned Gentleman must not shake his head. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I know what has been going on in relation to the inspectorate and we know that that is why the right hon. and learned Gentleman wanted to transfer it to the private sector—he wanted to have control over them.

Mr. Straw: I am even sorrier that my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) is leaving this place. He may have just made his last speech, although there are proceedings in the House on Monday and perhaps he will be here to intervene——

Mr. Haynes: I shall be here on Monday.

Mr. Straw: Good, we shall look forward to even more speeches from my hon. Friend before Parliament finally dissolves.

The Secretary of State protested again that he had not come up with the extraordinary, bizarre Bill to privatise the inspectorate as part of a scheme to undermine HMI's independence. He has never explained satisfactorily to anyone how on earth a Bill designed to emasculate HMI and reduce its numbers from more than 470 to 175 would do anything but severely weaken HMI's position. Large numbers of Her Majesty's inspectors were to be made redundant or moved away, their powers were to be withdrawn and, more importantly, 150 years of experience were to be destroyed by the Secretary of State. He knows that.

The only reservation that I have about pursuing the allegation that the Secretary of State made the proposal in order to undermine the inspectorate is that it suggests that there is some coherence behind the reasons for the Bill. I and most others suspect that the Secretary of State never thought that he would have to present the measure to the House. He was asked to write the parents charter as part of the Prime Minister's wheeze at about this time last year —an allegedly winning agenda for the autumn election. The Secretary of State found himself having to say something about the so-called parents charter at the end of July.

Very late in the day—even after advertisements had been placed for a replacement for Eric Bolton—a review of the inspectorate was set up. Before the review was over, the Secretary of State announced the decision on it.

There is a curious resemblance between the madcap scheme in the Bill and a seven-page pamphlet written by the right-wing ideologues in Wandsworth, including the chief inspector, Mr. John Burchall. He wrote a pamphlet for the Centre for Policy Studies proposing the privatisation of the inspectorate and the emasculation of HMI. The original Bill and the pamphlet are remarkably similar.

My reservation about accusing the Secretary of State of deciding deliberately to undermine the independence of HMI is that I am conceding too much to the coherence of his policy. I think that it happened accidentally, when the Secretary of State saw the inspector's policy proposal and decided that he could go along with it in the hope that there would never be legislation on it.

As I said, and will continue to say throughout the election, our proposals, as every inspector knows, strengthen Her Majesty's inspectorate. They place the senior chief inspector in the same constitutional position to the education standards commission as the Comptroller and Auditor General is in relation to the Public Accounts Committee or the controller of the Audit Commission is in relation to the Audit Commission. I have never heard it suggested that the controller of the Audit Commission is the creature of the commission, because he has clear constitutional duties that are separate from the commission.

3.15 pm

Moreover, for the first time, the inspectorate, directing and supervising the work of local inspectors in a single national service, will have a clear point of report, not directly to Ministers but to the House. Standards have become such a highly charged political issue—in many ways that is good, because it reflects the increasing importance of education and the increasing sense that we have to attack the problem of standards—that the independence of those who monitor what is going on in schools must be clear beyond peradventure.

The Secretary of State has refused our proposal to provide safeguards over the appointment of the senior chief inspector by the Secretary of State—for example, by having it made by the Civil Service Commission. Therefore, as long as the chief inspector and the inspectorate have to serve two masters—the public interest and Minister's private interests—their independence will be compromised. It would be far more satisfactory to have them as a body reporting to Parliament where the detailed scrutiny of their work, through the commission, took place in the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts. Inspectors will be available to give Ministers advice, but that is a separate matter.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that he can commend this arrangement, which I am sure that all concerned with education would endorse, by saying that the inspectors under this plan will be responsible to all the parents all the time rather than to the Secretary of State, who, even at best, can be representative only of some of the parents some of the time?

Mr. Straw: Yes, I would say that without hesitation. Moreover, under our proposals for an education standards commission, parents end up with much more than simply the paper choice that they get under the parents charter and, in many cases, under the Government's proposals.

Parents' rights are reduced, as people are understanding, because in many areas it is not parents who are choosing a school but schools that are choosing parents. Our proposals give parents real rights, and the local authority's performance will be inspected. That has never happened in the past 13 years, which the Secretary of State bleats on about when he uses local authorities as a punchbag.

For a brief period, HMI did snapshot inspections of local authority areas, but that policy was abandoned by the Secretary of State or his predecessor. We would require, by law, that the performance of the local authority be properly inspected. We would ensure that if parents felt that a local authority was behaving in a way likely to damage standards, they could appeal, through a properly constituted governors meeting, to the education standards commission and secure action.

In Committee, Conservative Members asked me about this London borough or another borough that had been in the news. There was no dubiety about my answer, because we feel that the whole aim of policy should be to secure a high standard of education. If a local authority is doing a proper job, that is fine. If it is not, then the education standards commission and HMI will come down on it like a ton of bricks.

Let me also make it clear to the Secretary of State, as he appears to be listening—again there is no dubiety about this, and it is all on the record—that the power to issue directions that is contained in sections 68 and 99 of the Education Act 1944, which has caused considerable problems would be strengthened. The commission could make a recommendation to the Secretary of State about the exercise of those powers and could issue directions both in relation to a school and to a local authority.

A clear message would go out that if governors were doing their job, that would be fine, but if they fell down, the interests of the children would come well above their constitutional position.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are touching on important matters. Both sides are espousing an interest in the independence of HMI. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) gave details of how he thinks that should be achieved. I shall briefly discuss the origin of the Bill's approach. The hon. Members for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and for Blackburn give every appearance of believing the suggestions that the Bill is based on hostility to HMI, that it comes from the Centre for Policy Studies, and so on.

When I became Secretary of State, I thought that, if we were to move towards a system of greater parental choice between schools and greater accountability to parents, we needed more information for parents so that their choice could be effective and informed. In fact, I felt that there was a need for a system of quality assurance to improve informed parental choice and public accountability. That led to a review of HMI's position in any system of quality assurance. As a result of that review within my Department, proposals emerged for an inspection at schools level, with inspectorates chosen by the governors but registered with and monitored by HMI. That is the origin of the Bill.

As the hon. Gentleman said again today, the Bill has been presented as some sort of privatisation or emasculation of HMI. As a word, privatisation was always crude and clumsy, and it has never been more misused. HMI remains with statutory independence and statutory powers under the Bill. The reason why the numbers appear to be dramatically reduced is, as the hon. Gentleman knows, because those inspectors involved in higher education will move to the quality assurance section of the higher education funding council, while those involved in further education will be accountable to the further education funding council. The reduction in numbers is not as dramatic as the hon. Gentleman suggests. It was based on the best judgment of the senior chief inspector and me about the numbers required to do the task required. We were not artificially fixing the numbers. The role that we gave the inspectors was powerful and independent. However, because of amendments passed in the other place, the numbers will probably rise.

It is absurd to refer to the reduction in the numbers required to do the task and say that that implies privatisation. Under the Bill, HMI remains independent, respected and with more independence of the Secretary of State than ever before.

Mr. Straw: If the right hon. and learned Gentleman has such confidence in his proposals, why has he never been willing to publish the review? I do not want to keep hearing him coming out with stuff about official advice being confidential—I know that. However, I also happen to know that plenty of his colleagues have arranged for similar reviews to be published. The Rayner scrutiny of HMI in the early 1980s was published. Most Government reviews, of which this is one, are published. What was the Secretary of State scared of when he suppressed the review, and why did he become angry when it was leaked? Would not it have been better for the explanation and understanding of his policy if he had put the review before the House?

Mr. Clarke: Every time the hon. Gentleman has raised that matter, I have said that my view is that advice to Ministers should not be published. Were he ever to become a Secretary of State, I do not think that he would publish most of the advice given to him, either. Most advice prepared for the purposes of publication is different to advice given to Ministers. As it happens, *The Independent* claimed an extensive leak of the review, which appeared in that newspaper shortly after it had been prepared for me. The hon. Gentleman has not drawn extensively on that leak. If *The Independent* was correct, the hon. Gentleman would know that the account that I have just given of the origin of the policy is correct. He knows that he is in a better position to make a fuss about the apparent banishing of the review——

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Instead of listening to Labour Members, will my right hon. and learned Friend visit Bolton to talk to parents who are keen on his reforms—particularly those of children at Crompton Fold primary school, which hopes to secure full grant-maintained status by the time that its next term begins, on 27 April?

Mr. Clarke: I may have an opportunity to do so in the next three or four weeks, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his invitation.

The hon. Member for Blackburn contrasts the amendment with his proposals for HMI's greater independence, which I have another opportunity to challenge now. The hon. Gentleman is misleading the House, which he accused me of doing, when he said that HMI would, under Labour's proposals, have more independence. In fact, they threatened the inspectorate's independence in a way in which it has not been threatened since it was founded.

"Raising the Standard" states that the hon. Gentleman's great quango, the commission, which would play an all-singing, all-dancing role in Labour's education policy,

> "would be responsible for inspecting and measuring the effectiveness of schools, and for securing measures to raise standards. It would take over the inspectorial work of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education . . . and the bulk of the Inspectorate itself."

That makes it clear that HMI would be subordinate to the new commission and that its inspectorial work would be taken over by that quango.

HMI currently determines its own programme of work, but in future that would be done by the commission. At present, HMI reports directly to the Secretary of State; Labour wants it to report to the commission. The hon. Gentleman's analogy with the controller of the Audit Commission and with the Audit Commission is very revealing. The hon. Gentleman says that HMI would be in the same position as the controller—but he is not independent of the Audit Commission, but its servant. The commission appoints him.

The hon. Gentleman's model and statement of policy suggests that HMI should be made subordinate to a commission that he, the Secretary of State, would appoint. Under Labour, the inspectorate would lose its independence, and its inspectorial role would be reduced.

The hon. Gentleman opposes a Bill that will give HMI enhanced status and more independence than ever before. If, at this late hour, the hon. Gentleman has seen the light on the road to Damascus, really believes that inspection should be free of political control and freer of the Government, and that there should be independent inspection of schools; and if—wonder of wonders—Labour believes that the results of inspections should be divulged to parents, and that the public should be allowed to know the strengths and weaknesses of the schools that their children attend, I welcome the hon. Member for Blackburn to the fold. However, the hon. Gentleman's published documents and his speeches today make it clear that he is dressing up behind an air of independence a desire to take over HMI and to make it subordinate to a body that a Labour Secretary of State would appoint.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State talks utter nonsense. Nothing in "Raising the Standard" suggests that HMI's programme should be subject to the commission. In suggesting that I, as Secretary of State, would appoint the members of the commission, the right hon. and learned Gentleman fails to understand that that body would report to Parliament. Its members would be nominated by the Secretary of State but would be subject to endorsement of the all-party Education, Science and Arts Select Committee.

That provision was specifically included in "Raising the Standard" to avoid precisely the kind of partisan appointments of which the Secretary of State is a past master, and which have so damaged the apparent independence of standing of bodies such as the Schools Examinations and Assessment Council—and of district and regional health authorities when the right hon. and learned Gentleman was Secretary of State for Health.

The Secretary of State is the last person in the House to talk about appointments being independent of Minister's partisan interests. The right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot make any appointment without first asking of the person where his political affiliation lies. He is the last person to be trusted with any appointment that has any independence attached to it. The public will have no trouble at all——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that he is making an intervention and not introducing an amendment.

3.30 pm

Mr. Straw: I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for your indulgence on the penultimate sitting of this Parliament.

The public will have no difficulty in judging which sort of appointment system will be more independent. There is the choice between the Secretary of State, with his previous convictions, appointing the chief inspector and having him report to him, the Secretary of State, and our system, under which the membership of the commission would have to be approved by an all-party Select Committee, which would then make the appointment. It would then report——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must now follow my guideline and resume his seat.

Mr. Clarke: That was not an intervention: it was a wild, intemperate and inaccurate outburst. The hon. Gentleman realised that I was exposing his policies. He is playing at the onset of a campaign in which regard for truth and accuracy is beginning to fade rather rapidly. I wish that it did not in political debates.

The hon. Member for Ashfield accused me of attacking Her Majesty's inspectorate reports. I have told him that I have never attacked one. The hon. Member for Blackburn has said that, before appointing anyone to a post, I always ask about his or her political affiliations. To the best of my knowledge and recollection, I have never asked anybody whom I was appointing to a post about his political affiliation. I have appointed ex-Labour Members as chairmen of health authorities. I defy the hon. Gentleman to produce any evidence.

The hon. Member for Blackburn is trying to evade his own policy document. When I do not refer to it, he says that I have not read it. When I read it, he is deeply embarrassed. He has spent the afternoon proclaiming the independence of the inspectorate. I have quoted his document accurately and temperately and, as I discovered from his reaction, extremely damagingly. The relevant passage reads that the commission

"would take over the inspectorial work of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and the bulk of the Inspectorate itself."

The staff of the inspectorate would be made the employees of the commission, and they would lose their independence. It is ridiculous for the hon. Gentleman to argue that he is not taking away the independence of the inspectorate when his own words have always asserted that. The amendments are consistent with the independence of the inspectorate. The Bill makes Her Majesty's chief inspector more independent of the Government than at any time in the past. That being the reality, I suggest that the House should agree with the Lords in the proposed amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 2, line 16, after "schools" insert "in England".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 9 and 24.

Mr. Clarke: The amendments would make drafting changes. Under the guillotine procedure, the Opposition have less than 18 minutes. They can debate the amendments if they are becoming desperately short of material to keep the debate going, but otherwise I suggest that the House might take them on the nod.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 5, in page 2, line 29, at end insert

("( ) The Chief Inspector for England may at any time give advice to the Secretary of State on any matter connected with schools, or a particular school, in England.")

Read a Second time.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I beg to move amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, in line 4, at end add

"including whether there is adequate finance available to ensure the provision of good-quality education."

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendments (b) and (c) to the Lords amendment, amendment No. 10 and amendment (d) to that amendment.

Ms. Armstrong: I cannot say that I am overjoyed to be moving the amendment at this time on a Friday afternoon. I have regarded my involvement in the consideration of education Bills as a learning exercise, and I have learnt an enormous amount from the Secretary of State this afternoon. I have learnt that so long as one is a Tory Secretary of State it is possible to say anything and expect it to be believed. I know that most people throughout the country, along with myself, do not believe a great deal of the assertions of the right hon. and learned Gentleman. I began to think that I was in the middle of another Tory party broadcast. *The Sunday Times* analysed his broadcast last week and told us that four of five assertions were entirely untrue. Perhaps that was why I expected the right hon. and learned Gentleman to blush when he moved the first group of amendments.

The amendments deal with the powers of the inspectorate when reporting to the Secretary of State. This matter was debated in Standing Committee. It seemed to us that the Government were defining so carefully the inspection aspects that it might be impossible for the inspectors to comment on some of those aspects and on how Government policy was affecting the ability of individual schools to enable each child to learn as much as possible and make progress. We realise that the Government will not accept the amendments, but we believe it important that they should be made to think about them.

I am amazed by the way that the Secretary of State has continued to defend his Bill against all the evidence. The evidence that has been given by people in all parts of the country, who have supported other aspects of his reforms, does not seem to matter much to the Secretary of State. They are therefore completely bewildered by his intransigence and by his determination to say that the Bill equates with anything like a parents charter.

Amendment *(a)* deals with the right and the opportunity for the senior chief inspector to include in his report comments on whether adequate finance is available to ensure the provision of good quality education. The Government frequently tell us that expenditure on education has nothing to do with the outcome. That is an interesting argument. Conservative Members have made it clear time and again that they are so concerned about the quality of education for their own children that they choose to opt out of the state system, since the resources provided for the maintained sector are insufficient. *[Interruption.]* Again, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) has not read the amendment. It refers to adequate finance being made available to ensure the provision of good quality education.

Inspectors should be able to comment on whether there is a sufficient number of highly qualified teachers in a school, on whether the teaching staff have adequate and

[Ms. Armstrong]

appropriate qualifications, accompanied by appropriate remuneration, and on whether the resources available to a school are sufficient for it to provide the right amount of equipment, the right number of books and the right laboratories that it needs if it is to implement the national curriculum. If children are not provided with appropriate texbooks, writing materials, computers, sports equipment, musical instruments and all the other facilities that are needed if they are to benefit from a good education, the quality of their education will not improve and will probably decline.

I know from various reports and from the parents who have written, rung and come to see me that some schools are requesting a significant financial contribution to enable them to continue to provide experienced teachers. That is a particular problem with the local management of schools formula, but it faces many other schools. I do not accept that schools should believe that they can employ only newly qualified teachers because the formula to which they are working does not enable them to carry an experienced teaching force. Nor do I accept that it is legitimate for parents to be put in a position in which they have to contribute for their children to receive a basic education.

Recently, a parent came to see me in tears. She has stopped going to parents' meetings, first, because her husband is long-term unemployed, she is not working and the visit involves a fairly costly bus journey. More than that, she said that whenever she went she was expected to contribute to a raffle or something else for fund-raising. She could not do so and felt embarrassed about that. When that creeps into parents' opportunity to consult teachers about their children's education, we must be in a very bad way. It must be recognised that it is legitimate for the inspector to comment on the quality of resources available to schools when he reports to the Secretary of State.

Amendment (b) considers

"whether class sizes need to be reduced in order to ensure the provision of good quality education".

The Secretary of State is on record as saying that class sizes are irrelevant. I am told by the information officer of the Independent Schools Information Service that, according to its surveys, one of the key criteria that make parents choose to send their children to independent schools is because class sizes are small there. Therefore, class size means something to those parents. We want to ensure that class sizes in the state sector do not continue to increase as they are at the moment.

I was horrified at the latest reports about the number of children being taught in classes of 40 or more pupils. It is a small percentage in terms of the whole school population. Nevertheless, for thousands of children it is their only experience in a class at that stage of their career. Although the number may not be large in terms of the overall school population, it is critical for each of those children. That is why we have said that one of our first acts will be to ensure that no child has to be taught in a class of more than 40 pupils. We shall reduce class sizes and introduce a maximum limit until they are reduced to 30.

I visit and have regular contact with a number of primary schools and I know that class size is regarded as important not only by teachers but by parents and people on governing bodies who are determined to improve their schools. We believe that it is an issue of national importance and should be dealt with by any Government. We should have liked it to be dealt with by this Government, but it will of course be dealt with by the next Labour Government.

Amendment (c) deals with the manner in which information is provided under clause 16 which deals with information and what have been called league tables. Essentially, the amendments give Her Majesty's chief inspector the power to advise the Secretary of State on any aspects of the information being given by schools. We argued consistently in Committee that the information that the Government had specified to date was too narrow, and was not clear. The criteria according to which information is to be given still allow too many variations.

3.45 pm

We should like more information to be available, but we also tabled the amendments to ask the Secretary of State to get rid of some of the rhetoric—I know that that is difficult for him. I am talking about the rhetoric that we have heard from him about information. Those aspects of the Bill are not necessary, because there is already the power for that information to be given, and under regulations it has to be given.

The Bill is largely unnecessary legislation, which adds little to the present law on maintained schools. Its most significant effect is to require independent schools—including city technology colleges and their arts equivalents—and non-maintained special schools to publish the same information that maintained schools are required to publish.

We seek to ensure that we at least place on record again the fact that clause 16 is in the Bill not because the law needed altering but because the Secretary of State wanted to give himself the opportunity to publish the parents charter. A lot of money has been spent on that, but most of the information involved is already made available to parents.

We should like the information available to parents to be wider and to deal more clearly with children's progress in schools. Again, the Secretary of State will say that the Opposition want to make the information so complex that no one will be able to deal with it. I reject that suggestion. I believe that parents will be able to deal with information which shows them how their individual children are progressing and also how effective the school is.

At present, the latest league tables for standard assessment tests have so many problems, as well as several inaccuracies, as to render the whole exercise somewhat farcical. Are the Government serious about the independence of Her Majesty's inspectorate? I have heard the Secretary of State speak many times. I am not a cynical person, but he drives one to cynicism when he keeps repeating his opinion of our policy when he has not really tried to understand it.

I am amused when in other debates in the Chamber Conservative Members tell us how good the Audit Commission is and how we ought to value it more, because when we propose similar bodies for education, in order to recognise nationally the importance of having standards across the board, clear criteria by which to judge them and a clear means of measuring and tackling school effectiveness, the Secretary of State tries to be cynical about that.

I am confident that in the next few weeks we shall be able to ensure that there is a Government who are really worried about standards. Our amendments would at least give the Government the opportunity to recognise the independence which many fear will disappear—the ability of the inspectorate to comment on the way in which Government policy is affecting schools' ability to deliver the quality of education that they wish. It is right that the inspectorate should comment on how Government policy affects schools. The amendments attempt to get information from the Government on that subject.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The amendments to the broad, sweeping Lords amendments are not necessary. It is not necessary to draw particular attention to the funding of schools when it has increased by 50 per cent. per pupil during the lifetime of this Government. I am grateful that the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) referred to the parents charter, which she still attacked. She seemed to defend the fact that at one time her political allies refused to distribute it. From beginning to end of the debate——

It being two hours after commencement of proceedings on the motion relating to the Education (Schools) Bill (allocation of time), MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question already proposed from the chair, pursuant to Order this day.*

Amendment to the Lords amendment negatived.

Remaining Lords amendments agreed to. [Some with Special Entry.]

Army Bill

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered. Order for Third Reading read.

3.51 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The decision to merge the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Royal Irish Rangers was especially important because it affects regiments that have stood for more than 20 years in the front line of the battle against terrorism. The decision is not a criticism of the UDR or of the Royal Irish Rangers. There is no conspiracy here and no hidden agenda.

The aim is to create in the home service battalions of the new regiment an even more professional, effective and flexible security force which is capable of playing an even more decisive role on behalf of all law-abiding people of Northern Ireland in bringing about the defeat of terrorism. The agenda is very much in the interests of Northern Ireland, of the UDR and of its members.

The UDR is about 6,000 strong with a roughly 50:50 ratio between full-timers and part-timers. We expect to maintain the home service battalions of the Royal Irish Regiment at about the same total strength and with a part-time element of about the same size. Obviously, we are not going to commit ourselves to precise figures, but I can give the House a reassurance. Part-time service is a vital and cost-effective feature of the UDR and we expect to retain it at about its present level.

The home service battalions will, of course, be only one element in our total security forces deployed in Northern Ireland, which amount to about 17,000. The total number of troops deployed may vary in the future, depending on the security situation, just as it has varied in the past.

We are still working on the detailed terms of service for the new regiment. We recognise entirely that members of the UDR did not join to travel the world but joined to serve locally the people of Northern Ireland. We shall acknowledge that in the new terms of service for the home service battalions. Those terms will limit the service that is required to service within Northern Ireland.

For some, however, the opportunity to volunteer for a tour of duty or training with the general service element of the regiment may be attractive. It may enhance their military proficiency and chances of promotion. We certainly believe that for some, training or duty outside Northern Ireland will be to their wider benefit.

The principal cost element to which the Bill relates is military manpower. We shall continue to give the House the information about numbers in the home service battalions which we provide about the UDR at present. I commend the Bill to the House.

3.54 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): It is greatly to be regretted that, in the dying hours of this Parliament, we should be giving the Bill its Third Reading. The matter is highly controversial in Northern Ireland. Anyone who listened to a show on local radio last night will understand that. The charges made were very serious indeed.

I cannot accept—I wish that I could—what the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said. I would merely ask him about the poll carried out by the Ulster

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

Defence Regiment to ascertain the opinion of the regiment and of people in Northern Ireland. At a meeting at which the Minister was present, elected representatives of Northern Ireland found out for the first time that a public relations job had been done. We were entitled to know who did it. We were also entitled to know the sample that was taken and the attitude of members of the regiment. Some of them went public and said that they had been handed documents by their superior officer and told that, when on television and speaking to the press, they were to follow the official line that the officers were taking. They were told that if they did not take that line, and if they made television appearances or talked to the press, they would be subject to Army discipline. I do not think that that is the way in which to get a good response from loyal men who take their lives in their hands every time they put on their uniform or if they are known to be members of the UDR.

I utterly deplore the fact that Northern Ireland representatives have not had the opportunity to discuss the Bill as it should be discussed. I was promised that there would be representatives of all parties in the House when the Bill went into Standing Committee. The opportunity to serve on a Committee considering the Bill was denied to my party and to the Social Democratic and Labour party, which is interested in having the regiment abolished, as its representatives have always said.

We must have full democratic discussion of matters relevant to Northern Ireland. We must be able to probe the Government and table amendments, yet, as a representative of Northern Ireland, and representing a Northern Ireland party, I have had no opportunity to move any amendments to the Bill. Is that what democracy is coming to? We are told that there is much support for the Bill. Even if that is so and I am in a tiny minority, I should be allowed to exercise my democratic rights through the institutions of the House established for that purpose.

I feel strongly that it would have been better had the Government withdrawn the Bill at this stage. If the Conservatives are in government after the election, they could bring it back. As the Labour party agrees with the Bill, a Labour Government could also bring it back. We could then have a full and proper discussion in Committee and Northern Ireland Members could table amendments to make the Bill more in keeping with what they wish. That opportunity has been denied to us and, late on Friday, the Government are pressing on regardless in an attempt to get the Bill on the statute book as quickly as possible.

In the name of those whom I represent and in the name of the vast majority of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, I must protest. The question has been asked: why do not members of the regiment resign if they are unhappy with the proposals? Why should they? They volunteer to stand by and to serve their country. Yet people say, "There have not been many resignations from the regiment, so all its members must be happy." That claim is illogical and unjustified. As I said, a man who joins the UDR puts himself and his family at risk. The men who do that are loyal men who want to defend their country against the acts of terrorism that are taking place there.

There is one word on the lips of the people of Northern Ireland in respect of the Bill and it is "betrayal". Those people include the highest to the lowest parts of society. Why do they say it? Hon. Members seem to think that Ulster people say "betrayal" when they have no arguments to put. However, when one studies the history and how the thought of the Bill was born in the Government's mind, one sees how justified Ulster people are. The thought of doing away with the Ulster Defence Regiment did not start in the House or with the Government; it started with the Irish Republic. It started on the very day on which the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed. I have with me a statement by the then Prime Minister of the Irish Republic. He said:

> "When we get into the conference we will put forward Irish views and proposals for the progressive establishment of a new security system which would obviate the need for the UDR to be involved in local security. This will be pursued sensitively, carefully and firmly."

Here we have the blueprint for the very thing that the House is asked to do. We must compare that statement with the statement that was made in the House. We were told that we are not abolishing the UDR but are making a better Army career structure for the UDR. That is exactly what the Taoiseach suggested—that the way to get rid of the UDR was to obviate its place in the security of Northern Ireland.

I must put a salute firmly on record. The obituary that was written by the Government does not take into account everything that has happened in respect of the UDR. More than 200 UDR men have been killed by terrorists, 44 former members have been murdered by the IRA and 377 have been seriously wounded. The Ulster Defence Regiment has given value for money. It costs £1·5 million a week, whereas the RUC costs £1·5 million a day. No other aspect of the security forces is so cost-effective. In 20 years, the UDR has trained 40,000 members. Of them, 17 have been convicted for murder. Four are having their appeals reheard. The UDR is responsible for only 0·28 per cent. of all deaths in Northern Ireland. Republican terrorists have killed 250 times as many people as the Ulster Defence Regiment in carrying out its statutory duties.

That is part of the record of this regiment. It ill becomes me not to pay the highest tribute to the men who left their homes, their children, their wives and their businesses to go on to the streets of Northern Ireland when the House could find no one else to do the job. Those men were recruited when the House, in its folly, abolished the Ulster Special Constabulary, a gallant body of men who defended Ulster so well that the official historian of the IRA has said that as long as they were there the IRA could not do the task that it wanted to do in taking over Northern Ireland. That was written by Tim Pat Coogan in the official biography of the IRA. It is a fine tribute.

History is now repeating itself. The UDR is a gallant regiment which the House should honour. In fact, a few weeks before the guillotine fell on the regiment, Her Majesty the Queen gave her colours to four of its battalions and spoke in the highest possible manner of the gallantry of those men. There has been and there continues to be, however, a vicious and diabolical campaign of slander against the regiment. We have had all cries. The greatest cry has come from the IRA. It has cried out, "Get rid of the Ulster Defence Regiment."

If the Minister of State for the Armed Forces believes that he is giving the right message to the people of Northern Ireland by pressing the Bill through today, he is gravely mistaken. It gives the wrong message at the wrong time to the people of Northern Ireland and those who have their backs against the wall under terrorism. I appeal to the Minister. Nothing will be lost if he withdraws the Bill tonight. Let it come back to the new House of Commons. Let us have a further discussion on the matter and put it to a Committee in which those who represent Northern Ireland can move the necessary amendments. That is the way in which it should be done.

As I said, history is, sadly, repeating itself. The Bill tells us that all members of the Ulster Defence Regiment will cease to be members of that regiment. It amounts to an abandoning of the regiment. The briefing paper that Tory Members of Parliament received said that the Bill was the end—the word "end" was used—of the Ulster Defence Regiment. No amount of assurances or talk from the Government Front Bench could do away with that fact. The Bill destroys the Ulster Defence Regiment.

The only reason why we have the Bill is that the regiment was brought into existence by a Bill becoming law. The Government thought that they could achieve their purpose in another way. When we told them that they would have to come to the House, they discovered that primary legislation would be necessary. If it had not been necessary, the measure would have been steamrollered through long before and we would not even have had this debate. That is why many people in Northern Ireland feel that Northern Ireland legislation should be dealt with properly, with Bills being announced, going through the House and becoming Acts.

It seems ironic that the Government praise the Ulster Defence Regiment when they intend to do away with it. I read the Committee proceedings on the Bill, which lasted barely an hour. I read all the praise and sympathy for the UDR. Many hon. Members said, "Yes, we know how you feel." The people in Northern Ireland do not want any sympathy. They want tangible expressions from the House that it has taken cognisance of what is happening in Northern Ireland and is prepared to do something about it.

Passing the Bill will not achieve what the Minister tells us that he is trying to achieve—peace and a better way to handle security in Northern Ireland. I know people on the border whose only defence is the Ulster Defence Regiment. I know how they feel about the Bill. I know how the lonely families in South Armagh, Fermanagh and South Tyrone, the Londonderry border and South Down feel about the Bill. The last line of their defence is to be taken away from them. They deserve that defence and the House has a responsibility to give it to them. But today the House will take it from them.

No amount of appeals or assurances and no amount of lectures from the Government to representatives in Northern Ireland which do not tell them the things that they want to hear can alter the fact that fear is in the hearts of the people who have looked to the Ulster Defence Regiment and who received protection from it in the sad and bad days in the past which, although we do not want to prophesy, we are sure will continue.

The Bill is opposed and needs to be opposed. In discussions on the Bill I have been staggered by the way in which the measure has been sold to the people. I do not think that anyone in Northern Ireland, or even the Minister during his brief introductory statement to the Third Reading debate, has ever suggested that the Ulster Defence Regiment was like any other regiment in the British Army. It was called into existence to do a specific job, not to create professional soldiers or to give them a career in the Army but to enlist them for the defence of their homes, their families and the country that gave them their birth. That is why it is called the Ulster Defence Regiment.

The Bill will delete the name of Ulster, although the Ulster Defence Regiment has held an honoured place among the regiments of the British Army. Ministers tell us that they want to introduce an Irish dimension into the Army. The largest part of Ireland—26 counties—is no longer part of this United Kingdom and therefore is not especially interested in it.

The explanatory note to the Bill says that the new regiment will be called the Royal Irish Rangers. It seems to me that if the Government had wanted to put the word "Royal" in the name and had wanted to give continued assurance and some respite in the fear in the hearts of the people in Northern Ireland, they could have called it the Royal Ulster Regiment.

Why is there such bitter hatred and why does the Army want to delete the name "Ulster" from its records—records which have brought honour to men who fought in the regiment—and put "Irish" in its place? That is the question that the Minister has to ask.

As I said in a previous debate, the Minister's boss, the Secretary of State for Defence, made it clear to my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) and to me that never again would Ulster be used in the name of any regiment in the British Army and he said, "You know why."

What is the reason? It is because of opposition from Dublin to that name. The Bill was born out of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the Taoiseach of the Republic at the time made it crystal clear that it was his aim to see to it that that regiment was eventually disbanded. That is what will happen as a result of the Third Reading of the Bill.

At every Anglo-Irish Agreement meeting since the agreement was signed, the Foreign Minister of the Irish Republic has made a statement attacking the Ulster Defence Regiment. So, their propaganda went on and on.

At the last meeting—the first meeting under the new Irish Government—Mr. Andrews, the Foreign Minister, said that the Ulster Defence Regiment would be the first subject that he would raise at the Anglo-Irish Conference. There has been a well-orchestrated, well-planned campaign of propaganda to discredit the men of the Ulster Defence Regiment.

I should like to take the House to Castlederg. I should like to take hon. Members through the cemetery gate, turn them to the right-hand side and show them every plot in that graveyard where lie the bodies of UDR men murdered in that area by the IRA. I should like to do something else: I should like to tell hon. Members that when I sat in a room with the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland, Mr. Hermon, the body of men there said, "Sixteen of our colleague UDR men have been murdered. Now count us and come back in a year's time and see how many are left." I went back a year later, not Mr. Hermon, and those ranks were seriously depleted. Instead of men, there were vacant chairs. Some hon. Members may not want anybody to speak of these matters. Others may want to get away, and I can well understand why, but we will fail in our duty to represent Northern Ireland if we do not put these matters firmly on the record.

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

This matter goes down into the very depths of the Ulster people. We are dealing with life and death. We are dealing with something that the Government said that they would do for the people of Northern Ireland when they abolished the old Stormont Parliament and took responsibility for security from the elected representatives there: they said that they would safeguard our homes and lives—that they would defend us. They recruited this regiment of Ulster men who were prepared to put their lives on the line to give their fellows on both sides of the religious divide security and defence. How have they been treated?

This is no good day for the House, for the Minister of State for the Armed Forces or for the people of Northern Ireland. We need to face up to that. I know that our voices will be like those of one crying in the wilderness. Nevertheless, those voices must be raised strongly and loudly in the House today. What is going to happen in Northern Ireland?

Some weeks ago we had a most distressing, terrible, heart-rending period of violence. There were a number of atrocious, diabolical, tit-for-tat killings. What happened? The Secretary of State called out the UDR. That poured oil on the waters. A couple of weeks later we had comparative calm and peace in that area of the city of Belfast. Only recently, the Secretary of State called out the regiment to alleviate the distresses of Ulster in the midst of its agony, and it was successful. Yet, at the same time the Government were pressing ahead to destroy the regiment. I see that even the Minister paid tribute in some Government papers and the Committee to its ability to do such a task. Why, then, does the Minister put his hand to abolishing a regiment that has done particular good recently in the war-torn Province that my colleagues and I have to represent?

The past 21 years have been hard years for everyone in Ulster. Violence and terrorism have been on the increase. One thing has been highlighted month in, month out over those terrible years—the Government's inability to give the death blow to the men of violence. There has been an increase in the growth of terrorism and counter-terrorism. The UDR soldier has never ceased to be a target. In many cases he has been not only a target but a victim of IRA violence.

Members of the IRA do not come out, declare themselves and say, "Let's fight it out", but perhaps four or five of them wait for that man when he goes off duty, having done his stint to defend the people of Northern Ireland, and shoot him in cold blood. Sometimes, when he is coming home from earning money to keep his family and children, they shoot him, perhaps in his own yard before his children and his wife. Hon. Members should be on their feet today defending the Ulster Defence Regiment, instead of acting as they are.

The other day, on the border, four IRA men attacked one UDR man who had a handgun. He demonstrated his bravery and fought off the four of them. He shot one and the other three fled to the safe sanctuary of the Irish Republic, to be released later by the authorities there. That was an up-to-date incident. More than 45 members have been killed and 377 members have been seriously wounded, both on and off duty. I would challenge any hon. Member who questioned the gallantry and loyalty of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment.

It has been said to me, "Haven't those men done things that they shouldn't have done?" Of course they have, but have not members of other regiments from other parts of the United Kingdom also done things that they should not have done? Have not they, too, been charged with murder in the courts and found guilty? Why do not we make an even comparison between all the regiments that serve in Northern Ireland? Why must the Ulster man be pilloried? Why must the Ulster Defence Regiment soldiers be picked out to be treated in that way? I make a plea in the House that all our men who serve in those regiments should be defended. If one, two or more people do something wrong, the law takes care of them, but that does not challenge the integrity of the other regiment members.

The Government appear not to take account of the sacrifices that have been made. They are not prepared to say to the Ulster Defence Regiment, "You have done a good job; you will keep your name and we shall put 'Royal' before it. Why shouldn't you be honoured with that title? Why shouldn't the name of the only part of Ireland that is now in the United Kingdom be the name of one of our regiments?" Instead of that, the miserable little Bill is presented to the House today as the House is about to close down, and we are told that it is imperative that it is passed. I appeal to the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to think again. The people in Northern Ireland are saying, "All this is rubbing the noses of the suffering UDR members into the dirt. They would be better treated if they had not given their lives and paid the ultimate price in loyalty to defend the people of Ulster."

We are told that the Ulster Defence Regiment is sectarian. How can it be anything else when the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church tells its people that they should not join it, and the cardinal tells his people that the Ulster Defence Regiment should be done away with? We cannot expect Roman Catholic people to join it. If they do so, they have to leave their homes and live away. Their parents have to visit them in safe houses. Do hon. Members realise that police officers and members of the Ulster Defence Regiment who are Roman Catholics—I salute their loyalty and bravery—cannot go to their own homes? Their parents have to meet them in secret, safe houses in the city of Belfast or elsewhere, so they are cut off. We cannot expect people to serve in those circumstances.

No greater hardship has been suffered by any member of Her Majesty's forces than has been suffered by members of the UDR. They have borne the burden and the heat of the day and their share of hardship. The regiment, totalling 6,000 full-time and part-time members, is facing a crisis. The Minister cannot tell the House what will be left of the part-time sector of the regiment. It has been said that there might be 3,000 members. I noticed from the Committee *Hansard* that he said that he hoped that the forecast by the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) was right, and that 3,000 part-time members would be retained, but it is the part-time part of the regiment that is most important. It needs to be strengthened, not weakened, but the Minister cannot deny that when the Bill comes into force the regiment will be further weakened.

If the Government are honest when they say that the part-time element of the regiment should be increased, why has there been no intensive campaigning on its behalf? Why was there not a call-up asking people to join the regiment on a part-time basis? To emphasise only the career structure of the new amalgamated regiment is to miss the point, which is that there should be a determined effort to ensure that part-timers are not only kept at their present level but increased. The Government are not doing that. I will go further and make a prophecy, based on what the Minister said—the number of part-timers will be reduced more and more.

I am glad to say that it is acknowledged by those who are opposed to the Ulster Defence Regiment that it is not part of the problem. On Second Reading, my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. NcNair-Wilson) referred to a television programme, saying that it was unfair that the programme-makers should pillory the UDR and say that it was part of the problem that it had been brought into being to solve. No greater slander could have been made against the regiment.

The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour party, said at his party's conference that only 0·28 per cent. of violent deaths in Northern Ireland had been caused by the UDR and that 67 per cent. of those deaths had been caused by the Irish Republican Army or its associates. Put that 67 per cent. beside that 0·28 per cent. and take from the latter those who were killed because they were doing something that they had to be stopped from doing and the result shows that the UDR has the best record on killing of all the services in Northern Ireland. It is difficult to find any justification for what is happening today.

The UDR has been maligned by intrusive comments from successive foreign Governments of the Irish Republic. The Government, by their actions, show that they care nothing for the security of the Province. They are content to play the Republican green card of continuous criticism, ignoring the consequences of such catcalling. It was the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement which brought about the problem and gave rise to the proposed disbandment of the UDR, via a merger.

The Minister says that there is no conspiracy, no hidden agenda, and that we should not believe such rumours. He should come to Northern Ireland, where I would take him to homes that I have visited, with their curly-headed little boys and girls who have no father tonight. I would like him to speak to the wives so that they could tell him what they suffer when even the memory of their loved ones is maligned and attacked on television by those whose one aim is to blacken the name of the regiment. The House should wake up to the fact that if we keep blackening the names of our friends and those who are prepared to stand for law and order and decency, and to give their lives in defence of that, we shall be sowing the wind and one day we shall reap the whirlwind. That will happen because of the Bill.

The House should remember that under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement there is an obligation on the conference that at its every meeting it should consider the security position, and thus provide an opportunity to deal with policy issues, serious incidents and forthcoming events. The policy issue that has been hammered and hammered by the Irish Republic is the UDR. One would not think that the IRA was carrying out any murders. At every meeting an announcement is made that, once again, the UDR must be put under scrutiny. Once again, there must be an assurance that the police will accompany UDR members. Once again, we must agree to prevent the UDR from having any contact with members of the general public.

How can the UDR carry out its duties if it cannot deal with the general public? There has been a campaign to isolate the regiment and, that campaign having succeeded in the propaganda war, the way has been prepared for the regiment's final destruction. The will of the Government of the Republic to effect change in Northern Ireland and in the UDR was evident even before the defence review of Her Majesty's forces was announced. We saw it coming. I was relieved when I heard the Secretary of State for Defence say that there would be no change to the UDR. Suddenly, the greatest of all changes was announced—the regiment is to be disbanded. The Bill makes that perfectly clear. Even if we were to accept that the merger is a military proposal in which both regiments will be fully absorbed, as the Minister said, we could not accept that the will of the Government of the Republic did not influence the decision to bring about that merger.

The very fact that the Government of the United Kingdom would even consider the suggestions of a hostile and foreign Government—who make an illegal claim to Her Majesty's jurisdiction—is in itself a negation of responsibility. As I said in the House after the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, it was an outrage that the first thing said by the Taoiseach was that there would be the demise of a regiment of the British Army as a result of the signing of the agreement. Dr. Garrett Fitzgerald said

> "The UDR has a core of competent, professional military officers"—

or will the Minister claim that it is not competent and professional, down to company level?—

> "as well as an adequate number of experienced NCOs."

When was the regiment lacking in those NCOs? He added:

> "The part-time membership of the UDR should be disbanded"—

and we are seeing that happen—

> "and better control of UDR operations should be ensured."

That was the Prime Minister of a foreign country dictating what should happen to a British Army regiment. When one considers the Bill's proposals, it is clear that the requirements of the then Taoiseach are being met.

The proposed UDR career restructuring is an attempt to hide the motives behind the merger, which is to get rid of the unacceptable face of security, as it is painted by the Irish Republic and others, and to change the UDR's ethos.

The emergency situation in which the regiment is even more evident today. Shame on successive Governments for not dealing with that emergency in the correct way. The current development originated in a campaign against the Royal Ulster Constabulary that suddenly switched to one against the UDR. Now that that regiment is to be done away with, opposition to the RUC is growing, with more and more criticism of its activities, accusations that it is a sectarian force, and questions about why more Roman Catholics are not to be found in its membership. So it will go on.

Northern Ireland's unique security situation calls for a unique force such as the Ulster Defence Regiment. Only the UDR can provide the manpower to assist the RUC in its fight against terrorism. Its Deputy Chief Constable told me, "We as police could not do anything about the security situation if we did not have the assistance of the Ulster Defence Regiment. If it is disbanded, how can we train men to take its place? How could we set up an adequate security apparatus to take its place? It cannot be done."

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

The men who serve in the UDR could have joined other regiments that have closer associations with the Province, but they chose to join the UDR—to fight not for Ireland but for security, peace, and harmony in Ulster itself. The regiment's membership is an indication of its desire to serve for peace in that beleaguered Province.

The proposed merger will have many side effects, but the overall concern is the detrimental effect that it will have on security and on the morale of the regiment's members.

I wish to make it clear that I am not party to calling on people in Northern Ireland to leave the Ulster Defence Regiment. That is not what I advocate. I know how men feel. I am aware of how they have been treated. I know of those who were arrested and had false charges laid before them. I know that millions of pounds had to be paid to buy them new houses and to relocate them under the terms of the Stevens inquiry. Those men persevered in their membership of the UDR because they were dedicated and loyal men.

If the merger takes place, a force in which there is so much will lose its identity. Why should the regiment have to suffer in this way? If it had done something disgraceful and besmirched its good name, one would understand, but that, of course, is not the position. Even its detractors, as they come with glee to bury it, are prepared to pay fulsome eulogies to its members, the way they have served and the sacrifices that they have made.

The Government's proposals will add nothing to the overall effectiveness of the British Army's counter-terrorist role in Northern Ireland. Instead, they will detract from the implicit moral driving force that attracts men and women into the ranks of the UDR. The proposals will do nothing to improve security. Indeed, security will take a terrible hammering. That is because people are losing faith in what should be done. The enemies of our Province will be well pleased.

What of the proposed title of the regiment? Men have died because they joined the UDR. Men were murdered because they associated with them. Men were murdered even after they had done their stint and had returned to civvy street. They were killed for being British Ulster men and women. They were unprepared to swallow Irish rule. They died for the cause of Ulster, not for that of Ireland. They did not die to give an Irish dimension. They died because they chose to be part of the United Kingdom and its jurisdiction. The proposal to name the regiment the Royal Irish is a laughable attempt to grab orange with green—a vain attempt to inflict a hybrid name of Irish society upon the people of Ulster.

Why do the Government not wake up to the realities? The empire is dead and only British Ulster is British. The Irish have forsaken the Union. Why do the Government not honour those who wish to maintain the Union and are prepared to die for its preservation? They should rename the UDR the Royal Ulster Defence Regiment to give credit to those to whom credit is due.

If the Government honestly believe that calling the regiment the Irish regiment will attract support from the Social Democratic and Labour party, the Roman Catholic church, the Irish Government and the security forces, may God almighty help us. Since the announcement was made, the SDLP, the Roman Catholic hierarchy and the southern Government have not said, "Join the new regiment that is about to be formed." That is the proof of the matter. Why do we not hear those who were the detractors of the UDR making a clear call—not an ambivalent one—in support of men and women joining the new regiment? Instead, we hear them say, "No, we shall not commit ourselves." When will they commit themselves? The answer is that they will never commit themselves to anything that is aimed at retaining and maintaining the Union.

Can the Government give a guarantee to the UDR that the merger will not result in removals, redundancies, transfers and demotions? They cannot do so, because the removals, redundancies and demotions have already begun. The thinning out process is in hand. Any officer can say to a man, "You can appear on the media, provided that you say this, but if you do not say that but say the opposite and oppose the merger, we shall take disciplinary action against you." The part-time element of the Ulster Defence Regiment is already understaffed and being phased out by natural wastage. At a time when Ulster is the victim of so many sectarian atrocities, instead of strengthening the armed forces the Government are pulling the carpet from under the feet of the UDR. If the Government continue to pursue this merger, it will have an unsettling effect on the family life of current UDR members. The Government must remember that if certain members of the UDR, for their own reasons, do not join the new merged regiment, they will still be marked men.

The tragedy is that a policy has begun to withdraw the personal weapons that members of the UDR were given with which to defend themselves when off duty. It is bad enough to have served in the security forces and therefore to be a marked man. It is bad enough to know that one's only hope of protection is one's own ability and a personal weapon. But what will happen when people find that they are no longer members of that regiment and that personal weapon is taken away from them? Is that the sort of treatment that should be handed out to men who have marked themselves out because by taking a stand and joining the regiment? They will lose both earnings and protection.

There will also be loss of employment. The Ulster Defence Regiment represents the greatest value for money in terms of security costs that the Province has ever seen or is ever likely to see. We hear every day about cuts. These continuous cuts will affect the money available to make the war effective against the enemies of Ulster. The proposals will undoubtedly set in motion the means by which the part-time element of the UDR will be reduced to a lower level than ever before in its history.

In November 1991 the ferociousness of the IRA's terrorist campaign necessitated the first call-up of those part-time men. Since November last year an emergency situation has prevailed in Northern Ireland. More troops have had to be brought into the Province. A law-abiding community has been able to say over and over again, "Thank God for our security forces, thank God for our police, and thank God for the Ulster Defence Regiment, because they have stood between us and the enemy." For some time now the British authorities have viewed part-time Ulster Defence Regiment membership as unacceptable by their career standards, but the very ethos of the UDR was to be a unique arm of the security forces in a unique situation. I can now see the demise of those part-time soldiers—not immediately, but in the long term. Their numbers are going down already.

Terrorism in Ulster can be thwarted only through the civil power of the Royal Ulster Constabulary backed up and supported by a locally recruited Ulster Defence Regiment. The auxiliary forces must be drawn from and must interlock with the Northern Ireland community. The Ulster Defence Regiment offers the best network of intelligence within the community that it serves, and the only way in which terrorism can be destroyed is through intelligence. Who better to gather intelligence and to spearhead the strength of intelligence than those who live and go in and out of the community? Who better than those who use their eyes and ears to defend themselves and who in so doing can defend others? That is all to be sacrificed. It would be more advisable for the Minister of State to appeal to every Irish Member in the House to support the security forces and to appeal directly to the Social Democratic and Labour party to support the security forces.

As I have said, the lack of Roman Catholic members in the UDR is the responsibility of the IRA, who pick them out to murder them, but it is also the responsibility of their Church and their political representatives in the SDLP.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): I apologise for interrupting my colleague so early in his contribution, but this relates to the role of the Social Democratic and Labour party. Is there not a strange irony in the fact that a political party which, since its inception, has done everything possible to undermine the security forces in Northern Ireland and to withhold its support from them and which, in recent years, has withheld support from the Ulster Defence Regiment and called for its disbandment is not in its place this evening to see the dawning of the hour that it sought?

Rev. Ian Paisley: All I can say to my colleague is, when the British Government does that party's work so well for it, it does not need to be present. Even in its death throes, the House is eager to pass this mean little Bill and to add its insult to the UDR, so the SDLP does not need to be present.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): The attitude of the Social Democratic and Labour party towards the Ulster Defence Regiment is of course all on record, as the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) says. However, is not it also on record that the SDLP is wholly opposed to the Royal Irish Rangers and that it campaigned against that regiment ever serving in Northern Ireland? As that is the SDLP's background, is not it natural that it will campaign against the new Royal Irish Regiment which is to be the successor to the Royal Irish Rangers and the UDR?

Rev. Ian Paisley: It is of course on record that the SDLP campaigned against any of the Irish regiments in the British Army serving in Northern Ireland. It insisted—indeed, dictated—what regiments should come to Northern Ireland to serve. I think that it was only under a Conservative Government that the regiments eventually came. I may be wrong about that but, certainly for a long time during the troubles, none of the regiments were permitted to come. They were not considered acceptable in Northern Ireland by the SDLP. There is no doubt about that.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *indicated assent.*

Rev. Ian Paisley: I see that I have the approval even of the Minister. We need the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church to say that it will support the regiment, and the SDLP to call on its people to support it. At a meeting in Downing street when the Prime Minister talked to the four leaders of the constitutional parties, as they are called, I told him that it was not true that the four leaders were one when it came to supporting the security forces. The leader of the Social Democratic and Labour party did not support the security forces. He does not call. There is a great difference between saying to one's people, "If anything happens to you, go to the police," and saying, "Join the police. Support the police by becoming a member of the police."

That is what is happening in Northern Ireland. No nationalist or republican elected politician says, "Join the police. Put your emphasis on the police by joining them." Yet I still repeatedly hear them say that we shall achieve peace only when everybody can give his allegiance to the police. There is no country in which all the people give their allegiance to the police. Those who want to break the law do not give their allegiance to the police, and the IRA will not do so—neither will those who support it.

It is a sad fact that the proposals in the Bill are before us. It is all too easy, as hon. Members hasten away to the coming election, for a number of them to wait here and vote the Bill through. But they will not reap any of its harvest. They will go to bed tonight in the comparative peace and safety of their homes on this side of the water. They know nothing of the worry of the woman on the border with her family, and the family on the border who can no longer live in their own home. At night they have to live in an outhouse, where both the father and the mother have shotguns in their hands. Hon. Members know nothing about that. The House is ignorant of what is happening in Northern Ireland—ignorant of what one sees when one goes to a farmhouse, and the wife and the father take one to the outhouse and show one the bedding on the floor and the guns stacked against the wall, and say, "That is how we have to live, because our house could be attacked at any time". Those are the people who now live in more fear, because people in those areas have looked to the Ulster Defence Regiment for their defence.

That is why I say to the Government and to every Member of the House, "Some day you will have to remember—your conscience will remind you—and you will say, 'Yes, I voted for that.'" It is easy to vote for a Bill, but what will the end product be?

The trouble with the Bill is that, in one sweep, it says:

> "Any person who is a member of the Ulster Defence Regiment at the commencement of this Act shall cease to be a member at that time and, if his term of service with the Regiment would have continued after that time . . .
>
> he shall continue to be a member of the armed forces until the term of service current at that time expires or is otherwise brought to an end, and . . .
>
> he may be transferred"—

it does not say "shall be transferred"—

> "to another corps in the same way as a member of the regular forces serving in a corps other than the Ulster Defence Regiment."

With one sweep, those three little paragraphs completely wipe away the whole membership of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and the regiment itself. It is the end of the road for the regiment. Would any hon. Member in similar circumstances not feel deeply aggrieved if that were the sentence of execution passed by the House? Does the

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House not feel that that is bound to be intolerable to members of the regiment, especially in view of their sacrifices?

What will the end of the story be? After the debate concludes and the House divides on Third Reading, the word will go back to Northern Ireland that this is the end of the UDR. People in our Province remember the day when the House did the same with the Ulster Special Constabulary. They will have more despair in their hearts at the end of this debate than they have had for many long years. They hoped and trusted that at long last the Government and the Prime Minister would take the matter in mind. Instead, they find that once again their hopes have been dashed. Those who have served well in the UDR have got their come-uppance, which they do not deserve. They have been treated in a manner that I put on the record as disgraceful.

I cannot accept the arguments that I have been given, although I should like to accept them. It is far easier to live at peace than to live at war, and it is far easier to conform than not to conform. However, when one is elected to office, one has a responsibility to ensure that the electors give their views. Having balanced those views and found them to be absolutely honest and trustworthy, one has a duty to put those views in the place to which one has been elected. Whether the House wishes to hear them and whether that man receives scorn from the people to whom he speaks, he must say what the people have convinced him is right. Having talked to UDR officers, to UDR men, to a prominent general in the British Army and to others related to military service, I am convinced——

Mr. Peter Robinson: Does it concern my hon. Friend that, in every contact with the Minister he has said with absolute conviction—I do not doubt him for one minute —that the UDR wants the change? Does it disturb my hon. Friend that the Minister actually believes that? I can see that the Minister is not interested in listening, although he will have plenty of time later in which to listen.

Is it not disturbing that the Minister clearly believes that the UDR wants the Bill? We who come from Northern Ireland know that the UDR wants nothing to do with the Bill and that the grass roots, the men who serve on the streets and roads of Northern Ireland, want the measure defeated.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I do not expect the Government to listen. The only time they listen to Northern Ireland is when they are in trouble. They then run to the leaders from Northern Ireland saying, "Please help us." The hard-pressed people of Northern Ireland say, "In God's name, help us. You are not helping us tonight by what you are doing."

It is no use the Government bluffing their way and saying, "Everything will be all right." Everything will not be all right. The Minister has the evidence. I put it to him again. I see a person in the Box who was present at the meeting at which it was revealed to us that the Government had spent money on a survey—an opinion poll—which came out overwhelmingly in favour of the Bill. The Minister should now tell us when the poll took place, what money was spent on it, how many officers, NCOs and privates were questioned. What was the breakdown, and what was the result of that poll?

Mr. Robinson: My hon. Friend said that the poll was of the officers and men of the Ulster Defence Regiment. Was it not also of the officers and men of the Royal Irish Rangers, and did not the Minister suggest that there was a less enthusiastic response from the Royal Irish Rangers when they were asked those questions—even though the sample was clearly geared to get the best result for the opinion poll?

Mr. John. D. Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. I. Paisley) said more than an hour ago, the future of the UDR is very important to us in Northern Ireland. My party tabled an amendment in Committee, but it was defeated by the Government. We have not had a full and proper debate at any stage in the Bill's proceedings. The debate is now getting off the ground, and many hon. Members wish to take part in it. There is a rumour that the Government are about to curtail the debate. Can we have a ruling from you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on how long we have available to continue?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The right hon. Gentleman and the House know full well that the occupant of the Chair cannot deal with hypothetical questions. I have to deal with the situation as it proceeds.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May we have an assurance that the debate can continue for as long as you are satisfied that hon. Members wish to voice their opinions on Northern Ireland, and that those opinions will be heard. I was told by those in the Table Office that the debate could continue for as long as there were people who were prepared to speak. If that is not so, I should like to hear it contradicted; if it is so, I should be happy to hear you say so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I can add nothing to what I have already said. As long as the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. I. Paisley) is in order, he is entitled to proceed.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Let me take this opportunity to warn the Government not to try to gag Northern Ireland Members tonight. It does not matter to me if they curtail our proceedings; it would suit me because I have plenty of other things to do in Northern Ireland. But I can tell the Minister that, if the Government do that the people of Northern Ireland will realise the lengths to which they are prepared to go to gag Northern Ireland's public representatives and prevent us from speaking.

We do not enjoy the opportunities available to hon. Members representing seats in Wales, Scotland and England. In Great Britain, legislation is implemented by way of Bills which have stages—Second Reading, Committee, Report and Third Reading. Our laws are passed in one and a half hours in a series of Orders in Council. It is amazing that I can move an amendment to a law affecting the people of England and Wales but that I cannot amend a law affecting those who sent me to the House. Our opportunities for debates are limited, and if we do not have a full opportunity to debate Bills that affect Northern Ireland, the people of Northern Ireland had better know that we are limited in that way. We have no forum in Northern Ireland to which we can take matters.

The House should remember that it is always dangerous to stifle debate. If debate is stifled, frustrations will break out in another way. If that is what the

Government are about, let them do it. That will be all right, but they will reap in Northern Ireland what they are sowing. This debate is open ended, but if the Government had wanted, they could have guillotined it. They thought that the matter would never be seen on the Order Paper and that it would be nodded through.

It will not be nodded through. I have already told the Minister of State that it would be better to withdraw the Bill and bring it forward again. What has he to fear? Is he not going to return to this place? If he returns, he will have the opportunity to do that. If he does not return, Labour Front-Bench Members, who are in favour of the Bill, can bring it back for him. The Minister of State can join them in a new coalition. He did not withdraw the Bill, so I shall continue. I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Will my hon. Friend say something about the consequences of this measure becoming law, in particular the lessons that will be learned by the Provisional IRA, which campaigned for the removal of the B Specials? It was successful in persuading the House to remove the B Specials because of IRA propaganda. IRA propaganda has concentrated on the Ulster Defence Regiment, and the Government have again responded to IRA propaganda. Is there a lesson that the IRA will draw from that?

Rev. Ian Paisley: Yes. The lesson that I have learnt is that I have to talk on and on, because I have discovered that the Government intend to move a closure motion when I sit down. That leaves me no option but to continue to speak on this matter. I deeply regret that attitude. It will have a sad reaping in my Province. The Minister of State should go the second mile on the issue. He is not even prepared to listen. He has been doing his correspondence and talking to his hon. Friends. He wants to silence the person to whom he is not prepared to listen. That is not democracy at all, it is the worst form of dictatorship.

Please, for the sake of the widows, orphans and memory of the Ulster Defence Regiment, let the House debate the matter. If nobody but Northern Ireland hon. Members want to take part in the debate, they should be heard. This is our only opportunity to debate the matter.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): I am sorry to disturb the hon. Gentleman's brief remarks, but may I refer to something that he said a few moments ago? He said that other hon. Members are not aware of living under the threat of violence. We all appreciate that the threat in Northern Ireland is serious, but some hon. Members are living under the same threat. Their names have appeared on lists. Of course, hon. Members have been murdered. Two lists were discovered. One was in Limerick. It was discovered by the Garda six months ago. Other hon. Members who are not Northern Ireland Members were on that list. I remind the hon. Gentleman as gently as I can that the terror and fear are shared by many other hon. Members and their families.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I do not know of any case on this side of the water of a family having to leave their own home at night and go into a lonely outhouse—a cowshed—and stretch out their beds, with the father bolting the door and putting two cartridges into a double-barrelled shotgun. I do not know of any part of the United Kingdom where a man goes out ploughing and his wife has to lie up against a hedge with a gun in her hand. I know and appreciate that there is fear among people. There is fear on both sides of the Community. I am aware of that.

In my other capacity as a minister of religion, I have to visit the hospital. When I visit the Royal Victoria hospital it takes 20 police officers to get me in and out safely. One of the Ministers visited the hospital the other day. It took 200 members of the security forces to get him in and out safely. Does the House realise the continual pressure that we are all under?

Mr. John D. Taylor: It is important to clarify the issue of fear. The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) limited fear to the fear among elected Members of Parliament here in Great Britain. Of course a handful of Members of Parliament in Great Britain live in fear. But that is not the issue that the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) was addressing. He was not worried about Members of Parliament. He was rightly worried about the fear that has spread across the ordinary people of Northern Ireland. It is the people of Northern Ireland who live in fear. Ordinary Members of Parliament here in Great Britain still do not understand what the fear is like in practice in Northern Ireland.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The right hon. Gentleman is right. I must say to the House that people who go into public life in Northern Ireland take their life in their hands. We all know that. The IRA attempted to kill the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor). I remember visiting him in the hospital shortly after he received all those bullets in his face. I am warned continually that I am on the danger list and could be murdered. My wife has been attacked. I have been shot at. But if one chooses to take a stand and be a public representative in Northern Ireland, no matter who one is and what one's convictions, one will always be under threat. But that is not what I seek to convey to the House about the Bill.

The ordinary people in Northern Ireland who go about their daily business, whose name is never on the front of the newspaper, who are unknown, who bring up their children, send them to school and do their best to rear them and give them a chance in life, are living in fear. It is a fear that goes across the religious divide. Protestants are afraid and Roman Catholics are afraid. The fear enters into the gut of the people. There is great fear. If the Bill is passed tonight, there will be more fear. The Bill will not lessen but build up fears.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), the leader of the Ulster Unionists in the House, told the Prime Minister when we met him that there was a perception that the British Government would pull out of Northern Ireland. That perception leads to fear among not only Protestants but Roman Catholics, who do not know what will happen if the Government pull out. We have a super-abundance of fear.

Some people in the House may be cynical and say that the fears are unreal, but even if they are unreal, they are real to the people who have them. We must emphasise that to the House. The House should take cognisance tonight that there are real fears in the hearts of people.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Apart from the fear of terrorism, is there not a real fear in Northern Ireland as a consequence of legislation such as this? It creates fear that a Government who introduced the Anglo-Irish Agreement moved directly at the behest of Dublin to start making

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changes such as the removal of the Ulster Defence Regiment. Has my hon. Friend read the memoirs of Dr. Garrett Fitzgerald? In them it says that, during negotiations on the Anglo-Irish Agreement, Dr. Fitzgerald and his colleagues pressed the Government of the United Kingdom to do away with the UDR. He says that there was less than a solemn defence of the Ulster Defence Regiment from the British Government during that time. Will the people of Northern Ireland not fear that there is a sell-out by the Conservative Government over the Ulster Defence Regiment, just as they sold out Northern Ireland over the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I must confess to my colleague that I have not read that large book—the memoirs of the Taoiseach—but I have read extracts from it, which made it clear that Garrett Fitzgerald entirely got his own way. As my hon. Friend said, he also put on record that he was amazed that representatives of the British Government did not defend the position of people in the north of Ireland and almost readily accepted his charges.

I emphasise that, when the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, the whole attack was aimed at the Ulster Defence Regiment. Some hon. Members told us that the agreement would not make any difference, that the sovereignty of this country over Northern Ireland was more secure than ever before, and that the Dublin Government would have little interest. The Dublin Government has since had continual influence in Northern Ireland.

Where was this Bill born? It was not born in the hearts of the Government, but at an Anglo-Irish Conference meeting. It was born when the Dublin Government put on pressure to get rid of the Ulster Defence Regiment.

Winston Churchill said that appeasement never pays. You can appease and appease crocodiles, but eventually they will swallow you up. That is what will happen to the Government if they go on appeasing.

Mr. John D. Taylor: On the relationship of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and how that has led the Conservative party to recommend the abolition of the Ulster Defence Regiment, there is confusion in the political arena in Ulster tonight, confusion created by the British Conservative party. Although the Conservative party imposed the Anglo-Irish Agreement, Conservative candidates in Northern Ireland say that they are opposed to it. Although the Conservative party is promoting what are known as the Brooke inter-party talks, Conservative candidates have said that they will campaign against those talks during the election.

Can the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) at least help the Conservatives to clarify the confusion about the Ulster Defence Regiment? The Conservatives are abolishing the Ulster Defence Regiment in this House, but will Conservative candidates in Northern Ireland campaign to preserve it?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I find it amusing, because a Conservative candidate says that he will fight against me in Antrim, North. He is welcome to do so if he wants to lose £1,000 for central office. In my constituency, he says that he is against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Why does he say that? Because he knows that he would not stand any chance of anyone listening to him if he did not say it. That is absolutely dishonest, and that man is either a pirate, or he has the approval of central office to say something different in Northern Ireland from what is said on the mainland. That is what the issue is about.

On the Brooke talks, the leader of the Conservative party in Northern Ireland, Mr. Kennedy, says that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is responsible for IRA murders because he called those talks. The other day, he was received at a meeting for candidates, and he met the Prime Minister at a candidates' reception. Yet when he got back to Northern Ireland, he said that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was responsible for those killings.

So far, Conservative candidates have been mute on the subject of the Ulster Defence Regiment, but after this debate they will all be saying, "We are for the Ulster Defence Regiment." Those candidates are against the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which is a child of this Government who helped to beget it. They are against the Brooke talks, which I happen to be for. It was through the honourable leader of the Unionist party and myself that these talks came about. We have been pleading with the Government to go ahead and have these talks, but the Government are against them and now they are to be against the UDR.

How can the people of Northern Ireland think that the Conservative party is serious when its candidates say that the direct opposite in Northern Ireland to what the Government say from the Front Bench here? Let us have some decency, some honesty. If a candidate——

The Treasurer to Her Majesty's Household (Mr. Alastair Goodlad) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House proceeded to a Division:—

Rev. Ian Paisley *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps you can help me. Does this mean that, if the Bill is passed now, the House will have no other opportunity of commenting on it? Does this bring the debate on it to an end?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am dealing with the Division on which the House is engaged. We must see what the result of the Division is.

The House having divided: Ayes 250, Noes 13.

Division No. 113] **[5.25 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartliss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William

Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy

Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Sir Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael

Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir D. *(Calder Vly)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David

Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Flynn, Paul
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Haynes, Frank
Livingstone, Ken
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon

Paisley, Rev Ian
Robinson, Geoffrey
Skinner, Dennis
Wareing, Robert N.

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Taylor and
Mr. Peter Robinson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The House divided: Ayes 254, Noes 3.

Division No. 114] **[5.36 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell-Savours, D. N.

Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel

Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Sir Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir D. *(Calder Vly)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Neil Hamilton.

NOES

Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Rev. Ian Paisley and
Mr. John David Taylor.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

INDUSTRIAL AND FREIGHT TRANSPORT

Resolved,

That the draft Industrial and Freight Transport (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 11th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

MINES AND QUARRIES

Resolved,

That the draft Mines and Quarries (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 11th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1991-92

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Order [12 March],

That a further sum, not exceeding £241,460,000, be granted out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges for Civil Services for the year ending on 31st March 1992, as set out in House of Commons Paper No. 341.

Question agreed to.

ESTIMATES 1992-93

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Order [12 March],

That a further sum, not exceeding £109,478,692,000, be granted out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges for Defence and Civil Services for the year ending on 31st March 1993, as set out in House of Commons Papers Nos. 273, 274 and 275.

Question agreed to.

CONSOLIDATED FUND (APPROPRIATION) BILL

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the two foregoing resolutions by the Chairman of Ways and Means, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. David Mellor, Mr. Francis Maude, Mr. John Maples and Mrs. Gillian Shephard.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard accordingly presented a Bill to apply certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund to the service of the years ending on 31st March 1992 and 31st March 1993, to appropriate the supplies granted in this Session of Parliament, and to repeal certain Consolidated Fund and Appropriation Acts: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Monday next and to be printed. [Bill 15].

Points of Order

Mr. Peter Robinson On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The disgraceful manner in which the Government dealt with the Third Reading of the Army Bill will cause much concern throughout the House. As you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have consistently defended the rights of Back Benchers when you have occupied the Chair, will you please advise us—although your advice may be of little use during the course of this Parliament—whether it is in order for a Minister, having opened a debate, to interrupt in midstream the very next speaker in that debate, and not to allow right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House freedom of speech? To deal in such a shabby manner with the gross betrayal of the Ulster Defence Regiment is a disgrace to the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What occurred was perfectly in order. I well understand the hon. Member's feelings, but the matter was in order, we have disposed of that business, and we cannot continue the debate now.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is there any precedent for what occurred today? The Government, in one move, disbanded the Ulster Defence Regiment, with only one Back Bencher being allowed to take part in the debate. Is there any precedent for such a lack of democracy within the Conservative party?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the right hon. Member is not disputing the judgment of the Chair, which is a difficult one for the Chair to have to make. The Chair is able to do so in accordance with long-established precedents, and it does not give reasons. What has happened was perfectly in order. We cannot continue the debate now.

Rev. Ian Paisley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps you can help me. Is it not in accordance with the rules of the House that, before the Question is put on a closure motion, Mr. Speaker or Mr. Deputy Speaker must be satisfied that there has been a full and adequate debate on the topic before the House? How can there have been a full and adequate debate when Members were rising in their places who had not spoken and when Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies were denied the right to be members of the Committee that considered the various elements of the Bill?

In acting in defence of minority parties in the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, could the Chair be satisfied that there had been a full and adequate debate when only one Back-Bench Member was allowed to speak after the Minister had completed his opening remarks, that Back-Bench Member not being allowed to finish what he had to say?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Member is not questioning the discretion of the Chair. I have exercised my discretion to the best of my ability, and the House has come to its decision. There is nothing further that I can add.

Mr. John D. Taylor: On a further point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are not questioning your ruling on this matter. It is—*[Interruption.]* The problem with the Conservative party is that it wants to steamroller the people of Northern Ireland without even listening to the voices of the Members who represent them. As I have said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not questioning your ruling. It is—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members are interrupting because they are ashamed of what they have done today against the people of Northern Ireland. We are asking only whether there is a precedent for the Chair accepting a closure motion when no one from the Opposition Benches has been given the opportunity to speak in the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As I have said already, there is nothing further that I can add to what I have said. I am grateful to the right hon. Member for reassuring me that he was not questioning the judgment of the Chair.

I understand that the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill motion is not to be moved.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I sought to give notice that I would raise this matter. I refer to a press release which was issued by the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, which I received this morning. The release announces that the decision of the Committee will be delayed untii 2 April, when there will be no Select Committee and no Chairman of it, because all of us will have been dissolved by that date, only seven days before the general election.

The possibility has been raised that a Select Committee report is being used for political purposes, when otherwise we would expect the report to be a helpful one. For the Committee to bring out a report in the teeth of an election must devalue any of its work. Surely it would have been better if the report had been published on Wednesday two days ago, when it was agreed by the Committee.

Would you agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is out of order, or most inappropriate, for the report to be published on 2 April? Do you agree also that it would be much better if it were published this coming Monday with the other report that was agreed on Wednesday by the Select Committee? Secondly, will you ensure that no taxpayers' money will be spent on the press conference that is to be held at Swansea on 2 April at the same time as the report is published?

Thirdly, even if taxpayers' money is spent on holding the press conference, with the present Chairman of the Select Committee present, would you agree that it is entirely wrong for a document to be issued by the Committee Office of the House that will effectively publicise someone who will then be only a Labour candidate?

Mr. Flynn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Although we do not expect the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) to return to this place, I do not think that he is going to be dissolved in the way that he suggested. His fate will be rather more pleasant than that. It is disgraceful, however, that he should suggest that the dates involved any political manipulation. The Select Committee on Welsh Affairs has been run in an entirely impartial, non-partisan manner by its splendid Chairman for many years, and has enjoyed the respect of Members in all parts of the House. It is wrong to end this Parliament on such a note.

This afternoon, we have witnessed an undemocratic display, when a fascinating and interesting debate in which many of us would have liked to take part was disgracefully

[Mr. Flynn]

guillotined. An attempt is now being made to manipulate the timetable in a way that is to the benefit of the Conservative party, but nothing will help the Conservative party in Wales. It will lose several seats in Wales and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have got the drift of this point of order. This is obviously a political argument, not a point of order for the Chair. Perhaps, however, I can make two points both to the hon. Gentleman and to the House which might be helpful. First, the time when Select Committees publish reports is a matter for them. They are frequently published during a recess, so that is in order.

Secondly, it would not be in order for a member of a Select Committee to call a parliamentary press conference when Parliament is prorogued. If he did something on an individual basis, I assume that it would be as a parliamentary candidate, but it would not be in order for him to call a parliamentary press conference. We shall start the Adjournment again.

Asraam System

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

5.56 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I am very grateful for the opportunity to raise this matter on the Adjournment. After the last spurious point of order, we return to the serious business of the House and come to the Adjournment debate, which is very important because of its subject matter. I am grateful to the Minister of State for coming to the House this afternoon to respond in, I hope, a positive manner to my complaints and strictures. When I say "complaints and strictures", I do not mean that I am making the obvious kind of complaint that one makes when a decision such as this is made.

On 3 March, the Secretary of State announced his decision regarding the choice of the contracting parties for the advanced short-range air-to-air missile project and contract. One accepts that a choice had to be made and that there would be a winning party and a losing party. In this case, there were three applicant groups, including a foreign group. There were the two British-led clusters—one with American partners, the other with French partners. The one with French partners is of particular concern to me because of my local constituency interest. I repeat that on these occasions one has to accept that there are winners and losers. The excellent high-technology space missile defence company, GEC Marconi, with its headquarters in Stanmore—of which I, as the local Member of Parliament, and others both in that area and in the territorial zone around it are intensely proud because of its past achievements and, I hope, its considerable future achievements—has been the recipient of contracts for excellent projects from the Ministry of Defence over many years.

This was a crucial project. One can only congratulate the British Aerospace group on having won the contract. The decision was widely welcomed by other hon. Members who have local constituency interests. Most of them sit on this side of the House. Therefore, I was somewhat of a lone voice when I said that I thought that the wrong contractor had been selected. When the Secretary of State made his announcement on 3 March I said:

> "Of course, the equipment is essential and vital for the future defence of the realm and we are proud that missile equipment of that sort is British."—[*Official Report,* 3 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 167.]

I believed then, and I believe now, that the wrong contractor was selected. In my view, it is a bitter blow for GEC Marconi.

I hasten to add that these remarks are made entirely on my own initiative. People often feel that on these occasions Members of Parliament are doing some respectable, legitimate and proper lobbying on behalf of an equally legitimate outside interest—a company in their constituency—and that they have been prompted to do so by that particular company. That is certainly not the case on this occasion. Although I know the company well, have visited its headquarters many times and know its executives and staff, this is very much my own initiative and I do not wish to engage them in any commentaries that I may make on this project. These are entirely my views. I stick to them, and I welcome the opportunity of this short debate for the Minister of State for Defence Procurement to reply to the points that I shall make.

I wish to make one crucial but obvious point. As I said, a series of comments were made approving of the Secretary of State's selection. My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) also welcomed the Secretary of State's decision and statement and said that it

> "underpins the strategy of flexibility outlined in 'Options for Change'."

However, my hon. Friend, significantly, added an important question, which perhaps stood out. He asked:

> "Can he assure us that Hughes, whose parent company is based in the United States, will not run into problems of technology transfer when seeking to export?"—[*Official Report*, 3 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 163.]

That is a crucial question which must be answered satisfactorily to reassure people.

During the post-war period there has been much American domination of such projects. We often start out believing—I see that the Minister has decided not to listen to my remarks for the moment. Perhaps I should pause while he returns to the Front Bench. It is funny to see a Minister leaving when a colleague is making a speech. I am a trifle surprised, but I shall continue now that he is returning to take an interest in the debate.

In the post-war period it has been on the weaknesses of European and British defence contracts that we thought that we were going to be an equal partner and would have full control over the development of the technology, instrumentation and equipment, especially in electronics defence projects. However, we ended up being dominated —perhaps unduly—by the Americans.

The crucial advantage of the alternative in this instance —the MICASRAAM, in which MICA represents the French missile configuration component—was that that would not be so. It was to be a European project and Matra, the French partner, was to be fully and heavily involved. It was to be a quintessentially European project, getting away from the old weakness from which United Kingdom defence projects have suffered repeatedly in the post-war period and from which they perhaps still suffer even now that European defence projects are at long last gaining greater ascendancy.

I remember many visits to the Pentagon when embarrassed senior officials of that great department in the United States would give a list of the United Kingdom's share of American defence orders. It would usually turn out to be extremely puny despite their protestations that they would do better next time. The new project for the European fighter aircraft and for our existing fighter aircraft was to get away from that.

On the day of the selection, I wrote to the Secretary of State to express my disappointment about the choice. I am still waiting for a reply to my letter, but I imagine that the Minister of State will deal with some of the points today. In order to be fair to the Government, I said that I knew of the difficulties in making such choices. There will always be one set of aggrieved parties and another set that is delighted to have won. One hopes that GEC Marconi will be the recipient in future.

In the fourth paragraph of my letter of 3 March to the Secretary of State I wrote:

> "I was glad to note in answer to my supplementary question"—

by the way, I fully appreciate that the Secretary of State tried very hard to be helpful in his answer in what was a difficult situation, and I pay tribute to him for that—

> "that you expected Marconi to be the recipient of other key government defence orders in the future."

I shall crystallise what I believe would have been the main salient advantages if the MICASRAAM alternative had been chosen as opposed to the British Aerospace ASRAAM offering. I am an outside party and probably do not have access to all the expert, behind-the-scenes figures available to people in the Department and companies involved, but, having considered the project, I believe that one advantage would have been that it was the competitive and compliant bid. It drew on the combined expertise in missile seekers of GEC Maconi and on Matra, the outstanding French group, in airframe and propulsion systems.

The bid represented value for money, too, and a low-risk development programme, bearing in mind that such equipment has often gone wrong in the past and has cost public departments of defence—including the Ministry of Defence—a lot of money when things did not quite work out. I imagine that it is always difficult to be certain about different competing specifications.

The French Government had clearly and unequivocally offered a French ministry of defence financial contribution to the development programme, and there was a strong certainty—I was about to say that there was a "likelihood", but that word is not strong enough; it was a certainty—that there would have been a French order, too, for the armée de l'air, of a size similar to that of the Royal Air Force order. That would have followed the selection of MICASRAAM rather than ASRAAM.

The Anglo-French missile configuration would have represented a significant opening up of a genuinely European defence market. Things are a little better than they have been over the previous decade, but there is still far too little in the way of a genuinely European defence equipment market, involving joint contracting efforts between the member states. There are still plenty of national efforts, but not enough joint efforts. We need to encourage that, and the MOD has missed an opportunity.

Within Europe, and elsewhere, the export prospects of MICASRAAM would have been truly outstanding. For Europe, as a centre of defence equipment excellence, to be able to sell a total weapons system with missiles and aircraft, without the danger of a United States veto—I have emphasised that risk before—would have enhanced the prospects for both MICASRAAM and the European fighter aircraft.

I stress, too, the high-technology seeker expertise that has been developed by Marconi over several decades for highly successful British Aerospace missiles, such as Skyflash, Sea Skua, Sea Eagle and Alarm. That is a crucial part of technology, upon which future national security depends. We saw the excellence of such pieces of equipment during our efforts in the Gulf, yet our equipment now runs at least a risk of being surrendered to the eventual control of the American supplier, rather than staying in British and European hands.

The expertise is crucial; that is why I am raising the matter. I am not criticising the Government severely, because of the difficult nature of such choices, and I hope that Marconi will receive many such valuable orders in future. However, as the local Member of Parliament, with those fantastic headquarters in my constituency, I worry about what may happen to the excellent outstanding team of scientists and researchers. Such a team of experts in electronics and missile technology has been built up over decades—it take time. They are highly qualified, brilliant people. Yet the original staff of 450 people has been cut to

[Mr. Hugh Dykes]

less than half that number as a result of the inevitable redundancies that, sadly, the firm has recently had to make. I am acutely concerned to preserve that highly skilled executive work force of scientists and technicians at Stanmore to ensure that it remains intact for employment and——

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman, who is well known for his European views, seems to be speaking on behalf of the Commission, rather than on behalf of his constituents. Some of us believe in competitive tendering and in the freedom and fairness of choice. Some of us actually believe in Anglo-American relationships, and we are not so keen on the frogs. I must tell the hon. Gentleman that I speak on behalf of the hon. Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood) and of the people of Welwyn and Hatfield and we welcome the fact that the Ministry of Defence has given the order to that great manufacturing company, British Aerospace. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would pay more attention to British interests and less attention to the French.

Mr. Dykes: I knew that it was a serious mistake to give way to my hon. Friend—as I call him, although he called me an hon. Gentleman. Presumably, the fact that Luton Town football club has had difficulty getting into Europe has led him to sound off in his characteristic way.

Ignoring that contribution totally, and returning to my speech, I was describing the essential anxiety of a local Member of Parliament. To express that anxiety is my job on such occasions. Who would have thought a few years ago that in an area such as Stanmore or Hertfordshire we would be worried about unemployment developing into a serious and durable problem among highly skilled people as well as among what would be described as ordinary applicants for work? It is serious when highly skilled teams are reduced in size. It affects adversely our ability to compete in projects for national orders and for international orders. Where do those people go? Do some of them go abroad because they cannot get jobs here? The technology, expertise and skills of those brilliant scientists and technicians will be lost to this country for ever unless the Government have regard to those matters.

Would anyone have believed a year or two ago that the specialist design team at Stanmore would be cut from about 450 graduate engineers to just under half that number? If that project had been selected instead of the other, which was widely welcomed by my hon. Friends because of the location of the plants that would benefit from the British Aerospace alternative, employment from the project would probably have been greater than under the British Aerospace alternative. The greater number of MICASRAAM's export potential effects in different countries—I believe that some countries were already expressing considerable interest in the possibility, subject to the development configuration and success—would have provided greater employment.

Some 400 or 500 jobs at headquarters alone would have resulted from the project going to GEC Marconi. If the Minister, in return, can reassure me that GEC Marconi will receive other orders which will make up for this danger of loss of employment, value and money, my concerns will be partly allayed. However, I am sure that he understands fully the reasons why I raised this serious problem on the Adjournment today.

6.11 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Alan Clark): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) for giving me the moment that I relish to answer him in this last Adjournment debate on the last full day of the last Parliament in which I shall attend the House. The hon. Gentleman said that he would not labour me with strictures. Had he done so, it would not have been the first time. He and I have a particular personal relationship—I use the word "relationship" in its archaic form. In the course of my almost nine years in Government and three Departments——

Mr. Dykes: Are you going to answer the debate?

Mr. Clark: That is exactly what I intend to develop. I admit that I have had idiosyncratic, some would say tendentious, moments of behaviour which have always been treated with great tolerance by the House. Although there have been calls for my resignation, they have largely been jocular.

I recall the hon. Member for Harrow, East exhibiting an altogether higher level of commitment. He did not invite me to resign—he actually said that I should be sacked, and to make his feelings absolutely clear, he called on the Prime Minister to sack me. To ensure that his views would be widely disseminated, he expressed that view not in a letter, as I might reasonably have expected, nor even in the Chamber, but full-frontally before the television cameras. I am sorry to say, as testified by my presence here today, that despite being so widely publicised, the call fell on deaf ears.

It is unusual—indeed, I have no recollection of its occurring before—for an hon. Member of one party to call for the dismissal of a colleague who has ministerial office in the same party, except in the Tea Room where, as we know, it happens all the time. I am glad to answer the hon. Gentleman's debate. I might have thought that his insistence that I be dismissed from the Government suggested a certain lack of confidence, and I suggested through the usual channels that he might prefer another Minister to answer the debate. However, the hon. Gentleman insisted that I answer it. I infer from that that I have regained his confidence.

The requirement for a new advanced air-to-air missile dates back to the early 1980s when the strategic environment was very different. While the monolithic threat in Europe has receded, however, regional tensions remain which could affect us. In terms of specific systems, the most potent threat comes from the MIG 29 and SU-27 aircraft, and the highly capable air-to-air missile known as Archer. I must emphasise that these weapon systems are not confined to the former Soviet Union; they have already been widely exported and further proliferation is likely in the future.

Our overwhelming success in the Gulf conflict was the result of the early establishment of air supremacy. Clearly, we must continue to maintain our superiority in air defence to protect the United Kingdom itself and British forces operating elsewhere.

Our original intention was to procure the missile in collaboration with our NATO allies. Under the family of weapons memorandum of understanding signed in 1980, the United States was to develop an advanced medium-range air-to-air missile, and the United Kingdom and Germany a short-range system. France took observer status only and did not participate in either programme. Later, Norway and Canada joined Germany and the United Kingdom in the short-range programme. Both programmes experienced the difficulties and delays so often inseparable from collaborative projects. Eventually in 1989 and 1990, our partners withdrew from the project.

The withdrawals led to reassessment of our own position. The threat was re-examined, and the operational requirement found still to be valid. In the absence of collaborative partners to share the burden of development costs, however, I decided that we should follow our standard procurement procedures and hold a competition. British Aerospace Dynamics was the United Kingdom industrial leader in the former collaborative procurement, and naturally could be expected to put forward the ASRAAM missile which was to have been procured collaboratively. We were also aware that GEC Marconi, in association with Matra, would wish to offer a derivative of the short-range variant of the French MICA.

The competition was successful in attracting bids of systems to meet the requirement, and a lower-cost, lower-capability system offered by the German company Bodenseewerk Geratetechnik or BGT. Two United States companies expressed interest, but in the event neither submitted a bid.

After careful examination of the BGT offer, including mathematical modelling, we decided that the improvement that it offered over the most sophisticated hostile system was not decisive and could not justify the expenditure. But I am grateful to BGT for its bid, and I repeat that it was given the most serious consideration.

As for the BAe and GEC Marconi bids, although their systems adopted different technical solutions to the problems, each was broadly compliant with the operational requirement. In addition, we took into account three other factors.

We attached much importance to having a contract with taut terms and conditions which placed the risk with industry rather than with my Department. We therefore paid close attention to compliance with our contractual requirements. Price was obviously of great importance, but the competitiveness of a price depends very much on the terms and conditions associated with it.

The prospect of export sales was also a factor taken into account, and this aspect was of interest to many hon. Members on both sides of the House last week. Both companies were optimistic about achieving export sales in different markets. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, as he said, has been in contact with the United States Secretary for Defence in relation to export sales of the ASRAAM, which uses the United States designed seeker. I am pleased to say that we received a satisfactory letter of assurance from him.

Finally we quite properly took account of the prospects for jobs in the United Kingdom, and I pay tribute to the insistent and persuasive advocacy of my hon. Friends the Members for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), for Stevenage (Mr. Wood), for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) and for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) in that regard. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, also took a keen interest in the progress of the project. British Aerospace pointed to more than 80 per cent. of the work in total being carried out in the United Kingdom and claimed that the jobs of some 7,000 people would be secured. The GEC Marconi offer, on its own figures, would have led to a lower proportion of work being done in the United Kingdom, even when potential sales to a third party were taken into account.

Of course, I recognise that jobs in the United Kingdom is not a concept which has much significance for the hon. Gentleman. He has long since ceased to consider, still less to welcome, the concept of the United Kingdom as a national identity of its own. His loyalty, as we know, is to the European Community, if not, as my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) said, to the European Commission. And so a "job" anywhere in the Community will, of course, be of equivalent value to him.

Our assessment of all those factors pointed to British Aerospace as the winner. The assessment was supported, as in all major investment decisions in the public sector, by a formal investment appraisal. That also pointed to British Aerospace as the clear winner of the competition.

In every competition, of course, there must be losers. It would be wrong for me to disclose the grounds on which the GEC Marconi bid fell short of our needs, as the information in its offer was submitted to us in confidence purely for bid assessment purposes. I understand that GEC has asked for a briefing on the reasons why it was not not selected, and I hope that it will take full advantage of the opportunity. I must say, however, that my hon. Friend is, at best, premature in his criticism of the decision.

Mr. Skinner: Friend?

Mr. Clark: At that moment.

GEC Marconi will have a much clearer understanding of the factors that we took into account once it has received the briefing next Tuesday. I hope that it will enable it to improve its prospects in future competitions for defence requirements.

As for my hon. Friend's concern for his constituents in Stanmore, I can assure him that GEC Marconi is highly valued by my Department as a major defence contractor which has made a significant contribution to a range of defence projects. We have some 150 contracts, worth more than £2 million each, with GEC Marconi Stanmore, with a total current value of approximately £3·3 billion.

In addition, on 20 January I announced that a consortium led by GEC Marconi had been chosen to develop the defensive aids sub-system for EFA. That contract is due to be placed very shortly and it will be worth more than £100 million. Much of the work will be undertaken at GEC Marconi Stanmore, where some 200 jobs will be created. Taking the GEC group as a whole, since the beginning of last year orders worth more than £2 billion have been placed either directly with GEC companies or with those companies acting as major sub-contractors.

All potential defence contractors need to show that their proposals represent cost-effective use of public funds. The best way to do that is through competition, which not only ensures keen prices but offers a vehicle for original and innovative technical solutions. We were fortunate in the competition to have three European bids, two of them British-led. It is a tribute to British industry that both those bids were enterprising and professionally presented.

[Mr. Clark]

I am confident that ASRAAM will be a successful programme, and that it will make a vital contribution to the defence of the United Kingdom well into the next century.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes past Six o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 16 March 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Orders of the Day

CONSOLIDATION FUND (APPROPRIATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

FRIENDLY SOCIETIES BILL

Considered in Committee; reported without amendment; read the Third time, and passed.

MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES BILL

Not amended [in the Standing Committee), considered.

Bill reported without amendment; read the Third time, and passed.

CHARITIES BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. —*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Further proceedings postponed, pursuant to Order [12 March].

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Charities Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

- (a) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of such money by way of remuneration and allowances to the officers and employees of the Charity Commissioners;
- (b) any administrative expenses incurred for the purposes of the Act by the Charity Commissioners; and
- (c) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of such money under any other Act;

(2) the charging on the Consolidated Fund of any sums required for making good to any person sums for which the official custodian for charities may be liable in connection with land vested in him in accordance with section 1 of the Reverter of Sites Act 1987.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any act resulting from the Charities Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the charging of fees payable to the Charity Commissioners and the imposition of other charges so payable;

(2) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee, pursuant to Order [12 March].

Clauses 1 to 78 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 79

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Amendment made: No. 1, in page 72, line 23, leave out subsection (8).—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 7 agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment; as amended, considered.

Bill read the Third time, and passed, with an amendment.

COMPETITION AND SERVICE (UTILITIES) BILL

Lords amendments considered.

Lords amendments agreed to. [Some with Special Entry.]

TRANSPORT AND WORKS BILL

Lords amendments considered.

Lords amendments agreed to.

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL

Ordered,

That further proceedings on the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill be suspended until the next Session of Parliament;

That if a Bill is presented in the next Session in the same terms as those in which the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill stood when proceedings on it were suspended in this Session—

- (a) the Bill so presented shall be ordered to be printed and shall be deemed to have been read the first and second time, to have been reported from the Select Committee and to have been re-committed to a Standing Committee; and
- (b) the Standing Orders and practice of the House applicable to that Bill, so far as complied with in this Session, shall be deemed to have been complied with in the next Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith on Standing Order No. 101 (5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

LAND AND DEEDS (NORTHERN IRELAND)

That the draft Registration (Land and Deeds) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 11th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Question agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With the leave of the House, I shall put together the remaining motions—Nos 11, 12 and 13 on the Order Paper.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No 101 (5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE (NORTHERN IRELAND)

That the draft Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 19th February, be approved.

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 19th February, be approved.

That the draft Local Elections (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 19th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Question agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Petition—Mr. Harry Greenway.

Motion made, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall not put the Question on the Adjournment, because that might be unfair to the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle): we have moved very fast. Accordingly, I shall suspend the sitting until 10.30 am.

9.43 am

Sitting suspended.

10.30 am

On resuming——

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. An important precedent has been set today, in which the House was adjourned because the business on the Order Paper was rushed through so quickly that time was exhausted. The Sitting was then suspended to allow my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) to come to the Chamber to move his very important Adjournment debate.

That is an excellent precedent, and I hope that that practice can be pursued in the next Parliament. When something happens very quickly in the House, it is absurd that other business on the Order Paper should, as it were drop off the end of the table, simply because the business has been rushed through.

While this may not be within your power at the moment, in your final hours as Madam Deputy Speaker, I hope that you will be able to send a letter to the Procedure Committee about what has happened, so that the next Chairman of that Committee can do something about it.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Good try. The hon. Member is aware that that is a matter for the Procedure Committee. We must wait and see what happens in the next Parliament.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I support the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), but I regret the fact that, for some procedural reason, it was not extended this morning to petitions. By chance, I was in the House but not in the Chamber, and had I intended to present an important petition on behalf of the residents of Northolt and elsewhere which was signed by 5,000 petitioners and the chairman of the Northolt village residents association——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should raise a point of order with me and not present a petition. If he is about to raise a point of order, will he come to his point so that I can deal with it?

Mr. Greenway: My point of order is that, procedurally, I am delighted by the precedent of allowing the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) time to move his Adjournment debate. However, can that precedent now——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I think I have the gist of the hon. Gentleman's point of order.

Mr. Greenway: May I just explain——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. No, I have the gist. The hon. Gentleman was in the House, but he was not in the Chamber. That is to be regretted, but he cannot now officially present his petition formally. However, he can place it in the bag. I hope that he will do that now and allow us to get on with the Adjournment debate, the motion for which has already been moved.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was in the House when the sitting was suspended. As I understand it, the suspension took place in order to allow time for my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) to come to the Chamber.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) is a long-standing Member, and he is very familiar with our proceedings. However, he is not correct in this instance. The Adjournment was moved and I must now call the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle). Time is being taken from him.

British Nuclear Fuels (Warrington)

Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

10.33 am

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I must first thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to move this Adjournment debate. There were some procedural difficulties, and thanks to the kindness of the House, I have been allowed to initiate this debate at this time. Like other hon. Members, I was in the Chamber earlier.

I want to thank the Under-Secretary of State for Energy, the hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) because I understand that he faced some small local difficulties *[Interruption.]*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. As a courtesy to the hon. Member for Warrington, North, will hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber do so quietly?

Mr. Hoyle: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I thank the Minister because he was not aware of my Adjournment debate until almost the last minute. Like me, he was caught unawares by the sudden collapse of our business this morning. However, this is a historic occasion, as the Minister and I will be participating in the last debate of this Parliament. Although I cannot speak for the Minister, I must say that this is the first time that I have had such an opportunity.

The subject of this debate is very important for Warrington, and I note the presence of the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) in the Chamber. This debate is about British Nuclear Fuels plc, and the 750 redundancies that are due to take place by the mid-1990s. The announcement of those redundancies caused some shock, as it closely followed the press announcement of an agreement between British Nuclear Fuels and Scottish Nuclear Ltd. under which they signed a contract for fuel-cycle services which will last for 15 years and probably lead to contracts worth more than £2·7 billion.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am sure that my hon. Friend accepts that this is a narrow debate about unemployment in his constituency at the British Nuclear Fuels headquarters at Warrington. However, in view of the importance of the occasion, the issue of redundancies will echo around the United Kingdom. There has been a stream of redundancies in the textile and engineering industries in my constituency, where 29,000 people depend on those industries for their jobs. I hope that my hon. Friend will consider that in his debate. I congratulate him on obtaining his Adjournment debate, but I hope that he will bear in mind the fact that redundancies are hitting at the heart of British manufacturing industry. Since 1979, some 2·5 million jobs have been lost under the Tory Government.

Mr. Hoyle: I totally agree with my hon. Friend and I will refer to the effects of the recession shortly. My hon. Friend is aware of my keen interest in the textile industry since I entered the House in 1974. The textile industry requires a more stable economy if it is to expand in future. I was pleased to give way to my hon. Friend about that.

As I was saying, a deal worth £2·7 billion was completed. We all knew that, when THORP ceased operating, there would be some redundancies. However, the number of the redundancies and the fact that the announcement was made so quickly after the good news, took everyone by surprise.

The search by British Nuclear Fuels for alternative contracts has not been helped by the recession. It has been extremely difficult even for a company with the expertise of British Nuclear Fuels to find alternative contracts which might have meant fewer redundancies at Risley and elsewhere.

Last year's reorganisation in British Nuclear Fuels did not help matters. British Nuclear Fuels was divided into three divisions—United Kingdom, international and engineering. It is clear that British Nuclear Fuels is still making large profits, but it would have been easier for the company to be more flexible if it had not been divided in that way.

Each division appears to stand in its own right. There is no flexibility in relation to profit distribution. It is not as easy to transfer the labour force across the company. I remind the Minister that it is the expertise and skill, particularly of design, that have created the wealth that is accruing to the United Kingdom division. I hope that the Minister will consider that when he replies. I hope also that he will say that there would normally have been an opportunity for work transfer. As I have said, the overall profits might have cushioned the effects of the recession and the shedding of jobs in the engineering division.

British Nuclear Fuels has always had a human face. I pay tribute to its work in the Warrington community and further afield. It has supported the environment, helped sport, and, in particular, taken an interest in the youth in the town and in education projects. That is why it is rather regrettable that, among those redundant people, there are 76 apprentices. The apprenticeships, both trade apprenticeships and design apprenticeships, have always been of a very high calibre. That training is applicable not only to that industry but to engineering elsewhere. One of the sad matters was the ending of the apprentices' school roughly 12 months ago. In the past three to four years, British Nuclear Fuels has not retained any apprentices.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend accept that, while out canvassing in Bradford recently, I met an apprentice-trained engineer who had worked for one firm for 37 years, was made redundant, obtained another job with an engineering firm, and then was told that he would be made redundant because of the recession? One of the points that my hon. Friend is making about his constituency and which is echoed elsewhere is that a pool of skilled engineering ability is simply being thrown on the dole by the Government's economic policies. That is a terrible shame and a waste of human resources.

Mr. Hoyle: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. It is a tragedy, and that is why I appeal to the Minister on behalf of those young people.

Mr. David Bellotti (Eastbourne): Does the hon. Gentleman share my disgust at the Government cutting, at this very time, £100 million from the budget for employment and youth training? When I previously visited the hon. Gentleman's constituency in Warrington and saw the YMCA there, I saw the pool of talented youth people who are ready to go on training courses, yet, at this very time, when they have the ability, such as that of the young people I know in Eastbourne, the Government are cutting their training programme.

Mr. Hoyle: I could not agree more with the hon. Member. The tragedy is that overall training has not been good enough. I look foward to the change of Government, since the next Government will provide adequate training for all. The hon. Gentleman will be very dismayed to know that the training of young people at the YMCA in Warrington is also coming to an end. That is the world that young people are now facing, and that is what will happen to young apprentices if there is no change of mind on the part of British Nuclear Fuels.

Unfortunately, having had an excellent record, British Nuclear Fuels has not retained any apprentices in the past three to four years, but it has offered short-term contracts, and some apprentices have been on contracts for up to four years. Those contracts are not being renewed.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Does my hon. Friend appreciate that, like Warrington, in many mining areas such as Pontefract and Castleford our mining apprenticeship schemes and mechanical and electrical schemes were the pride of the country and probably of the world? That is not now the case. Throughout the country, there will be an untrained work force if and when the economy ever lifts. We will not be in a position to use expertise, because it will not exist.

Mr. Hoyle: I reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) with a little pain, because I went to Castleford the other Sunday and saw Warrington badly defeated there. However, I agree with my hon. Friend on apprenticeships. Mining is another industry in which apprenticeships are being cut. British Coal is renowned throughout the world for its training of engineers. It is sad that that is also coming to an end.

Although volunteers are taking up the redundancies that are being offered to them, in relation to the 76 apprentices, work is still continuing for agency staff. Some agency staff have been employed for 15 years. How temporary is that work? Surely, if work has been carried out by agency staff in the past 15 years, permanent posts should have been created during that time. When I discussed the matter with company representatives—they are always ready to discuss matters with me—it appeared to me that there were at least 12 months' work and perhaps more for those young people. In addition, people who have retired have been retained as specialists. Again, it might be possible to find such work for those young people.

Over the past few years, the company has been taking on 10 to 20 young clerical trainees. They have come into the company from local schools and colleges, and they have received training in business skills. They have also been well equipped for work in the community or, as has happened, been absorbed into the company. I appreciate that the company may not be able to do that in future, but I hope that it will continue the training scheme for 10 to 20 young clerical workers. Even if they cannot find a job with British Nuclear Fuels at the end of their training, they would be well equipped. Perhaps there will be a change of Government and better opportunities outside than are being offered at this moment.

It appears that the unions are not being given all the information they need on which to question what is happening to those young people and redundancies generally. I understand that, in certain areas, overtime is continuing, but they cannot get the full picture. I also understand that they cannot get the true picture of what is happening with agency staff. It appears that company employees are going, while agency staff are being retained. It would be good if the Minister could give an idea of the future corporate plan that British Nuclear Fuels announced when splitting into the four divisions. I do not want to take up much time, because I want to hear what the Minister has to say. I hope that he has some positive and constructive comments.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend accept that one of the interesting points about the debate is that the Minister will respond to my hon. Friend? One of the reductions in accountability to Parliament has been the privatisation of important public utilities, from which British Nuclear Fuels is exempt. The accountability and answers that my hon. Friend is seeking are no longer available from Ministers because they have shrugged off accountability. My hon. Friend has all our backing for his plea for information from the Minister, because that is the process of accountability which we call democracy. During the ensuing election, we shall bring that issue to the fore. I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees.

Mr. Hoyle: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend, as I have said on the two previous occasions when he rose to his feet. It is absolutely essential that we are able to question Ministers. As my hon. Friend rightly says, I can ask such questions in relation to British Nuclear Fuels because it is still in the public sector. Even in the public sector, such as the Department of Employment and elsewhere, quangos and agencies are being created. That makes it difficult to question Ministers. When one writes in, one is referred to the head of a quango instead of to a Minister. Ministers are ultimately responsible, but they can pass the buck, and that is what has been happening. That is one of the tragedies.

The Minister has given up his time and I am extremely grateful to him, because the matter was visited upon him at a late hour and he has had to perform at a rather earlier hour than he imagined this morning. However, I managed to have a word or two with him.

My great anxiety is that the overall total of 750 redundancies should be made by voluntary means, and that as much work as possible should be taken away from the agencies so that the company can retain employees. I hope that the future stategy will not be to use agencies and consultancies rather than directly employing people.

Even if the Minister cannot answer about the 76 apprentices this morning, I ask him to consider them in particular and whether they could be absorbed in some way and allowed to take over some of the work that is being done by the agencies. I have no criticism of the company. Indeed, it has good standing in the community for all the work that it has done. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford knows, rugby league has also benefited from sponsorship by British Nuclear Fuels, as well as by the coal industry and various other companies.

We are therefore grateful to the company, but we ask that the apprentices be retained. We also ask the company to retain clerical training. Even if it is not able to take on the young people at the end of the training period, at least they would be well equipped to face the future, I hope under a new Government, in an economy that is recovering.

10.50 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): I am glad that we managed to retrieve this Ajournment debate. I congratulate the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) on the way in which he introduced the debate and his sense of timing in securing it, not too early and not too late in the Session —and, indeed, in this Parliament.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about the regrettable job losses at Risley in his constituency. As he recognised, they came about primarily because British Nuclear Fuels plc has just finished building the thermal oxide reprocessing plant—the so-called THORP. The commissioning stage is still to come, and will take a few months, but already the company has secured about £9 billion-worth of orders for the plant, of which more than half are from overseas. This is a remarkable achievement. It will ensure that THORP generates wealth for the region and the company for many years to come.

BNFL is also past the peak of a major programme of updating and upgrading its waste management and treatment plants at Sellafield. Each element of its nuclear process is being resolved, and solutions are being achieved to the highest environmental standards. So both programmes are somewhat in decline in terms of investment expenditure. The projects were a large task. The large team at Risley has worked on project management, design and procurement for some years.

I join the hon. Member for Warrington, North in paying tribute to the remarkable work that it has done and to the fact that it has finished construction of the plants on time. However, BNFL has concluded that, with the builk of its programme concluded, there is simply not enough work to maintain the present level of employment at its Risley office. Accordingly, the company has offered voluntary severance terms. I hope that there will be no need to move to compulsory redundancy.

The hon. Member for Warrington, North spoke about apprentices and the position of some ex-apprentices who are now on fixed-term contracts. I understand the hon. Gentleman's anxieties, but the bulk of the people involved were offered permanent jobs at the Sellafield site on completion of their apprenticeships. Most of them chose to remain at Risley on fixed-term contracts, knowing that those contracts might not be renewed. BNFL has made it clear that it will assist those people in the pursuit of alternative employment, both within the company and outside. The apprentices have gained substantial training and work experience with the firm, which should stand them in good stead in whatever career or alternative employment they may pursue. However, I undertake to pass on the hon. Gentleman's particular points to the company.

The company has told me that it will give sympathetic consideration to providing additional work experience within the company for the apprentices who may finish this summer. I shall be in touch again with BNFL to ensure that it is aware of the contents of today's debate. I emphasise that such matters are for the management of the company. It is for it to decide, not Ministers. It would be wrong for us to prevent management from managing and put rigid barriers in the way of releasing staff who are no longer required.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): I speak as a constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), and I am pleased that he has raised this issue. I know what will be the impact in the community of job losses at BNFL. The Minister takes the usual line that we have heard for the past 13 years: he says that a commercial decision must be taken by management. But has the Minister attempted to estimate the social cost to his Department and the Department of Social Security of the redundancies that will occur in the Warrington area? If he has not, he is abdicating some responsibility.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Of course, there is always a cost associated with redundancy, but there would also be a cost associated with any decision by the Government to interfere with the commercial management of a company such as BNFL. Future wealth, prosperity and employment in the region depend very much on the success of the company in future, and in particular of its major asset, THORP. That success would be put at risk if we interfered in commercial management decisions of the company.

Sir Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): May I at this point say how glad I am that it is my hon. Friend who is replying to this debate, because 31⅓ years ago, I took over from the well-loved Derick Heathcoat-Amory? It is a particular pleasure that, at the end of my last Parliament, a member of the same family should end that Parliament at the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. The next House of Commons will be the poorer without the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Sir R. Maxwell-Hyslop).

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) and the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) said about protecting jobs. I have been trying to protect jobs in my constituency in the coal industry, yet the hon. Gentleman's colleagues come into my constituency and say that they will phase out nuclear power and nuclear energy. That is a direct contradiction of what the hon. Gentlemen said today. Will my hon. Friend the Minister highlight the hypocrisy of the Labour party? Whenever it suits them, Labour Members say one thing, but when they go to another area they say another thing.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend makes a telling point. I cannot end the debate without drawing attention to the inescapable connection between long-term employment prospects at BNFL, and therefore at Risley, and the future of the nuclear industry in general. Indeed, the future of the nuclear industry would look extremely bleak under a Labour Government.

In its policy document "Opportunity Britain", published last year, the Labour party said that it was committed to phasing out nuclear power. The document said that no new power stations would be built and that most existing ones would be shut by the year 2000. The Liberal party has made an even more emphatic promise to shut down the nuclear industry. All that would be extremely serious for BNFL and all its employees. The job losses that we have seen recently at that company would be

[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory]

as nothing compared with what would flow from the full-scale running down of the nuclear industry as promised by the Labour party.

Mr. Cryer: The Minister has been helpful in giving way this morning.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North mentioned the 750 job losses and expressed his grave anxiety about them. The Minister said that the project was a fixed construction project which was coming to an end, resulting in redundancies. Does the Minister accept that BNFL should have developed alternatives, rather than simply putting people on the dole? Does he agree that it is a good idea for industries such as the nuclear industry to do that, because, at any time, environmental pressure is present and processes can be changed and improved or, like people, made redundant? Should not the Government encourage BNFL and other similar companies to plan change to ensure that redundancies do not take place?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am informed that there is an excellent training and enterprise council in the north and mid-Cheshire areas. It has already been in touch to offer its services. There are also the more routine services available from the local department of employment offices.

My point is a slightly separate one. The nuclear industry employs some 40,000 people, and all those jobs would be put at risk by a Labour Government operating the policies that Labour announced last year.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths).

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): My hon. Friend mentioned the long-term interest of the industry. Will he take into account, and perhaps report to the chairman, the fact that, throughout much of eastern Europe and in some of the new republics of the former Soviet Union, there is an enormous amount of work potentially in assisting in the demolition and safe disposal of nuclear fuels of redundant nuclear power stations? If we were to follow the recommendations of both Opposition parties and virtually dismantle our nuclear fuels industry, we should lose a potential export market of great importance.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend makes a telling point. There is a huge potential need to help eastern Europe dispose safely of fissile materials. We can help. Indeed, BNFL and the Atomic Energy Authority are following up a number of opportunities. That, too, would be put at risk if we were to shut down or wipe out our home-based facilities.

Mr. Hoyle *rose*——

Mr. Lofthouse *rose*——

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I give way to the hon. Gentleman whose debate this is.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the Minister acknowledge, first, how much of this has resulted from the privatisation of electricity and the surcharge that is already causing many problems? Secondly, will he acknowledge our point about the difficulty that the recession has caused BNFL in seeking alternative contracts? Thirdly, nothing is ruled out in eastern Europe, because the expertise that we have developed here can gain contracts for BNFL in the nuclear industry in eastern Europe, so that is irrelevant.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the privatisation of electricity. I must remind him that the nuclear industry, particularly Nuclear Electric, benefits from the fossil fuel levy, which is also helping to retain expertise and employment in the industry, including in BNFL. That, too, I understand, would be at risk from a Labour Government. The hon. Gentleman makes that point for me.

I must emphasise that the Government will carry out an impartial review in 1994 of the future of nuclear power. We will not prejudge the issue by issuing hasty documents in advance that threaten to shut down the industry, regardless of its improving performance. We will permit Magnox stations to run if it is safe and economic for them to do so. They bring substantial work to BNFL.

We also support Nuclear Electric in its efforts, which are increasingly successful, to get more electricity and a higher performance than at present from the advanced gas-cooled reactors. We will commission Sizewell B in 1994, or thereabouts. Silence from the Labour party on that point.

All those projects would be put at risk by an incoming Labour Government and would feed through directly to the employment prospects of people at BNFL and Risley.

Mr. Lofthouse: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I must proceed to a conclusion. This is, after all, only an Adjournment debate.

Even at this late stage, the hon. Member for Warrington, North should approach the Labour leadership and put the utmost pressure on his party to remove this threat to the nuclear industry. Perhaps there will be another U-turn and some change in the manifesto. In that case, employees in the nuclear industry will have to ask themselves whether a deathbed repentance on the part of the Labour party on nuclear power can offset years of hostility to their industry.

Mr. Lofthouse: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As the hon. Gentleman is a friend of the hon. Member for Warrington, North, I will give way one more time.

Mr. Lofthouse: The Minister will appreciate that THORP is fully committed, with 10-year contracts. He will understand, too, that there is no return clause in the early contracts, so the rubbish and waste after reprocessing is left in this country. Does BNFL plan to increase the work force to make sure that waste from abroad dumped here will be made safe?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: All that is done at Sellafield will be to the highest safety and environmental standards. I can confirm to the hon. Gentleman that all reprocessing contracts since 1976 have included a provision for the return of the subsequent wastes arising. The voters will have to ponder these matters during the forthcoming campaign.

A dissolution is imminent. I believe that I am the last Member to speak from the Dispatch Box and, indeed, in this Parliament. A new House of Commons will meet in six weeks' time, and I fully intend to be here, but exactly who returns and on what side we sit will be decided, as it should be, by the electorate. I have no epitaph for this Parliament beyond saying after Suetonius,

"Ave, Populus, morituri te salutant".

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The sitting is suspended until 2.30 pm when either Black Rod will be expected imminently or a further announcement will be made about when he will arrive.

11.6 am

Sitting suspended until half past Two o'clock.

On resuming:—

2.32 pm

Sitting further suspended.

On resuming:—

3.15 pm

Sitting further suspended.

3.51 pm

On resuming:—

Royal Assent

Message to attend the Lords Commissioners:

The House went:—and, having returned:

Mr. Speaker *(in the Clerk's place at the Table):* I have to acquaint the House that the House has been to the House of Peers, where a Commission under the Great Seal was read, authorising the Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Act 1992
Appropriation Act 1992
Finance Act 1992
Access to Neighbouring Land Act 1992
Offshore Safety (Protection against Victimisation) Act 1992
Prison Security Act 1992
Tourism (Overseas Promotion) (Wales) Act 1992
Parliamentary Corporate Bodies Act 1992
Medicinal Products: Prescriptions by Nurses etc. Act 1992
Still-Birth (Definition) Act 1992
Traffic Calming Act 1992
Firearms (Amendment) Act 1992
Cheques Act 1992
Social Security (Mortgage Interest Payments) Act 1992
Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992
Timeshare Act 1992
Sea Fisheries (Wildlife Conservation) Act 1992
Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992
Education (Schools) Act 1992
Army Act 1992
Friendly Societies Act 1992
Transport and Works Act 1992
Competition and Service (Utilities) Act 1992
Charities Act 1992
Museums and Galleries Act 1992
London Underground Act 1992
Aire and Calder Navigation Act 1992
Avon Weir Act 1992
Folkestone Habour Act 1992
Midland Metro Act 1992
Midland Metro (No. 2) Act 1992

Prorogation

HER MAJESTY'S MOST GRACIOUS SPEECH

Mr. Speaker: I have further to acquaint the House that the Lord High Chancellor, being one of the High Commissioners, delivered Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech to both Houses of Parliament, in pursuance of Her Majesty's Command, as follows:

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

The Duke of Edinburgh and I were pleased to visit Australia in February.

My Government have continued to make provision for the defence of the United Kingdom, including a substantial contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. They ratified the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty.

At the Summit meeting in Rome last November, NATO agreed a new Strategic Concept and set up the North Atlantic Co-operation Council, which at its Ministerial meeting on 10th March formally admitted republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States as members following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

My Government welcomed President Yeltsin to London on his first official visit as President of the Russian Federation. They are contributing directly to international efforts to dismantle weapons of mass destruction in the former Soviet Union and to economic reform programmes there. The European Community have agreed emergency food aid grants and credits worth over £1·5 billion.

My Government contributed significantly to the successful outcome to the European Council at Maastricht. Negotiations were concluded in the Inter-Governmental Conferences on Economic and Monetary Union, and on Political Union. The Treaty was signed on 7th February. My Government have continued to work within the Community to complete the Single European Market; to promote budgetary discipline; and to reform the Common Agricultural Policy; and for the conclusion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations. Agreement in principle has been reached to extend the Single Market to the European Free Trade Area from 1993.

The Community have also moved to consolidate relations with the new democracies to the East. Three Association Agreements, which were originally proposed by the United Kingdom have been signed with Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, and the trade liberalisation provisions of these Agreements have now come into effect.

In Yugoslavia, My Government have strongly supported the European Community's peace conference under Lord Carrington's chairmanship. They recognised the independence of Croatia and Slovenia. They participated fully in discussions leading to the adoption of a United Nations' Security Council Resolution to authorise the deployment of a peace-keeping force.

As President of the Security Council, My Government convened the first Summit meeting of Council Heads of State or Government which set in hand work to strengthen the United Nations' preventive diplomacy and peace-keeping efforts.

My Government have worked for the full implementation of Security Council Resolutions against Iraq. The

[Mr. Speaker]

United Kingdom contributes to the coalition's deterrent force in southern Turkey and has continued to provide protection and help for the Kurds.

My Government have supported the efforts of the United States and others to bring a just and durable peace to the Middle East. They warmly welcomed the release of the remaining British hostages from Lebanon.

Acting with the United States and France, My Government have demanded that Libya hand over the two principal suspects for the bombing of Pan Am flight 103. This has received the unanimous support of the UN Security Council.

My Government welcomed the opening in December of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa. They have been encouraged by its positive results so far.

A substantial and effective programme of overseas aid has been maintained to contribute to good government and economic and social progress in developing countries.

Members of the House of Commons

I thank you for the provision you have made for the honour and dignity of the Crown and for the public service.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

My Government have continued to pursue, within the framework of the Exchange Rate Mechanism, firm financial policies which have successfully reduced inflation. They are committed to maintaining the conditions necessary for sustained growth, the promotion of enterprise and training and the improvement of the working of the economy.

Legislation has been enacted to achieve a substantial step towards My Government's goal of a 20 per cent. basic rate for all taxpayers and to cut car tax by half.

As part of My Government's privatisation programme, a second tranche of shares in British Telecom has been sold to the public.

Legislation has been passed to provide for a new council tax to replace the community charge as the means of raising local revenue to finance local government spending.

An Act has been passed to establish a review of local government structure in England, and detailed proposals for structural reform in Wales have been published.

Action has been taken to improve quality, choice and opportunity in education. Legislation has been enacted to reform funding of further education and sixth form colleges and to reform higher education in England and Wales. An Act has been passed to provide parents with more information about the performance of schools and to improve school inspection.

My Government have taken forward their policies for enhancing the nation's health and for improving the effectiveness of the health and social services and the social security system.

My Government have continued to work for the regeneration of our cities, developing the new partnerships between local authorities, the private sector and local communities within the City Challenge framework. They have continued to promote diversity of choice in housing, and have taken steps to extend and improve the stock of social housing. Legislation has been passed to enable income support in relation to mortgage interest payments to be paid directly to lenders. An Act has been passed to increase temporarily the threshold for payment of stamp duty on house purchase.

My Government continue to take action to protect the environment, building on the policies in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance". The United Kingdom has played a leading part in international action on the environment.

A Bill has been introduced to enable applications for asylum in the United Kingdom to be dealt with quickly and effectively.

Measures have been enacted for England and Wales to create an offence of prison mutiny, to increase the maximum penalties for aiding prisoners to escape and for harbouring escaped prisoners, and to ensure that anyone guilty of taking a vehicle without consent is liable to a more severe sentence in aggravated circumstances.

An Act has been passed to strengthen health and safety arrangements for offshore installations.

Legislation has been enacted to enhance competitive tendering for local authority services. Other measures to implement the Citizen's Charter White Paper have been taken including the publication of a number of charters relating to individual public services.

For Scotland, an Act has been passed to reform further and higher education.

In Northern Ireland, My Government have continued to take vigorous action against terrorism. They have sought to promote political dialogue. Positive relations with the Republic of Ireland have been maintained and enhanced.

Other important matters have been enacted.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may attend you.

Thereafter, a Commission proroguing this present Parliament was read, after which the Lord Chancellor said:

"My Lords and Members of the House of Commons:

By virtue of Her Majesty's Commission which has now been read we do, in Her Majesty's name, and in obedience to Her Majesty's Commands, prorogue this Parliament to Monday the twenty-third day of this instant March, to be then here holden, and this Parliament is accordingly prorogued to Monday the twenty-third day of this instant March."

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 2 March 1992

ENERGY

Oil and Gas Reserves

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give a breakdown of the oil and gas platforms, oil and gas production, and oil and gas reserves between the Scottish and English sectors of the Moray Firth, central North sea, and mid North sea high fields.

Mr. Moynihan: Under international law, the continental shelf appertains to the United Kingdom as a whole. The reserves and production have not been divided between Scotland and England. The number of platforms presently located in the areas commonly known as the Moray Firth, the central North sea and the mid North sea high, together with my Department's provisional estimates of production in 1991 and of initial recoverable reserves discovered to date in each of these areas are shown in the table.

	Moray Firth	*Central North sea*	*Mid North sea high*
Number of oil and gas platforms	7	15	Nil
1991 oil production (million tonnes)[1]	9·8	19·3	Nil
1991 gas production (billion cubic metres)[1]	[3]—	[3]—	Nil
Initial discovered oil reserves (million tonnes)[1] [2]	455	690	Nil
Initial discovered gas reserves (billion cubic metres)[1] [2]	80	145	Nil

[1] Provisional figures.

[2] Central estimates at 31 December 1991.

[3] Less than one.

Electricity Generators Licences

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received regarding the effect of the no discrimination provision in electricity generators licences on competition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of representations regarding the non-discrimination provisions in the electricity generators' licences. Licence conditions are a matter for the Director General of Electricity Supply.

Oil and Gas Unit

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has had for and against the moving of the oil and gas industry exploration appraisal and development unit to Aberdeen.

Mr. Moynihan: I have received a number of representations from Scottish organisations, and the matter has also been raised in discussions with the oil industry.

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what time scale he envisages for the consultancy study considering the future position of the oil and gas industry exploration appraisal and development unit; when he expects to make a final decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The study of the case for or against relocating the Department of Energy's petroleum engineering directorate to Aberdeen is expected to take about five months. Ministers will then be in a position to make a final decision.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Malawi

40. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions the Minister for Overseas Development has had with her EC counterparts on linking Malawi's performance on human rights with the levels of EC development aid.

Mrs. Chalker: Following the EC Development Ministers' adoption last November of a resolution on human rights, democracy and development, agreed representations have been made to the Malawi Government. Britain and her European partners will continue to monitor Malawi's actions in all these areas and respond accordingly.

Zimbabwe

41. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current levels of aid to Zimbabwe.

Mrs. Chalker: In 1990, the last year for which comprehensive figures are available, we spent £20·7 million including investments by the Commonwealth Development Corporation. Expenditure in 1992 will include balance of payments aid in support of Zimbabwe's economic reform.

Aid Policy

42. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions the Minister for Overseas Development has had with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development on the co-ordination of aid policy.

Mrs. Chalker: I attended the OECD joint ministerial environment and development meeting and the OECD development assistance committee high level meeting in Paris, on 2 to 4 December 1991.

EC Aid Programmes

43. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place with Britain's EC partners on EC aid programmes in the last month.

Mrs. Chalker: I last discussed development issues with all my EC colleagues at the Development Council in Brussels on 28 November 1991. My officials are in frequent contact with their opposite numbers in the Commission and other member states.

Family Planning

44. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how British aid assists the contribution to family planning in developing countries made by the non-governmental sector.

Mrs. Chalker: Population assistance has a high priority in the United Kingdom aid programme—the amount has more than tripled since 1980 to £24 million in 1990. Non-governmental organisations have a vital role to play.

We are providing substantial and increasing support to NGOs in this area through our support to the International Planned Parenthood Federation, and through our joint funding scheme and bilateral programmes.

Aid Policy

45. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met OECD development ministers to discuss the co-ordination of aid policy.

Mrs. Chalker: I last met a number of overseas development ministers at the OECD joint ministerial environment and development meeting and the OECD Development Assistance Committee high level meeting in Paris from 2 to 4 December 1991.

Development Co-ordination

46. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place with Britain's EC partners on overseas development co-ordination in the last month.

Mrs. Chalker: I last discussed development issues with all my EC colleagues at the Development Council in Brussels on 28 November 1991. My officials are in frequent contact with their opposite numbers in the Commission and other members states.

Aid Programmes

47. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Minister for Overseas Development next intends to meet the Secretary-General of the United Nations and representatives of the World bank to discuss matters relating to the administration of multilateral aid programmes.

Mrs. Chalker: I met the United Nations Secretary-General on 13 January and the president of the World bank on 4 February. I have regular meetings with senior officials in these and other multilateral aid agencies.

Animal Conservation

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contributions towards animal conservation are being made by the Overseas Development Administration; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Since 1990 ODA has committed almost £20 million to wildlife conservation projects. A list of projects is available in the Library of the House.

Baltic States

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what conditions he intends to place on future know-how and other funds offered to the states of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia.

Mrs. Chalker *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* The Government have designated the following four sectors as priorities for the delivery of technical assistance to the Baltic states: food processing and distribution, financial services, small business creation, and energy. This does not prevent us from responding to specific requests made by the Baltic authorities in other areas.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the British economic assistance that has been extended to the three Baltic states since independence.

Mrs. Chalker *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* The following projects for technical assistance to the Baltic states under the know-how fund have now been approved:

KNOW-HOW FUND: ESTONIA, LATVIA, LITHUANIA
COUNTRY PROGRAMME PROJECTS
As at 28 February 1992

SMALL BUSINESS CREATION

Mitaline Technology (Estonia)

Preparation of training programme for use by Estonian Small Business Association. Approved at a cost to KHF of £4,820.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Ports Privatisation Conference

Director of Estonian Maritime Board enabled to attend Privatisation Conference. Approved at cost to KHF of £900.

Transcend Technology (Lithuania)

To provide assistance to the Association of Light Industry Enterprises of Lithuania to prepare individual state enterprises for privatisation. Approved at a cost to KHF of £9,800.

Lithuanian Association of Accountants

Study Visit by representative of the Association to United Kingdom to examine accountancy practices. Approved at a cost to KHF of £8,000.

POLITICAL AND CULTURAL

Restructuring Ministries of Foreign Affairs

Senior retired United Kingdom diplomats on short attachments to Ministries of Foreign Affairs in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. To provide advice on restructuring in a democratic society. Approved at a cost to KHF of £15,000.

Police Training

Senior officers from Strathclyde police on short missions to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to advise on police training needs and restructuring. Approved at a cost to KHF of £20,000.

Low Cost Book Scheme

Subsidies for text books for retailers and individuals in the three Baltic states in co-operation with International Books Development Ltd. Approved at a cost to KHF of £66,000.

Short Term Scholarships

One year scholarships for postgraduates and young professionals in the three Baltic states. Target areas are economics, finance and management. In co-operation with higher education institutions. Approved at a cost to KHF of £120,000.

Bradford Baltic Unit

Attachment of students from the three Baltic states to the Baltic Unit of Bradford University. Approved at a cost to KHF of £70,900.

Books for Parliament

Provision of text books in key areas to libraries of the Parliaments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Approved at a cost to the KHF of £15,000.

Seminar for Parliamentary Librarians

Training seminar for parliamentary librarians from three Baltic states. In co-operation with the Library of the House of Commons. Approved at a cost to the KHF of £8,000.

Legal Attachments

Attachments of young lawyers from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to the Law Society of Scotland and Scottish legal practices. Approved at a cost to KHF of £40,000.

Legal Concepts for Translators

Training in legal concepts in English for translators attached to the office of the Lithuanian Supreme Council. In co-operation with the University of Edinburgh. Approved at a cost to KHF of £10,000.

Television Training Project

Instructing trainees from the three Baltic states in British television production procedures. In co-operation with the Soros Foundation. Approved at a cost to the KHF of £26,000.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Protocol Training

Visit to UK by Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Deputy Chief of Protocol. Approved at a cost to KHF of £2,000.

Publisher Training

Seminar on publishing and the book trade in Lithuania. In co-operation with the Open Society Foundation of Lithuania. Approved at a cost to KHF of £30,000.

Re-integration Conference

Conference on the re-integration of the Baltic states into the world community. In co-operation with the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Approved at a cost to KHF of £6,000.

Voluntary Organisations Legislation

Visit of legal experts to advise on framing voluntary organisation legislation in Lithuania. Approved at a cost to KHF of £5,000.

Estonian Maritime Board

Visit of delegation to UK to study hydrography, search and rescue methods. Approved at cost to KHF of £5,000.

Missions

Banking, Finance and Privatisation Mission

Short mission to Baltic states to identify potential projects and terms of reference by Know How Fund Adviser. Approved at cost to KHF of £11,000.

Insurance Mission

Mission to the Baltic states to identify potential projects and terms of reference by Know How Fund Adviser. Approved at cost to KHF of £6,000.

Energy Audit Mission

Assessment missions to Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia to prepare terms of reference in co-operation with Ministries of Energy for National Energy Audit and other energy sector technical assistance projects by Know How Fund consultant. Approved at cost to KHF of £15,500.

Joint Exchanges Committee Mission

Mission to advise on the establishment of a physical commodity exchange. Approved at a cost to KHF of £4,000.

Training and Academic Link Projects

University of Stirling

Exploratory visit in association with the Estonian Academy of Sciences. Cost to KHF to be finalised.

Leicester Polytechnic

Exploratory visit in association with Riga Technical University. Cost to KHF of £1,000.

Investment Schemes Projects

Michael Abakhan Ltd.

Training for personnel in partly British owned investment in Estonia. Approved at cost to KHF of £15,600.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make further representations to the South African authorities to secure the release of all South African political prisoners in accordance with the UN declaration on South Africa adopted by consensus in December 1989; and if he will approach his partners in the European Community to do likewise.

Mrs. Chalker: We have repeatedly urged the South African Government to release all political prisoners throughout South Africa. The issue is complicated by the late submission of thousands of indemnity applications from prisoners claiming political status. A demarche on political prisoners was handed to the South African Government by the Dutch ambassador, representing the European Community, in October 1991.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to try and increase the number of entries on the electoral roll in St. Helena.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The registers of electors are up-dated during a period of 28 days at the beginning of each calendar year. During this period and throughout the year the public are urged by radio news and the weekly newspaper to register. This coverage, which extends to Ascension island, is supplemented by the work of registration officers and councillors who urge their constituents to register on the electoral roll. The preliminary lists for 1992 show 27 new claims.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the latest available figures for the population of St. Helena 18 years old or over, the number of St. Helenians eligible to be entered on the electoral roll and entitled to vote at an election for the legislative council; and the number at present entered.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The latest available figure for the population of St. Helena 18 years old and over is 3,508.

The same number are entitled to be entered on the electoral roll and entitled to vote at an election for the legislative council. A total of 2,532 persons are presently entered on the electoral roll.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the prospects for the St. Helena olive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The St. Helena Government are collaborating with the royal botanic gardens in an attempt to propagate the St. Helena olive. There is only a single specimen which is now old and producing only a few seeds from which propagation is being attempted both on St. Helena and at the royal botanic gardens at Kew. There is optimism that the St. Helena olive can be saved and eventually propagated in larger numbers.

Western Sahara

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide details of the United Kingdom financial contribution to the UN peace plan for the western Sahara; and if he will state how many United Kingdom personnel are currently in the western Saraha to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire and peace plan.

Dr. Douglas Hogg: Our assessed contribution to the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara (MINURSO) amounts to US$8,265,226 so far. In addition, we have provided 15 military observers.

Nuclear Proliferation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list *(a)* all measures taken by his Department in the last 12 months to prevent nuclear proliferation, *(b)* the number of personnel in his Department working to prevent nuclear proliferation and *(c)* his Department's total expenditure on control of nuclear proliferation in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Following is the reply:

(a) Preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is one of the FCO's departmental objectives. To that end we have been consistently active in promoting the nuclear non-proliferation regime in a wide range of international fora, including the UN, the IAEA, the EC, the nuclear suppliers group, the Zangger committee and in support of the UN Special Commission's activities in Iraq. We have undertaken regular bilateral lobbying to increase support for the NPT. In co-operation with other Departments we have provided advice to the DTI on export licensing matters.

(b) Ten FCO staff in London are engaged directly in work to prevent nuclear proliferation. But a much larger number of staff, at home and overseas, were involved in activities in support of this objective at some time in 1991.

(c) It is not possible to identify separately departmental expenditure specifically on the control of nuclear proliferation.

HEALTH

Children at Risk

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children are currently categorised as at risk in *(a)* London and *(b)* nationally.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information collected centrally relates to children on the child protection registers. The provisional figures for March 1991 show about 7,630 children on registers for London authorities and 45,200 for England. These figures may be adjusted slightly when the final publication is released in the next few months.

Induced Births

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by year for the last five years, the number of induced births carried out by each *(a)* regional health authority and *(b)* district health authority, and if he will show in his answer the age of the mothers in the following age ranges (i) under 16, (ii) 16 to 19, (iii) 20 to 24, (iv) 25 to 29, (v) 30 to 39 and (vi) over 40 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the estimated percentages of induced deliveries by regional health authority for 1985, the last year of the hospital in-patient enquiry (HIPE) and for 1989-90, the first full year of the collection of maternity items in the hospital episode statistics system (HES). The 1989-90 figures are the latest available centrally.

Induced deliveries as estimated percentages of all deliveries

	1985[1]	*1989-90*[2]
England	18	18
Northern	18	22
Yorkshire	17	21
Trent	18	17
East Anglia	15	17
North West Thames	24	12
North East Thames	16	18
South East Thames	15	22
South West Thames	18	15
Wessex	19	n.a.
Oxford	19	19
South Western	15	17
West Midlands	17	21
Mersey	16	17
North Western	18	24

n.a. Not Available

Source:

[1] Hospital In-Patient Enquiry (HIPE)

[2] Hospital Episode Statistic (HES)

Diabetics

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make available finger-pricking devices free of charge for diabetics; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are aware of the potential benefits of these devices: new additions to the list of prescribable items must be subject to the availability of resources and decisions on other competing priorities.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total capital expenditure on the national health service, expressed at 1992 prices for each year since 1962.

Mr. Dorrell: The information, expressed at 1992 prices, is shown in the table. Figures are available only from 1970-71 onwards, and are not available on the present definition of capital prior to 1985-86.

NHS capital gross expenditure (including trusts' capital expenditure)

	Cash (A) *£ million*	*Cash (B)* *£ million*	*Adjusted by GDP 1992-93 prices (A)* *£ million*	*Adjusted by GDP 1992-93 prices (B)* *£ million*
1970-71	126	—	966	—
1971-72	158	—	1,114	—
1972-73	201	—	1,311	—
1973-74	245	—	1,493	—
1974-75	246	—	1,253	—
1975-76	332	—	1,347	—
1976-77	361	—	1,290	—
1977-78	321	—	1,009	—
1978-79	373	—	1,057	—
1979-80	417	—	1,013	—
1980-81	568	—	1,166	—
1981-82	693	—	1,298	—
1982-83	719	—	1,257	—
1983-84	752	—	1,256	—
1984-85	845	—	1,344	—
1985-86	928	1,013	1,399	1,527
1986-87	—	1,089	—	1,590
1987-88	—	1,129	—	1,563
1988-89	—	1,221	—	1,577
1989-90	—	1,454	—	1,764
1990-91	—	1,603	—	1,792
1991-92	—	1,912	—	1,998
1992-93	—	2,073	—	2,073

Notes:

1. Figures in column B are adjusted to take into account the transfer to capital from current as a result of the redefinition of NHS capital.
2. Expenditure figures for 1991-92 and 1992-93 include estimated capital expenditure by NHS trusts financed through internally generated income and external finance limits.

Leighton Hospital

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what were the number of nurses of G grade and above employed at Leighton hospital, Crewe in 1990-91; and what are the comparable figures to date;

(2) what are the present staff levels at Mid Cheshire hospitals trust Leighton hospital in *(a)* consultants, *(b)* nurses and *(c)* auxiliary medical porters; and what were the comparable figures for 1979-80, 1985-86 and 1990-91.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. R. F. Lawrence, the chairman of Mid Cheshire hospitals NHS trust, for details.

Poliomyelitis

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of poliomyelitis there have been in each year since 1978 and in 1992 to date; and if he will give for each year the number of cases known to have been caused from *(a)* vaccination and *(b)* contact with a vaccinated person.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Between 1978 and the end of 1991, there have been 42 cases of paralytic poliomyelitis reported to the Public Health Laboratory Service communicable disease surveillance centre. A total of 18 were vaccine associated (recipient) cases and nine were vaccine associated (contact) cases.

In 1992 there has been one vaccine associated (contact) case.

Immunisation

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *111-12*, how many of the 483 reported suspected adverse reactions to immunisation in 1991 were serious.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: One hundred and fifty nine.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *111-12* if he will list the research studies which show that the deaths to which he referred are temporally not causally related to immunisation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The United States Institute of Medicine has recently published a detailed review of studies of vaccine adverse events titled "Adverse Effects of Pertussis and Rubella Vaccines". The report concludes:

> there was insufficient evidence to indicate a causal relationship between Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus (DPT) vaccine and aseptic meningitis, chronic neurological damage, erythema multiforme, Guillain Barre syndrome, haemolytic anaemia, juvenile diabetes, learning disabilities, peripheral mononeuropathy or thrombocytopenia, and rubella vaccine and radiculoneuritis and other neuropathies or thrombocytopenia purpura:
>
> that the evidence does not indicate a causal relationship between DPT vaccine and infantile spasms, hypsarrhythmia, Reye Syndrome or sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

The full bibliography can be made available. Thirty-nine references to studies on SIDS and DTP are listed in that publication.

In this country, deaths reported in association with mumps, measles and rubella have been studied carefully by the clinicians involved, and no causal relationship established.

Market Testing

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the individuals or organisations from the private sector who have been involved since 18 November 1991 *(a)* in determining areas within his Department for market testing or contracting out or *(b)* who have advised him of areas that should be market tested or contracted out to market consultants; the total fees or other costs to date charged to his Department by them and the full costs likely to be charged;

(2) if he will list any areas within his Department that have been identified since 18 November *(a)* by individuals or organisations from the private sector or *(b)* otherwise as possibly suitable for market testing and contracting out; and what steps are being taken to prevent any non-governmental organisations successfully tendering to carry out work currently undertaken by civil servants

facing a conflict of interest between the public interest requirement of this work and other commercial activities they are involved in or other clients they represent.

Mr. Dorrell: Following a competitive tendering exercise, the Department has appointed KPMG Management Consultants to assist in identifying activities that might be suitable for market testing. No decisions have been taken on areas for market testing beyond those identified in the Department's contribution to the annex of "Competing for Quality" published on 18 November 1991, a copy of which is available in the Library.

The full costs of external support for the Department's market testing programme cannot be estimated until that programme is decided. Payments under individual consultancy contracts are confidential.

To avoid potential conflicts of interest, all non-governmental organisations bidding in a market testing exercise will be required to declare any interest that might be contrary to the public interest. In particular, any companies that help to prepare specifications for any service will be excluded from the process of evaluating tenders.

Dentists

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he intends to take to stop people in dentistry from leaving the NHS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Our recent survey showed that 76 per cent. of dentists routinely accept all patients for NHS treatment, and 85 per cent. accept all children. There were always some dentists who provided a mixed service but prior to the registration of patients, as required by the 1990 dental contract, we had no means of checking the numbers. There are currently 25 per cent. more dentists practising in the general dental services in England than there were in 1979.

Patient Statistics

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the in-patient and day case activity figures for the first six months of the current financial year for each national health service trust; and if he will provide comparable data for the previous three years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In all NHS trusts the number of patients treated in the first six months of the current financial year was: in-patients 536,425, day cases 140,812. This information is provisional only as it has not yet been validated.

Comparable information for the previous three years for individual units is not available. However, in all NHS trusts the number of patients treated in the first six months of the last financial year was: in patients 516,129, day cases 120,078.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the in-patient and day case activity figures for the 75 directly managed units, showing the largest increase in activity rates in the first six months of the current year; and if he will provide comparable data for the performance of these units in the previous three years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

National Blood Authority

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 29 January, *Official Report*, column *586*, if he will list those who responded to the consultation document on the proposal to establish a national blood authority for England and those whom he has asked to be part of the technical working group to consider operational matters.

Mr. Dorrell: The organisations which submitted comments in response to the consultation document are given in the table. Those who have been invited to nominate members for the technical working group are indicated with an asterisk.

Alpha, Armour and Immuno Pharmaceutical Companies
Association of Clinical Pathologists
British Blood Transfusion Society
British Society for Haematology
Central Blood Laboratories Authority*
College of Anaesthetists
East Anglian Regional Health Authority
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's Special Health Authority
Joint Consultants Committee of the British Medical Association
Mersey and North Wales Regional Transfusion Centre
Mersey Regional Health Authority
Moorfields Eye Hospital
Mount Vernon Hospital NHS Trust
National Directorate of the National Blood Transfusion Service*
National Association of Blood Donors
National Blood Transfusion Service (Regional Transfusion Directors)*
National Health Service Trust Federation
North East Thames Regional Transfusion Centre
Northern Regional Health Authority
Northern Regional Blood Transfusion Service
North Western Regional Health Authority
North West Thames Regional Health Authority
Oxford Regional Health Authority
Oxford Regional Blood Transfusion Centre
Pontefract Health Authority
Public Health Laboratory Service
Public Health Laboratory Service at Manchester
Regional Health Authority Chairmen*
Regional Directors of Public Health*
Royal Brompton National Heart and Lung Hospitals
Royal College of Nursing
Royal College of Physicians
Royal College of Surgeons of England
Senior Nurse Managers Group of the National Blood Transfusion Service
South East and South West Thames Regional Health Authorities
South Western Regional Transfusion Centre
South Western Region Haematology Advisory Group
The Haemophilia Society
The Hospitals for Sick Children Special Health Authority
The Royal College of Midwives Trust
The Royal College of Pathologists
The Royal Marsden Hospital
Trent Blood Transfusion Service Board
Trent Regional Health Authority
Trent Regional Transfusion Centre
United Kingdom Haemophilia Centre Directors Organisation
Wessex Regional Health Authority
West Midlands Regional Transfusion Centre
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority

In addition, 14 individuals have commented in a personal capacity.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those parts of his Department, including executive agencies, carrying out reviews over the last 12 months into the pay and grading of staff and the firm of consultants engaged, where appropriate.

Mr. Atkins: No such reviews have yet taken place.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current number of staff in his Department dedicated to *(a)* the operation of local management of schools and *(b)* opted-out schools.

Mr. Eggar: Local management of schools is operated by local education authorities, not by the Department. There are 9·8 full-time-equivalent staff working in the Department's local management of schools unit, which is responsible for policy, development and implementation.

A total of 53 staff currently work in schools 4, division B, which is responsible for policy on grant-maintained schools, including transitional arrangements and recurrent and capital funding.

Kingsbridge School

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to reply to the hon. Member for South Hams's letter of 13 December, enclosing a letter from the principal of the Kingsbridge school and community college.

Mr. Atkins: A reply was sent by my right hon. and learned Friend on 26 February 1992.

Students Charter

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to introduce a students charter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Further and Higher Education Bill, when enacted, will improve opportunities for students and ensure that the quality of the education offered in both sectors is sustained and enhanced. My right hon. and learned Friend will be considering whether these advances will best be reflected in a charter.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fair Employment

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show for each health and social services board headquarters, the number of vacancies filled in each of the last available three years, the number of applications received by each board for those vacancies in each of those years, and the number of complaints made under the fair employment legislation in respect of those posts in each year and the number of such complaints which went to a tribunal; how many went to court; and how many are still ongoing.

Mr. Hanley: I attach a table showing the information requested.

	1989		*1990*		*1991*	
	Vacancies filled	*Applications received*	*Vacancies filled*	*Applications received*	*Vacancies filled*	*Applications received*
Northern board	123	1,116	239	2,354	153	2,009
Southern board	103	[1]—	57	576	89	790
Western board	102	785	160	2,098	90	1,594
Eastern board	294	3,500-4,000	220	3,695	243	4,135

[1] The Southern and Eastern health and social services boards have not retained application details for 1989.

There were no complaints in 1989. In 1990 five complaints against the Western board and three against the Eastern board were taken to the Fair Employment Commission and are still under consideration. Three complaints against the Northern board were referred to tribunal, two were withdrawn and one is outstanding.

In 1991 two complaints against the Western board were taken to the FEC and are still under consideration. To date, no complaints have gone to court and no compensation has been paid.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many teachers were trained within the teacher training colleges in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is:

	Number
1986-87	386
1987-88	403
1988-89	422
1989-90	432
1990-91	367

Eastern Health and Social Services Board

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the increase in staff working in the headquarters of the Eastern health and social services board since April 1989.

Mr. Hanley: Between 1 January 1989, the nearest date to April 1989 for which figures are available, and 1 January 1992 the number of staff employed in the headquarters of the Eastern health and social services board fell from the equivalent of 428·24 full-time workers to 352·12, a decrease of 76·12.

Electoral Registers

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were on the electoral registers of each of the 17 parliamentary constituencies in June 1983; and how many there are now.

Dr. Mawhinney: I understand from the chief electoral officer that the information is as set out. The figures for 1983 are estimates as the electoral register published that year was on the basis of the former 12 parliamentary constituencies.

Persons on the register of parliamentary electors in Northern Ireland, by constituency—June 1983 and February 1992

Constituency	*Persons on Register* [1] *1983*	*1992*
Belfast East	56,231	53,375
Belfast North	61,778	55,587
Belfast South	54,344	52,556
Belfast West	60,400	55,280
East Antrim	59,430	63,739
East Londonderry	68,015	76,912
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	68,530	71,472
Foyle	68,081	75,970
Lagan Valley	60,749	73,688
Mid Ulster	64,549	70,410
Newry and Armagh	63,037	68,716
North Antrim	63,904	70,217
North Down	62,224	69,604
Strangford	60,882	69,855
South Antrim	59,949	68,292
South Down	67,637	77,371
Upper Bann	61,445	68,422
Total	1,061,185	1,141,466

[1] Estimated figures. Figures are available for the number of people eligible to vote in each of the 17 Northern Ireland constituencies in the June 1983 general election, but they do not include 11,049 persons who were under the age of 18 on election day but were on the electoral register because they would reach voting age while it was current.

Health Service Staff

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of people employed by the NHS in Northern Ireland on a full-time and part-time basis.

Mr. Hanley: At 31 December 1991 the total number of people employed in the Northern Ireland health and personal social services was 61,050; of these 34,025 were employed on a full-time basis and 27,025 on a part-time basis.

Note: These figures include staff employed in personal social services which are provided by local authorities in Great Britain.

Electors

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the statutory provisions which relate to the powers of the chief electoral officer for Northern Ireland to arrange to have potential electors in residential homes excluded from the Register of Electors for 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The statutory powers and duties of the chief electoral officer in respect of the compilation of the electoral register are contained in the Representation of the People Act 1983, as amended and as applied by schedule 1 to the Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Act 1989, and in subordinate legislation made under that Act. Under sections 1(1), 2(1) and 12 of the Act a person who is subject to a legal incapacity to vote may not be registered.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many residents are registered in residential homes in east Antrim; and how many of those residents have been excluded from the 1992 electoral register.

Dr. Mawhinney: I understand from the chief electoral officer that this information is not available.

Lough Foyle

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the running costs incurred in the operation of the research vessel Lough Foyle in each of the years from 1 April 1986 to 31 March 1991.

Mr. Hanley: The running costs for the Lough Foyle are:

	£
20 October 1988[1] to 31 March 1989	168,662
1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990	409,332
1 April 1990 to 31 March 1991	585,483

[1] Date at which the vessel became operational in public service.

Claimants

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many, and what proportion, of supplementary benefit and income support claimants in Northern Ireland were in receipt of benefit because they were unemployed for each year since 1979.

Mr. Hanley: Social security operational matters are the responsibility of Mr. Alec Wylie, chief executive of the Social Security Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies of his reply will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Defence Sales

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) *Official Report,* 21 February, column *338,* if he will list those individual sales contracts for defence equipment covered by ECGD insurance where all commercial parties involved have agreed to disclosure.

Mr. Lilley: ECGD has no record of any instance where all the commercial parties have agreed to the disclosure of support in respect of defence sales contracts.

Nuclear Proliferation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list *(a)* all measures taken by his Department in the last 12 months to prevent nuclear proliferation, *(b)* the number of personnel in his Department working to prevent nuclear proliferation and *(c)* his Department's total expenditure on control of nuclear proliferation in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lilley: The Export Control Organisation of DTI works together with other Government Departments to implement policy on nuclear non-proliferation. Over the past 12 months my officials have continued to participate in international fora dealing with nuclear proliferation issues, in particular the nuclear suppliers group and the European political co-operation working group on nuclear non-proliferation.

Amendment No. 7 to the Export of Goods (Control) Order introduced in July 1991 was a significant unilateral measure which brought under control the export of a wide range of goods where the exporter knows or suspects that they will be used for nuclear proliferation purposes. In 1991 my Department organised a series of eight seminars for industry entitled "The Changing Threat" aimed at alerting exporters to proliferation issues in the context of export controls.

The Export Control Organisation of DTI employs 119 staff. As the staff of the Export Control Organisation deal with all matters relating to export control, it is not possible to provide figures on the Department's expenditure specifically on the control of nuclear proliferation.

Car Exports

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the total earnings of exports of British cars in 1990-91; and what are the latest figures for British car exports in total.

Mr. Leigh: The available information is given in the table.

Total United Kingdom exports of passenger motor cars

	Numbers	*Value (£ million)*
1990	433,490	3,306·3
1991	626,084	4,081·0

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom (Business Monitor MM20).

Passenger motor cars are defined as item 781·2 of the standard international trade classification, revision 3.

Innovation Unit

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the work of the innovation unit of his Department.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the background to the DTI's innovation unit as summarised in press notice P/91/544. Since its establishment in October 1991, the innovation unit has expanded, with the secondment of five top business men who are using their hands-on experience of innovation in industry to deal directly with firms, higher education institutes, schools and the media.

Since its establishment, the unit has initiated or supported many activities such as the publication of the first United Kingdom research and development scoreboard and the "Innovation Plans Handbook", both aimed at improving communication between industry and investors. It is supporting the fellowship of engineering's MacRobert award and visiting professorship scheme and, in conjunction with the Fellowship of Engineering and the Royal Society, organised the first United Kingdom innovation lecture, delivered last month by Mr. Akio Morita, chairman of the Sony Corporation.

Export Control Seminars

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to his answer of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *380*, if he will indicate *(a)* the number of corporate or individual attendees at each of the export control seminars held by his Department last year, *(b)* the number of such bookings taken for the seminar in Manchester on 23 March and *(c)* the feedback his Department has received on the utility of such seminars.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 28 February 1991]: (a)* The number of corporate attendees at each seminar last year was as follows:

	Number
Southampton	27
Manchester	50
London	161
Edinburgh	29
Bristol	26
Birmingham	44
Cambridge	18
Reading	49

(b) So far six companies have made bookings for the seminar in Manchester on 23 March. We are taking urgent steps to encourage further participation by businesses in the region.

(c) Last year's seminars were all well received by exporters and assessed by participants as being informative and of practical value.

Indonesia

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), *Official Report*, 27 January, column *435*, if he will set out for each year respectively from 1975 the proportion of United Kingdom total annual exports to Indonesia that were made up of military equipment requiring an export control licence.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* The information requested is not available.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the details of each external consultancy study undertaken, including its remit, into any aspects of the operation of the National Engineering Laboratory in each of the last five years.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 28 February 1991]:* Since this is an operational matter it would be best dealt with by direct contact with the agency. I have therefore asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Gentleman with the information requested.

EC Funding

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether local authorities in areas eligible to receive European regional development fund assistance will, from 1993-94, automatically have public expenditure cover made available for them to enable those local authorities to claim fully the European regional development fund made available by the European Commission.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* Yes. Local authorities are, however, of course not the only recipients of grant from the fund. In accordance with my statement on 17 February, from 1993-94 local authorities will receive supplementary credit approvals to match in full the ERDF-funded part of their expenditure on approved capital projects. Public expenditure cover will also be made available automatically for all other forecast ERDF receipts.

I welcome the Commission's announcement on 26 February of its approval of the Government's RECHAR programmes.

Additionality

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will deposit in the Library such papers relating to the discussions between the Government and the European Commission relating to the issue of additionality, and upon which he based his statement made on 17 February, as are not confidential.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* No. It is not usual for such papers to be deposited.

RECHAR

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give full details of the nature of the transitional arrangements referred to in his statement of 17 February, *Official Report*, columns 22 to 37, on RECHAR.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* An announcement will be made as soon as possible about the details of the transitional arrangements in the intervening period until 1993-94. Allowance has already been made in public expenditure plans for RECHAR-linked expenditure, but it has not been possible for RECHAR grants to be made in 1991-92 because of the delay to the Commission's approval of the programmes.

The transitional arrangements will include special arrangements for RECHAR to ensure that commensurate public expenditure cover is available to the relevant spending authorities for the element of their expenditure financed by the ERDF.

CIVIL SERVICE

Disability

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on the employment of people with disabilities in the civil service.

Mr. Renton: The annual review of employment of people with disabilities in the civil service is presented in the magazine "Independent" published today. This shows that the civil service employs 8,024 registered disabled people, an increase of 125 since 1990.

Copies of "Independent" have been placed in the Library.

THE ARTS

Arts Budget

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give details of the total United Kingdom arts budget for the last five financial years for which figures are available; and if these figures can be broken down for Scotland, England, Wales, Northern Ireland and London and expressed in cash terms and as percentages.

Mr. Renton: Details of the total arts budget for the United Kingdom are not available. The central Government arts programme for which I have responsibility is as follows:

	£ million	*Per cent.*
1986-87	343	—
1987-88	368	+7
1988-89	414	+13
1989-90	446	+8
1990-91	496	+11
1991-92	561	+13

It includes finance for the Arts Council of Great Britain which, in turn, passes funds on to the Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils.

The Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland make provisions for the arts in their respective expenditure programmes.

A territorial presentation of Government expenditures by function and from 1986-87, is available in the Government's "Public Expenditure Analyses to 1994-95, Statistical Suplement to the 1991 Autumn Statement". Cm 1920.

National Gallery

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister for the Arts what central Government financial assistance was given for the recent building work on the new wing of the national gallery in London.

Mr. Renton: None.

Acceptance in Lieu

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Minister for the Arts if the statement in paragraph 3.3 of his Office's annual report for 1992, Cm 1912, concerning the availability from the contingency reserve of up to £10 million per annum, taking one year with another, for acceptance in lieu represents a change in policy from the announcement of 26 July 1985, *Official Report*, column 777, stating that the figure was not a limit but an estimate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: As Lord Gowrie said when he announced this policy in 1985, it is not possible to give an exact estimate of what might be accepted in lieu of tax in any one year, as too many unpredictables are involved. Looking at recent and current levels of acceptance in lieu offers, we would expect to call on the reserve for around £10 million or so a year, taking one year with another. I am pleased to say that there has been no change in policy in this area and must emphasise strongly that this is neither a target nor a limit, but an estimate. In any given year the demand could be either less or more.

Bohemian Carvings

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts pursuant to the statement of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) on 17 February, *Official Report,* column 152, what further consideration he has given to the matter of discussions with the art market about Bohemian carvings.

Mr. Renton: I will tomorrow be meeting with my consultative group on the export of works of art after 1992, on which there are representatives of the major art trade associations and auction houses. I will therefore take the opportunity to draw the matters of the Bohemian wood carvings to its attention, and I will follow this up in a letter. The hon. Member is no doubt aware of the voluntary code of practice adhered to by the art trade in the United Kingdom, whereby it undertakes not to deal in stolen works of art. I am sure it will wish to assist in the recovery of any wood carvings which might appear on the market.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Departmental Staff

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total number of employees in his Departments; and how many are *(a)* black and *(b)* disabled.

Mr. Maples: The total number of employees in the Chancellor's departments at 1 October 1991 was 110,593·5.

Departments collated their ethnic minority and disability figures at different times within the past 12 months. The combined totals are 5,611 from ethnic minority backgrounds and 1,789·5 registered disabled workers.

These figures include part-timers as 0·5.

Some departments do not hold central records of the ethnic origin or disability of industrial staff. The response rate to ethnic origin questionnaires varies from 57 to 97·5 per cent. of staff. Some disabled people choose not to register as disabled.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women in his Departments in each of grades (i) 1, (ii) 2, (iii) 3, (iv) 4, (v) 5, (vi) 6, (vii) 7, (viii) SEO, (ix) HEO, (x) administrative trainee, (xi) EO, (xii) CO and (xiii) CA.

Mr. Maples: The combined total for the Chancellor's departments is:

Grade	*Men*	*Women*
1	7·0	0·0
2	19·0	3·0
3	58·0	2·0
4	58·0	0·0
5	402·5	31·0
6	1,135·5	73·0
7	2,582·0	344·0
SEO	4,132·0	572·0
HEO	10,310·0	3,576·5
AT	21·0	5·0
EO	14,882·5	12,244·0
AO	9,874·5	20,568·5
AA	6,777·5	18,862·0

These figures all relate to 1991-92, although the precise date varies between departments. The figures show full-time equivalents; part-timers are counted as 0·5. More women than men work part time; so the figures understate the actual number of women employed.

Childcare Tax Allowance

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect on Treasury revenues in 1992-93 and in a full year of introducing a child care tax credit of £5 per child for *(a)* all working mothers and *(b)* all mothers, giving figures separately for (i) all dependent children and (ii) children under five years only.

Mr. Maude: Estimates of the cost of introducing such a tax credit are in the table. It has been assumed that the £5 per week payments would be made to all those with children whether taxpayers or non-taxpayers.

	All families	*All families with working mother*[1]
	£ billion	*£ billion*
Payment in respect of:		
All children	3·2	1·9
Children under five only	1·0	0·4

[1] Including lone fathers who are working.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost of introducing a tax allowance for child care costs, set against the taxable income of the mother, equal to £50 per week *(a)* per family with children under age 16 years and *(b)* per family with at least one child under the age of five years, giving the numbers of each who would benefit from such allowance, in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 24 February 1992]:* Estimates of the cost of introducing an allowance of £50 per week against taxable income of mothers and lone parents at 1992-93 levels, and the numbers of families benefiting from such an allowance are set out in the table.

	Cost £ billion	*Numbers benefiting millions*[1]
Family with children under the age of 16[1]	1·3	2·5
Family with at least one child under the age of 5[1]	0·4	0·8

[1] Includes lone parents.

Families (Taxation)

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many families with children are estimated to have taxable incomes below the income tax threshold; and what proportion this represents of all families with children.

Mr. Maude: In 1991-92 it is estimated that 1·8 million single parents and married couples with children have no income tax liability. These represent about one quarter of all families with children.

Non-taxpayers

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for how many *(a)* working and *(b)* non-working people do not pay tax, in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maude: Just under 21 million people over 16 do not pay income tax in 1991-92, of whom 4·2 million have some earnings.

Debtor Countries

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what the estimated total value of debt relief will be for countries which recieved the Toronto terms if they were all to receive the same terms as recently agreed by the Paris Club for Nicaragua;

(2) how much debt relief would be given by the United Kingdom Government if all the countries which received relief under the toronto terms were to receive the same terms as recently agreed by the Paris Club for Nicaragua.

Mr. Maples: The actual value of debt relief under the terms of a Paris Club agreement is dependent on a number of factors which are not known in advance of the conclusion of the agreement. However, the agreement concluded with Nicaragua in December of last year provided for the reduction by 50 per cent. of eligible debts.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the United States Government on the adoption of option A of debt relief agreements reached in the Paris Club of the kind agreed with Nicaragua last December.

Mr. Maples: The United States Government are aware at the highest level of the United Kingdom Government's objectives in this area. These objectives are the full implementation of Trinidad terms by all creditor countries at the Paris Club. Treasury officials are in regular contact with their United States counterparts, and will continue to pursue this matter vigorously.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the criteria for debtor countries' eligibility to receive the Trinidad terms of debt relief.

Mr. Maples: There are no formal criteria for eligibility for any set of debt restructuring terms at the Paris Club. The Trinidad terms are designed for a similar group of countries to the Toronto terms. These countries were informally designated as those very poor and heavily indebted countries with chronic balance of payments problems that render the country unable to service debts on conventional terms. It is a pre-condition of any agreement at the Paris Club that the debtor country has a strong economic adjustment programme in place supported by the IMF. Eligibility is determined on a case-by-case basis.

The 20 countries which have benefited from the Toronto terms between October 1988 and June 1991, are as follows: Benin, Bolivia, Burkino Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Guyana, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zaire and Zambia. Since December 1991 four countries have further benefited from the Trinidad terms. These are Nicaragua, Benin, Tanzania and Bolivia. More are expected to follow.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much the United Kingdom is owed by those countries which have received the Toronto terms of debt relief.

Mr. Maples: Taking into account the effect of debt reduction under the Toronto terms, the total of debt owed to the United Kingdom Government by the countries which have benefited from Toronto terms is £870 million, comprising £755 million of claims and outstanding interest on those claims owed to ECGD and £115 million owed to ODA.

Capital Investment

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much British capital is currently invested in the USA.

Mr. Maples: The latest available information from United Kingdom sources relates to the book value of direct investments in branches, subsidiaries and associates of United Kingdom companies in the USA at the end of 1989 and is published in table 1.6 of "Business Monitor MA4 (1989 Overseas Transactions)" published by the Central Statistical Office, a copy of which is in the Library. In addition, figures on the position at the end of 1990, are published by the US Department of Commerce in its "Survey of Current Business (August 1991)". A copy of this publication is also in the Library.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the amounts of the inward and outward movement of capital to and from the United Kingdom for the last 10 years.

Mr. Maples: The available details inward and outward investment (distinguishing direct, portfolio and other flows) are contained in table A8 of the December 1991 issues of "Economic Trends" published by the Central Statistical Office, a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library. Annual figures for 1991 are not yet available.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much Japanese capital is currently invested in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maples: The latest available information relates to the book values of direct investments in branches, subsidiaries and associates of Japanese companies in the United Kingdom at the end of 1989 and is published in table 2.6 of "Business Monitor MA4 (1989 Overseas Transactions)" published by the Central Statistical Office, a copy of which is in the Library.

Local Authority Borrowing

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the total local authority borrowing requirement for each year from 1978-79 to 1991-92, estimated.

Mr. Mellor: The total local authority borrowing requirement (LABR) for each year from 1978-79 to 1990-91 is as follows:

	LABR £ billion
1978-79	1·3
1979-80	3·0
1980-81	2·1

	LABR *£ billion*
1981-82	−0·2
1982-83	0·1
1983-84	1·2
1984-85	2·4
1985-86	1·7
1986-87	0·1
1987-88	1·4
1988-89	0·3
1989-90	1·3
1990-91	3·4

An estimate for the LABR in 1991-92 will be published in the 1992 FSBR.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total corporation tax raised from companies in regard to their activities in Wales in 1990-91.

Mr. Maude: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the gross domestic product of *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* Greater London in (i) cash and (ii) real terms in each year from 1980-81 to 1991-92, estimated.

Mr. Mellor: Current price figures for Greater London up to 1989 are published in "Economic Trends" No. 457, November 1991 page 96. These include the income from employment of non-residents who work in Greater London. Alternative estimates given on page 92 exclude the income of non-residents. These do not measure the whole of the economic activity taking place in Greater London, but annual estimates are available up to 1990. Both pages include comparable figures for the United Kingdom. Only calendar year estimates are made.

Constant price estimates of regional GDP are not made because there are no regional deflators. Comparable constant prices figures for the United Kingdom are given in table 1.3 of the Central Statistical Office Blue Book, 1991 edition, "United Kingdom National Accounts".

Government Revenue

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total Government revenue, including all taxation and other income accruing to both central and local government, for the year 1990-91; and what was the revenue per capita.

Mr. Mellor: The information on total general Government revenue, defined as total current and capital account receipts, is published in the Central Statistical Office monthly publication "Financial Statistics" in tables 2.1 and 2.2 and is £220,347 million for the financial year 1990-91. The total revenue divided by the home population for mid-1990 as published in "The United Kingdom National Accounts" (CSO Blue Book) table 17.1 gives a figure for revenue per capita of £3,838.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish identifiable general Government expenditure, by area and function, consistent with the figures in tables E10 and E11 of Cm. 1920 for *(a)* Greater London and *(b)* the south-east excluding Greater London.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not available.

Market Testing

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list any areas within his Department that have been identified since 18 November *(a)* by individuals or organisations from the private sector or *(b)* otherwise as possibly suitable for market testing and contracting out; and what steps are being taken to prevent any non-governmental organisations successfully tendering to carry out work currently undertaken by civil servants facing a conflict of interest between the public interest requirement of this work and other commercial activities they are involved in or other clients they represent.

Mr. Maude: A study to determine the most promising areas for market testing within the Department is not yet complete. Guidance on the ethics of conducting business with the private sector is contained in the Treasury's public competition and purchasing units guidance—CUP No. 16—which has been circulated to Departments.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the individuals or organisations from the private sector who have been involved since 18 November 1991 *(a)* in determining areas within his Department for market testing or contracting out or *(b)* who have advised him of areas that should be market tested or contracted out to market consultants; the total fees or other costs to date charged to his Department by them and the full costs likely to be charged.

Mr. Maude: Following the evaluation of proposals from six firms, Touche Ross has been appointed to provide the private sector input to the study being undertaken to determine the scope for further market testing in Treasury in accordance with the White Paper "Competing for Quality" (Cm 1730). Information on the level of fees charged is commercially confidential.

Uniforms

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will approve the introduction of uniforms to those employees in the public departments and executive agencies who currently wear individual clothes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have no plans to do so.

Tax Deductions (Training Courses)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether expenditure by a proprietor of a business on attending a training course *(a)* to obtain new knowledge or skills or *(b)* to upgrade existing knowledge is tax deductible.

Mr. Maude: Where a business proprietor incurs expenditure on training to extend or improve his or her professional knowledge or skills, capital expenditure and tax relief will not normally be available for the expenditure when calculating the profits of the business for tax purposes. But money spent to update his or her professional skills or knowledge would generally be of a revenue nature and therefore allowable. It will be a question of fact in each case.

Company Cars

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people presently have cars registered for ownership in a company's name; and if he will give a comparable figure for each year since 1973-74.

Mr. Maude: I assume that the hon. Member is interested in the numbers of employees with cars provided by their employers which are available for private use. It is estimated that in 1991-92 there were just under 2 million such employees. There are also about 2 million cars used by self-employed people for which relief is claimed against schedule D income tax liability. Available information on the numbers of employees who were taxed on the benefit of the provision of a car for private use for earlier years is as follows. Information for earlier years of numbers of self-employed people with cars used for business is not readily available.

	Numbers with taxable car benefit (thousands)
1978-79	560
1980-81	650
1981-82	790
1983-84	850
1985-86	1,070
1987-88	1,550
1988-89	1,750
1989-90	1,850
1990-91	1,950

Pensioners

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what are the most recent estimates of the number of people who are *(a)* under state retirement age and *(b)* over state retirement age, and receiving a pension from a recognised scheme, giving in each case the number who are (i) non-taxpayers, (ii) basic rate taxpayers and (iii) higher rate taxpayers;

(2) what are the most recent estimates of the number of people who are *(a)* under state retirement age and *(b)* over state retirement age, and receiving a pension from a recognised scheme, giving in each case the number who are (i) non-taxpayers, (ii) basic rate taxpayers and (iii) higher rate taxpayers in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Maude: Available estimates are for United Kingdom taxpayers with occupational pensions and are as follows:

	Basic rate taxpayers (thousands)	*Higher rate taxpayers (thousands)*
Aged under 65	930	50
Aged 65 and over	1,540	70

Purchasing Initiative

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in implementing the Government's purchasing initiative since 1989-90.

Mr. Maude: A report by the central unit on purchasing (CUP) on progress in Government purchasing during 1990-91 is published today. This will be the last report from CUP; following the publication of the Government's White Paper "Competing for Quality" Cm 1730, a new public competition and purchasing unit (PCPU), based in the Treasury, has been established to promote the Government's programme as part of the citizens charter initiative for extending competition in the provisions of public services as well as subsuming CUP's other work.

The report records the high level of activity and considerable progress in Government purchasing in 1990-91. The main features include:

- in 1990-91 Departments achieved value for money savings of £153 million exceeding their target by some £36 million. For 1991-92 Departments have set themselves a target of 3·4 per cent;
- since 1985-86 Departments have achieved savings in excess of £1·5 billion;
- further strengthening of purchasing as a professional specialism in central Government;
- a core specification for purchasing information systems for all Government Departments;
- in the construction field, a database was established in 1990-91 which will offer departments a better system for tracking performance, so that projects can be properly managed within time and cost parameters.

The report also records progress on other areas of the purchasing initiative and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Taxpayers

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for how many people who pay tax have earnings below the upper earnings limit in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 24 February 1992]:* Latest estimates for 1991-92 indicate that about 16 million taxpaying employees had earnings below the upper earnings limit.

Marginal Tax Rates

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people faced marginal tax rates *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding social security, of (i) over 40 per cent., (ii) over 50 per cent., (iii) over 60 per cent., (iv) over 70 per cent., (v) over 80 per cent., (vi) over 90 per cent. and (vii) over 100 per cent. in every year since 1978-79, including 1991-92, in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 24 February 1992]:* Estimated numbers of taxpayers liable to income tax at rates above the basic rate are in the table. Estimates of the numbers with marginal net income deduction rates (taking account of the withdrawal of social security benefits) at or above certain levels were published in figure 20 of "Social Security. The Government's expenditure plans 1992-93 to 1994-95" (Cm 1914).

Taxpayers[1] liable at higher rate

(thousands)

Tax rate[2]	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91[3]*	*1991-92[3]*
40	235	302	334	445	435	355	380	380	400	360	1,350	1,500	1,660	1,620
45	158	168	216	305	245	245	255	250	300	320	—	—	—	—
50	86	108	129	170	155	140	145	150	210	240	—	—	—	—
55	84	43	52	75	65	55	65	70	90	110	—	—	—	—
60	54	53	65	95	83	65	85	100	120	160	—	—	—	—
65	45	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
70	32	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
75	36	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
80	33	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	763	674	796	1,090	983	860	930	950	1,120	1,190	1,350	1,500	1,660	1,620

[1] Single people and married couples for years up to and including 1989-90, individuals from 1990-91.

[2] Tax rate applicable to earned income. This excludes any liability to the investment income surcharge for years up to 1983-84.

[3] Provisional estimates projected from the 1989-90 Survey of Personal Incomes.

Income Tax

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the revenue cost in 1992-93 of a reduced rate of income tax of *(a)* 20 per cent., *(b)* 23 per cent. and *(c)* 24 per cent., on the first (i) £1,000 and (ii) £2,000 of taxable income, in the United Kingdom giving the numbers with taxable incomes less than £1,000 and £2,000.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1992]:* Estimates at 1992-93 levels of income are as follows. They assume that the basic rate limit (higher rate threshold) would not be affected by the introduction of the reduced rate band.

Full year costs (£ million)

Taxable income subject to reduced rate (£)	*Reduced rate* *20 per cent.*	*23 per cent.*	*24 per cent.*
1,000	1,190	480	240
2,000	2,280	910	460

Approximately 2 million tax-paying individuals have taxable income less than £1,000 and 4 million tax-paying individuals have taxable income less than £2,000 in 1992-93.

Tax Relief, Isle of Dogs

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the total cost of tax yields forgone as a result of the reliefs associated with the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone, showing the total for each tax, for each year from 1981-82 to 1991-92 (estimated).

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* Information on capital allowances claimed for investment in individuals enterprise zones is not held centrally. Estimates of investment in each zone are given in the HMSO publication "Enterprise Zone Information 1988-89" and earlier annual editions, copies of which are in the Library.

Denatured Wine

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the reasons for leaving duty on denatured wine products for culinary uses; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* Excise duty is charged on wine and made-wine, whether or not denatured, under sections 54 and 55 of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979. There is no general relief for culinary use but, subject to certain conditions, duty is repayable under sections 56 and 60 to manufacturers of products in which wine or made-wine is used as an ingredient.

PRIME MINISTER

Lord Chief Justice

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will describe the procedure whereby the Lord Chief Justice is appointed;

(2) if he will list the parties consulted before the nomination of the new Lord Chief Justice was submitted;

(3) what consideration was given to the custom and practice that an outgoing Government should not seek to bind its successors before appointing the new Lord Chief Justice.

The Prime Minister: As with other senior appointments to the judiciary, the Lord Chief Justice is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister following confidential consultations in appropriate quarters. It has never been the practice to list the parties consulted nor to reveal the nature and source of any advice or recommendations received.

Secondees

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the external secondees among the personnel of the efficiency unit, the "next steps" unit and the citizens charter unit, together with the seconding organisation or company where appropriate.

The Prime Minister: The external secondees working in these areas are:

	Seconding organisation	*Location*
N. R. Cribb	Unilever	Efficiency unit
Dr. I. V. Howell	British Petroleum	Efficiency unit
B. R. Ross	Bass	Efficiency unit
C. Purbrook	Ernst and Young	Next Steps unit

Alice Hyde

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister how he proposed to respond to the petition from Alice Hyde.

The Prime Minister: I have acknowledged Alice Hyde's petition on the effect of the proposed east London river crossing on Oxleas wood and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will arrange for a full reply to be sent shortly. It will confirm that the impact of the road on the wood was carefully considered at the public inquiries held in 1985 and 1986, and subsequently by the Secretaries of State for Transport and the Environment before they approved the line of the road.

The route has been aligned to preserve the largest part of Oxleas wood intact. The slopes of the cutting through the wood, and the new area of open space to be given in exchange for that required for the road, *will* be landscaped to recreate, as far as possible, the woodland habitat that existed before the road was built.

The Government place much weight on environmental matters. However, we have to balance the environmental impact of measures associated with road schemes with the benefits of those schemes in order to reach decisions that are in the best interests of the community as a whole. We believe that the right decision was made in this case.

Mirror Group

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received from the committee representing the staffs of Mirror Group Newspapers in regard to the recovery of pension assets from the banks which are holding them; if at an early date he will meet a deputation from the committee; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have recently received a request to meet a deputation and it will be considered in the usual way. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, and other ministerial colleagues met representatives of trustees of all Maxwell pension schemes on 6 February.

WALES

Home Ownership Schemes

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many homes are currently under the flexi-ownership scheme operated by the Development Board for Rural Wales; and how many households have taken advantage of the scheme.

Mr. David Hunt: To date the Development Board for Rural Wales has received 300 expressions of interest, dealt with 115 formal applications and completed 53 sales under the flexi-ownership scheme. To be eligible for the scheme, tenants must not have been in receipt of housing benefit or rent rebate in the preceding 12 months. When the scheme was launched approximately 850 households were eligible for flexi-ownership.

A40, Abergavenny

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had regarding safety for pedestrians on the A40 between Abergavenny town centre and Hardwick roundabout, Abergavenny; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Two inquiries have been received regarding pedestrian safety on this section of the A40, one from a Plas Derwen resident and one from the hon. Gentleman.

Grants to Industry

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 19 February *Official Report*, column *214*, on the effects of grants to companies in Wales, what information is available in his Department to assess the cost-effectiveness of grants in aid to industries located in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department participates in a programme of evaluation studies of regional policy instruments such as regional selective assistance and regional enterprise grants which are available in the assisted areas of Great Britain. These evaluations include an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the grant schemes.

The two most recently published studies are: "Regional Selective Assistance 1980-84," an Evaluation by DTI, IDS and WOID (HMSO 1990), and "Evaluation of Regional Enterprise Grants—Second Stage," a report by Segal Quince Wicksteed Ltd (HMSO 1991). Further evaluations of both grant schemes are currently taking place.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what amount of poll tax income is still owed to local authorities for 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: It is estimated that at 31 December 1991 about £76 million of community charges remain to be collected in 1991-92, including arrears of 1990-91 charges. Many payments made by instalments will have been made during the final quarter of the year.

Market Testing

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the individuals or organisations from the private sector who have been involved since 18 November 1991 *(a)* in determining areas within the department for market testing or contracting out or *(b)* who have advised him of areas that should be market tested or contracted out to market consultants; the total fees or other costs charged to the department by them to date and the full costs likely to be charged.

Mr. David Hunt: Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte has been engaged to help the Department draw up its forward programme of market testing. The amount of its fee is commercially confidential information.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list any areas within his Department that have been identified since 18 November *(a)* by individuals or organisations from the private sector or *(b)* otherwise as possibly suitable for market testing and contracting out; and what steps are being taken to prevent any non-governmental organisations successfully tendering to carry out work currently undertaken by civil servants facing a conflict of interest between the public interest requirement of this work and other commercial activities they are involved in or other clients they represent.

Mr. David Hunt: The study to identify potential market testing candidates is not yet complete. My Department observes the guidance on the ethics of conducting business with the private sector which has been prepared by the Treasury's competition and purchasing unit.

Agriculture, Gwent

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the implication of the MacSharry proposals on agriculture in Gwent.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received a number of representations from industry bodies in Wales and individual farmers, including some from Gwent, on the implications for the industry generally of the EC reform proposals.

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next proposes to meet the European Agriculture Commissioner to discuss the effects of the MacSharry proposals on agriculture in Gwent.

Mr. David Hunt: I met Commissioner MacSharry most recently on 21 February in Brussels when I again emphasised the deep concern of the Welsh farming industry over the EC's proposals for CAP reform.

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current level of employment in agriculture in Gwent.

Mr. David Hunt: There were 3,761 persons engaged in work on main holdings in Gwent in 1991, excluding wives/husbands of farmers, partners and directors.

Hospital Closures, South Glamorgan

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with South Glamorgan health authority concerning the proposed closure of Rookwood hospital, Prince of Wales orthopaedic hospital and the Cardiff royal infirmary and the timing of announcements relating to such closures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: None.

Independent Farm Units

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many independent farm units there were in Gwent in 1981 and 1991.

Mr. David Hunt: There were 2,129 main holdings in Gwent in 1981 and 2,143 in 1991.

Heartbeat Wales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West on 26 February, *Official Report*, column *526*, if he will institute an independent evaluation study of the costs and benefits of Heartbeat Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Health Promotion Authority for Wales has published its Heartbeat Wales evaluation strategy entitled "The Welsh Heart Programme Evaluation Strategy: progress, plans and possibilities", which has been subject to a scientific peer review. HPAW, in developing its strategy, has sought the advice of a wide range of external consultants. The evaluation was reviewed during 1989 by two international experts in the field of community programme evaluation, Professor Murray (University of Minnesota) and Professor Bosse Haglund (programme director of the Stockholm cancer prevention project), both of whom continue to give advice. In addition the Health Promotion Authority for Wales has an evaluation advisory group comprising United Kingdom-based experts.

Political Advisers

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the political advisers employed for each Minister in his Department since 1979, the period for which each was employed, the salary range applicable in each case, and the total annual cost to public funds of political advisers.

Mr. David Hunt: Mr. Christopher Butler served the then Secretary of State, the right hon. Nicholas Edwards MP, from 1983 to 1985. Mr. Rod Richards served as my special adviser from 1990. It would not be appropriate to reveal the salaries of special advisers, nor in consequence the total cost of individual appointments, as these are individually negotiated taking into account previous outside earnings and are therefore confidential.

Unemployment Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of long-term unemployed in each of the counties of Wales for the latest available date and for May 1979 giving the increase expressed both as a total and as a percentage.

Mr. David Hunt: The earliest month for which data comparable with present coverage are available for local areas is July 1983. The numbers of long-term unemployed in each of the counties of Wales in July 1983 and January 1992 are as follows:

Long term unemployed[1]

	July 1983	*January 1992*	*Change*	
	Total	*Total*	*Total*	*Percentage*
Clwyd	8,970	3,403	−5,567	−62·1
Dyfedd	5,576	3,361	−2,215	−39·7
Gwent	11,378	6,144	−5,234	−46·0
Gwynedd	4,109	3,237	−872	−21·2
Mid Glamorgan	13,494	8,423	−5,071	−37·6
Powys	1.262	648	−614	−48·7
South Glamorgan	9,000	6,138	−2,862	−31·8
West Glamorgan	9,538	4,546	−4,992	−52·3

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[1] Unadjusted.

Alder Hey Hospital

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future prospects of Welsh patients in relation to treatment at Alder Hey hospital, Wirral.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This is a matter for individual health authorities in Wales as purchasers of quality health care for their resident populations.

Cancer Treatment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to make a statement on cancer treatment for north Wales patients.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: We are currently considering the far reaching implications of the Deloitte Haskins and Sells report in the light of the responses to consultation. We hope to announce our decision on the further development of the service before too long.

Kytril

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the use in Wales for patients undergoing chemotherapy treatment, of the drug Kytril to combat nausea.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Kytril became commercially available from January this year after being licensed for use in December 1991. Any new drug is considered by the appropriate local drugs and therapeutic committee prior to its approval for either general or limited use. The use of Kytril is a matter for health authorities, as purchasers of health services for their residents, to consider.

Monmouth

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, column *56*, if he will now state what delegation, representing what bodies, he intends to meet in relation to the application for assisted area status for the Monmouth travel-to-work area.

Mr. David Hunt: I have agreed also to meet the Monmouth chamber of commerce on a date still to be fixed.

On 6 January 1992 I received a document from the chief executive of Monmouth borough council arguing the case for the Monmouth travel-to-work area to be designated an assisted area and asking for a meeting with the council and other bodies. On 24 January a reply was sent from my office acknowledging the document but pointing out that in 1988 it was announced that there would be no changes made during the lifetime of this Parliament. Mr. Roger Evans then contacted me to argue the case for a meeting and raising some new issues in favour of a change which were not contained in the document. Today I met the leader, deputy leader, planning and development officer, and chairman of the industrial site sub-committee from Monmouth borough council, the town clerk of Monmouth town council, county councillor White and Mr. Evans.

I shall now be considering the points raised and responding in due course. I am, of course, willing to see the hon. Gentleman on these issues should he make a request for a meeting.

Departmental Staff

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the numbers of *(a)* men and *(b)* women in his Ministry in each of grades (i) 1, (ii) 2, (iii) 3, (iv) 4, (v) 5, (vi) 6, (vii) 7, (viii) SEO, (ix) HEO, (x) administrative trainee, (xi) EO, (xii) CO and (xiii) CA.

Mr. Curry: The information has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and is as follows:

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Non-industrial staff in post statistics by grade eqivalent
1 April 1991

Grade	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Grade 1	1	0	1
Grade 2	6	0	6
Grade 3	24	1	25
Grade 4	16	0	16
Grade 5	101	9	110
Grade 6	130	13	143
Grade 7	827	130	957
SEO	868	131	999
HEO	1,221	423	1,644
EO	948	773	1,721
AO	699	1,365	2,064
AA	557	1,499	2,056
Total	5,398	4,344	9,742

Notes:

1. Includes one Grade 2 who has been on secondment to the European Community for a number of years and excludes one female Grade 2 appointed shortly after 1 April 1991.

2. Part-time staff are counted as half-units and numbers are rounded to whole units.

3. The table covers all non-industrial staff and includes equivalents of the grades listed.

Consumer Panel

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's consumer panel.

Mr. Maclean: Since it was set up by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in November 1989, the consumer panel has proved to be a fruitful means of obtaining the views of the ordinary consumer. I have therefore agreed that it should continue. I have today announced the names of the persons who have agreed to serve on the panel for its second term. They are: Mr. Philip Bell, Mrs. Judy Brander, Mrs. Dorothy Craig, Mrs. Harriet Kimbell, Mrs. Suzi Leather, Mrs. Jean McVitty, Mrs. Maeve Robertson, Mr. Gareth Morgan, Mrs. Karen Powell and Mrs. Noel Whamond.

Although individuals have been nominated by specific consumer organisations, they are appointed in a personal capacity to serve as ordinary consumers and to represent the views of ordinary consumers. I look forward to their playing a part in the continuing development of Government policies on food safety, diet and nutrition and consumer protection issues.

In order to help better focus the panel's discussion on the issues it considers, I have revised the terms of reference for the panel. These are now:

- (i) to bring to the attention of Ministers food issues of concern to consumer;
- (ii) to advise on the transparency for consumers of Ministers' food policies;
- (iii) to advise on the transmission to consumers of advice and information relating to Ministers' policies on food safety, diet and nutrition.

Agricultural Development Advisery Service Support Staff

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what account has been taken by his Department of the conditions of service of support staff following the establishment of the Agricultural Development Advisery Service as a Government agency in April.

Mr. Curry: ADAS support staff remain civil servants, subject to civil service terms and conditions of service. As civil servants, staff are eligible to move between the agency and MAFF, the Welsh Office or other Government Departments, for example, for career development.

Horse Manure

Mr. Alex Carlisle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has which would prohibit the sale of horse manure for spreading on private gardens; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I have no such proposals and have no intention of doing so.

Market Testing

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the individuals or organisations from the private sector who have been involved since 18 November 1991 *(a)* in determining areas within his Department for market testing or contracting out or *(b)* who have advised him of areas that should be market tested or contracted out to market consultants; the total fees or other costs to date charged to his Department by them and the full costs likely to be charged.

Mr. Curry: None. The Department is in the process of awarding a contract covering a preliminary exercise to assist with the selection of areas for more detailed examination.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list any areas within his Department that have been identified since 18 November *(a)* by individuals or organisations from the private sector or *(b)* otherwise as possibly suitable for market testing and contracting out; and what steps are being taken to prevent any non-governmental organisations successfully tendering to carry out work currently undertaken by civil servants facing a conflict of interest between the public interest requirement of this work and other commercial activities they are involved in or other clients they represent.

Mr. Curry: No individuals or organisations from the private sector have identified any areas within the Department since 18 November 1991.

As indicated in the "Competing for Quality" White Paper, the Department already has a programme for extending competition through market testing. Since publication of the White Paper, our officials have been reviewing further areas that could be considered suitable for market testing.

The Department is conscious of the risk that conflicts of interest could arise as a result of contracting work out. The risk would be assessed very carefully on a case-by-case basis both in framing invitations to tender and in attaching conditions to any contracts subsequently awarded.

Fish Conservation

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is yet able to draw up a detailed commissioning scheme to secure access to EC funding for British fishermen.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my right hon. Friend the Minister gave on 27 February to the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) at column *612-14*.

Intervention Stores, Coventry

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the EC intervention stores located within 20 miles of Coventry and tabulate the tonnage, value and type of stock held at each; how many storehouses for EC surplus foodstuffs there are in Britain; and what is the aggregate tonnage, value and type of the stocks they hold.

Mr. Curry: Since the question concerns matters which are the direct responsibility of the chief executive of the Intervention Board executive agency, I am asking him to write directly to the hon. Member.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Restrictive Covenants

31. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received about the law on restrictive covenants; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor has received around 100 letters from Members of Parliament and the public expressing a range of views on the Law Commission's report on obsolete restrictive covenants published in July 1991.

West Midlands Police

33. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Attorney-General when he expects to reach a decision regarding prosecutions of West Midlands police officers arising from the West Yorkshire inquiry.

The Attorney-General: The Crown prosecution service will take these decisions when consideration is completed of 73 files submitted to CPS headquarters by the West Yorkshire inquiry team.

Legal Aid

34. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Attorney-General what is the current annual cost of legal aid.

The Attorney-General: In the financial year 1990-91 expenditure on legal aid in England and Wales was £852 million gross and £684 million net. In addition, for the same period £33 million was spent on legal aid administration. In the current financial year it is estimated that expenditure will be around £1,150 million gross and around £900 million net plus £39 million on legal aid administration.

Maxwell Pension Funds

35. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Attorney-General if the Director of the Serious Fraud Office has reached any decision on prosecutions relating to the Maxwell Communication Corporation and Mirror Group of companies pension funds; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney General: No decision on prosecutions has yet been made. Inquiries will continue for some time.

Serious Fraud Office

36. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a further statement about the work of the Serious Fraud Office.

The Attorney-General: The aims of the Serious Fraud Office remain to increase the efficiency of the criminal justice system in dealing with serious fraud, thereby detering fraud and maintaining confidence in our financial systems. The Serious Fraud Office has, since its inception, prosecuted 171 individual defendants of whom 115 were convicted on one or more charges (67 per cent. of those brought to trial). Establishment of the Serious Fraud Office brought together the skills of several disciplines in a way which has made it possible successfully to investigate cases which previously might have proved impenetrable. The Serious Fraud Office has utilised modern technology extensively to ensure that cases can be presented succinctly and clearly to juries. Suggestions of overcharging are fallacious.

Of the 20 cases since September 1990 in which the jury were asked to return verdicts, six indictments contained one count only and only three indictments involved in excess of 12 counts. Each of those three indictments related to investor fraud involving up to several hundred instances of alleged criminal conduct.

37. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Attorney-General what recent representations he has received about the operation of the Serious Fraud Office.

The Attorney-General: In 1992 I have received seven parliamentary questions on a variety of subjects which fall under the broad heading of representations about the operation of the Serious Fraud Office. Those are in addition to the questions on today's Order Paper. I have also received representations from one hon. Member and one constituent.

Immigration

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Attorney-General, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey of 17 February, *Official Report*, column *19*, what plans his Department has to speed up the determination of appeals against refusals of applications for visitors' visas by visitors to the United Kingdom from Bangladesh.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor's Department plans to increase by 10 per cent. the staffing resources available to the immigration appellate authorities (IAA), and is improving and expanding the IAA's existing accommodation to provide more hearing rooms for adjudicators. Furthermore, a multi-terminal case-tracking computer system has recently been installed. These measures will help the IAA to tackle more effectively their rising workload, including visitor visa appeals from Bangladesh.

High Court Judges

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Attorney-General how many High Court judges are *(a)* men and *(b)* women.

The Attorney-General: As at 1 March there were 83 High Court judges in office, of which 81 were men and two were women. In addition, a further female High Court judge, Mrs. Justice Ebsworth, is being sworn in today.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list each private sector consultancy firm which has been retained by each agency within his Department, and for his Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme; and whether the appointment in each case was the result of competitive tendering.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte has been retained to conduct a single study, in conjunction with an internal review team, to advise me on the future market testing programme for my Department as a whole. It was selected through competitive tendering.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the individuals or organisations from the private sector who have been involved since 18 November 1991 *(a)* in determining areas within the Department for market testing or contracting out or *(b)* who have advised him of areas that should be market tested or contracted out to market consultants; the total fees or other costs charged to the Department by them to date and the full costs likely to be charged.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte has been retained to conduct a study, in conjunction with an internal review team, to advise me on the future market testing programme for my Department. The review is not yet complete and no decisions have been taken on areas that are suitable for market testing. The value of contracts is a matter of commercial and contractual confidentiality.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list any areas within his Department that have been identified since 18 November *(a)* by individuals or organisations from the private sector or *(b)* otherwise as possibly suitable for market testing and contracting out; and what steps are being taken to prevent any non-governmental organisations successfully tendering to carry out work currently undertaken by civil servants facing a conflict of interest between the public interest requirement of this work and other commercial activities they are involved in or other clients they represent.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on 5 December at column *219*, I set out plans for further private sector involvement in court escorts, custody and security and in prison management.

Private sector consultants, together with an internal review team, are conducting a study to advise me on my Department's overall market testing programme, but their work has not yet been completed.

Contracting out of Home Office work to the private sector is carried out in accordance with guidance issued by the Treasury's public competition and purchasing unit.

Dorset Police

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the increase in police manpower in Dorset since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Dorset police had 1,280 police officers at the end of December 1991, 140 more than in May 1979. The authorised establishment of the force will increase by 15 police posts to 1,302 with effect from 1 April 1992.

Effra House

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what decision he has taken on funding by his Department for 36 bed spaces at Effra house, 45 Effra road, London, SW2; and what representations he has received from the Effra Trust on that subject.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office provides funding for 25 of the 26 bed spaces run by the Effra Trust at five different addresses including 45 Effra road, London SW2. I have received representations from the Effra Trust and five other organisations based in London that the probation service should take on the care payments to residents currently paid by the Department of Social Security and due to be transferred to local authorities in April 1993. I shall be replying shortly.

Professional Jurors

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to introduce professional jurors in serious fraud cases.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans to do so. The procedures for serious fraud cases will be kept under review, taking account of anything which might be said by the Royal Commission on criminal justice.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what number of immigration and customs officials will be permanently in place upon the opening of the channel tunnel.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The staffing levels which will be required when the channel tunnel opens will depend upon the nature and frequency of the services which will use it at that time and the estimated passenger volumes. These are matters about which officials are in touch with the service operators, but it is still too early to put a figure on the staffing requirement.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* summonses and *(b)* liability orders have been issued for poll tax debt in (i) England and (ii) Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: About 11 million summonses have been issued alleging non-payment of community charge during the period 1 April 1990 to 31 December 1991, about 10·4 million in England and 0·6 million in Wales. During the same period about 8·1 million liability orders were made, 7·7 million in England and 0·4 million in Wales. In both cases, some will have involved the same persons in respect of different financial years.

Drug-related Crime

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the proportion of crime which is drug-related.

Mr. John Patten: The latest estimates are published in paragraph 2.4 of the 1991 report "Drug Misusers and the Criminal Justice System: Part 1 Community resources and the probation service" by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, a copy of which is in the Library. These however relate only to heroin misusers and do not include estimates for crimes by other drug misusers.

Wolds Prison

Mr. Archer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the total estimated cost of running Wolds prison during the financial year 1992-93; and how much of the total will be met by the remand contract unit.

Mrs. Rumbold: The estimated cost of running Wolds prison in 1992-93 will be published in the "Supply Estimate" on Budget day.

Police Forces

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* women and *(b)* men are employed by each police force in Britain; at what grade they are employed; and what percentage this is at each grade.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will write to the hon. Member.

Re-offenders on Bail

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in the West Midlands police force area have committed offences while on bail during 1991, or for the latest year available.

Mr. John Patten: The requested information is not available.

Football Stadia

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the work of the Football Stadia Advisory Design Council.

Mr. John Patten: This body was set up and funded jointly by the Football Association and the Football League following a recommendation of Lord Justice Taylor in his report on the Hillsborough disaster. He recommended that the council should:

(a) conduct and marshal research into the improvement and design of football stadia and

(b) disseminate regularly such information and expertise as they acquire in this field to members of the Football League and, on request, to other football and sports clubs in England, Wales and Scotland.

The council has already published some helpful guidance and I understand that discussions as to its future role are taking place with the Football Association.

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his latest estimate of the average cost per sitting hour of a magistrates court.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 27 January at column *415*.

Electoral Registration

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provision exists for homeless people to register; what guidance has been given to electoral registration officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, in order to be entitled to vote a person must be resident at an address in a constituency or electoral area on the qualifying date of 10 October, and must be registered there as an elector. The question of whether someone can be regarded as resident for registration purposes is determined not by the nature of the accommodation but by the permanence of his or her residence at a particular place. No guidance has been issued to electoral registration officers on registering homeless people.

Mr. Delroy McKnight

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to publish, and in what form, the results of his investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Mr. Delroy McKnight in Wandsworth prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* Any death in custody is the cause of very great concern, to the Prison Service and to the public. In addition to the full public inquest, a careful review is carried out by prison management in each case to see whether there are any practical lessons which can be learned. It would not be appropriate to publish such reports routinely.

The death of Delroy McKnight, however, revealed very serious inadequacies in the quality of care which, on this occasion, required a further and more detailed investigation. Following the inquest, which was held in March 1991, the director of prison medical services therefore established a working group to study the events leading to Mr. McKnight's death and make recommendations for change. The group, which was chaired by Dr. Michael Longfield, a principal medical officer within the medical directorate, submitted its report last November. In view of the seriousness of this case, I am now, exceptionally, arranging for a copy of the report to be placed in the Library of the House.

The report makes 17 recommendations, the majority of which are concerned with specific practical changes in working procedures at Wandsworth and other establishments at which Mr. McKnight was in custody. The recommendations aim particularly at improving communication and continuity in the clinical management of prisoners, for example by ensuring full documentation of all decisions, clear understanding by all staff of their responsibilities and regular multi-disciplinary reviews of the needs of prisoners who appear to be at risk of self-harm or are receiving treatment for psychiatric problems. Almost all the recommendations addressed to establishments have already been implemented. The local suicide prevention management group at Wandsworth has brought about substantial improvements in suicide prevention policy and procedure since Mr. McKnight's tragic death.

In addition, the report makes several recommendations about general matters of health care management within the Prison Service, which are under active consideration within the medical directorate in the context of the follow-up to the scrutiny of the prison medical service.

Mortality Statistics (Public Streets)

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the figures for deaths on public streets in London due to causes other than violence or road traffic accidents for the period 1 October 1990 to 30 April 1991.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what are the figures for deaths on public streets in England and Wales due to hypothermia, malnutrition or self-neglect in the period from 1 October 1990 to 30 April 1991;

(2) what are the figures for deaths on public streets in London due to hypothermia, malnutrition or self-neglect in the period from 1 October 1990 to 30 April 1991;

(3) what are the figures for deaths on public streets in England and Wales due to *(a)* hypothermia, *(b)* malnutrition or *(c)* self-neglect in the year ended 31 December 1991 or the most recent available period.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply.

There were no deaths on the public streets in England and Wales due to hypothermia, malnutrition or self-neglect registered in the period 1 October 1990 to 30 September 1991.

There were nine deaths registered due to these causes of persons of no known address, of which five were in Greater London and four elsewhere in England and Wales.

All of the deaths occurred between 1 October 1990 and 30 April 1991 and of these, six died in hospital and three elsewhere.

Prison Suicides

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of suicides in prisons in England and Wales during the year 1991; and if he will list the prisons and the number of suicides that took place within them.

Mrs. Rumbold *[pursuant to her reply, 22 January 1992, c. 191-92]:*

The total number of deaths in 1991 which resulted from an act of deliberate self-harm was 42 and not 41. The adjustment to the figure is necessary following the recent inquest into the death of a man at Cardiff prison in

October 1991, which was not initially thought to have been self-inflicted. Further evidence came to light at the inquest, however, and a verdict of "suicide while the balance of his mind was disturbed" was recorded.

Inquests have now been held on 29 of these deaths and a verdict of suicide was recorded for 23. The establishments at which the deaths occurred are listed in the table.

Deaths at HM Prison Service Establishments in 1991 resulting from an act of deliberate self-harm.

Establishment	*Numbers of deaths*
Birmingham	3
Bristol	1
Brixton	1
Cardiff	2
Dorchester	1
Durham	1
Featherstone	1
Feltham	2
Full Sutton	2
Garth	1
Glen Parva	1
Gloucester	1
Grendon	2
Haverigg	1
Leeds	2
Liverpool	3
Long Lartin	1
Manchester	2
The Mount	1
Norwich	2
Nottingham	1
Oxford	1
Parkhurst	1
Pentonville	1
Preston	1
Stafford	1
Stoke Heath	1
Wakefield	1
Wandsworth	1
Winchester	1
Wormwood Scrubs	1

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment If he will detail each local authority with the percentage of its community charge collected in 1990-91, and 1991-92 to date, in descending order of percentage collected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: I am arranging for the available information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the proportion of local authority revenue expenditure in England financed by *(a)* Government grant, *(b)* non-domestic rates and *(c)* local domestic taxation in each year from 1978-79 to 1990-91 and estimates for 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Key: The available information is as follows:

Local Authority Revenue Expenditure[1]

	Government grants[2] *as percentage of local authority expenditure*	*Non-domestic rates*[3] *as percentage of local authority expenditure*	*Domestic rates/ community charges*[4] *as percentage of local authority expenditure*
1981-82	56	25	20
1982-83	53	26	21
1983-84	54	26	19
1984-85	54	26	20
1985-86	54	28	21
1986-87	50	28	22
1987-88	49	28	23
1988-89	46	28	25
1989-90	44	29	26
1990-91	41	29	28
1991-92	52	31	16
[5]1992-93	56	29	15

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[1] For the years 1981-82 to 1989-90, local authority expenditure is taken to be 'relevant expenditure' plus expenditure on certain non-relevant items such as net expenditure on mandatory student awards. It represents spending to be financed by rate support grant, relevant specific grants, rates and balances. This measure of expenditure is net of sales, fees and charges, interest receipts etc. For the years 1990-91 to 1992-93 local authority expenditure is 'revenue expenditure do compare with TSS' which is expenditure to be met from revenue support grant, specific grants in aggregate external finance, special grants, non-domestic rates, community charges and appropriation from reserves. In 1991-92 ths also included community charge grant and in 1992-93 this will include teachers pay award additional grant.

[2] For the years 1978-79 to 1989-90 Government grants comprise aggregate exchequer grant and rate rebate grants. For the years 1990-91 to 1992-93 Government Grants included are revenue support grant, special grrants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge grant (1991-92), teachers pay award additional grant (1992-93), community charge benefit and transitional relief/community charge reduction scheme grants.

[3] For the years 1981-82 to 1989-90 this represents non-domestic rate yields net of rate relief. For the years 1990-91 to 1992-93 this represents the distributable amount from the non-domestic rates pool.

[4] Net of domestic rate rebates for the years 1981-82 to 1989-90, net of community charge benefit grant and transitional relief/ community charge scheme grant in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

[5] 1992-93 settlement.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the breakdown of local authority revenue for each year from 1979-80 to 1991-92 in terms of (i) Government grant, (ii) business rates and (iii) rates/poll tax expressed both in million pounds and constant prices and as a percentage.

Mr. Portillo: The available information is as follows:

Local Authority Revenue Expenditure

	Revenue Expenditure[1]		*Government Grants*[2]			*Non-Domestic rates*[3]			*Domestic Rates/ Community Charges*[4]		
	Cash *£ million*	*1991-92 prices £ million*	*Cash prices £ million*	*1991-92* *£ million*	*Per cent.*	*Cash prices £ million*	*1991-92* *£ million*	*Per cent.*	*Cash prices £ million*	*1991-92* *£ million*	*Per cent.*
1981-82	20,106	36,026	11,234	20,129	56	5,013	8,982	25	4,034	7,228	20
1982-83	21,952	36,718	11,705	19,578	53	5,685	9,509	26	4,548	7,607	21
1983-84	23,263	37,188	12,584	20,117	54	6,042	9,659	26	4,382	7,005	19
1984-85	24,119	36,719	13,126	19,983	54	6,361	9,684	26	4,707	7,166	20

	Revenue Expenditure[1]		*Government Grants*[2]			*Non-Domestic rates*[3]			*Domestic Rates/ Community Charges*[4]		
	Cash £ million	*1991-92 prices £ million*	*Cash prices £ million*	*1991-92 £ million*	*Per cent.*	*Cash prices £ million*	*1991-92 £ million*	*Per cent.*	*Cash prices £ million*	*1991-92 £ million*	*Per cent.*
1985-86	24,284	35,037	13,069	18,856	54	6,740	9,725	28	5,094	7,350	21
1986-87	26,630	37,199	13,402	18,721	50	7,566	10,569	28	5,912	8,258	22
1987-88	28,980	38,394	14,274	18,911	49	8,088	10,715	28	6,539	8,663	23
1988-89	31,240	38,615	14,469	17,885	46	8,819	10,901	28	7,689	9,504	25
1989-90	33,282	38,633	14,707	17,072	44	9,595	11,138	29	8,487	9,852	26
1990-91	36,448	38,993	15,037	16,090	41	10,429	11,159	29	10,109	10,817	28
1991-92	39,880	39,880	20,834	20,834	52	12,408	12,408	31	6,388	6,388	16

Notes:

[1] For the years 1981-82 to 1989-90, local authority expenditure is taken to be 'relevant expenditure' plus expenditure on certain non-relevant items such as net expenditure on mandatory student awards. It represents spending to be financed by rate support grant, relevant specific grant, rates and balances. This measure of expenditure is net of sales, fees and charges, interest receipts etc. For the years 1990-91 and 1991-92 local authority expenditure is 'revenue expenditure to compare with TSS' which is expenditure to be met from revenue support grant, specific grants in aggregate external finance, special grants, non-domestic rates, community charges and appropriation from reserves. In 1991-92 this also included community charge grant.

[2] For the years 1981-82 to 1989-90 Government grants comprise aggregate Exchequer grant and rate rebate grants. For 1990-91 and 1991-92 Government grants included are revenue support grant, special grants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge grant (1991-92), community charge benefit grant and transitional relief/community charge reduction scheme grant.

[3] For the years 1981-82 to 1989-90, this represents non-domestic rate yields net of rate relief. For the years 1990-91 to 1991-92 this represents the distributable amount from the non-domestic rates pool

[4] Net of domestic rate rebates for the years 1981-82 to 1989-90. Net of community charge benefit grant and transitional relief/community charge reduction scheme grant for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of poll tax revenue is outstanding to local authorities for 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Portillo: Local authorities budgeted to collect £10,200 million in community charges in respect of 1990-91 and £6,400 million in respect of 1991-92. I estimate that by 31 December 1991 they had collected £9,900 million of the former and £4,300 million of the latter. Much of the remaining 1991-92 amounts will subsequently have been collected in the form of routine monthly payments in January and February 1992.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what targets his Department has set for local authorities' collection of poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Local authorities should be attempting to collect 100 per cent. of the community charges due in their areas; well-managed authorities are coming very close to achieving this.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the safety net arrangements within the national non-domestic rate system; and if he has any plans to make changes to those arrangements.

Mr. Portillo: We have received a number of representations about the non-domestic rate transitional arrangements. We shall shortly be making regulations to allow transitional protection to continue in cases where a local authority waste disposal company takes over property occupied by an existing waste disposal authority under part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to make changes to the arrangements for the national non-domestic rate for 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: A number of provisions modifying the non-domestic rating system are contained in schedule 10 to the Local Government Finance Bill. Those which would have effect in 1992-93 concern the payment of interest in respect of overpayments of rates, the rating of multiple moorings, the exemption of church property, the reference date for the determination of rateable values, and the information which charging authorities must take into account in calculating their contributions into the national non-domestic rating pool.

Council House Building

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authority permanent dwellings have been started in the 32 London boroughs in each year since 1979.

Mr. Yeo: The information requested for 1979 is shown in table 5 of the publication "Local Housing Statistics: England and Wales", issue No. 53 (May 1980). Figures for 1980 to 1989 appear in "Housebuilding in England by Local Authority Areas, 1980 to 1989", tables 1.1 to 1.10. Figures for 1990 are in "Local Housing Statistics: England and Wales", issue No. 98 (July 1991). The following information is available on local authority housebuilding in 1991:

	Local authority
(a) Authorities with local authority housing starts in 1991	Barking 10 dwellings Barnet 4 dwellings Kensington and Chelsea 4 dwellings Waltham Forest 88 dwellings
(b) Authorities with no local authority housing starts in 1991	Bromley, Camden, Croydon, Ealing, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Havering, Hounslow, Islington, Redbridge, Sutton, Wandsworth, Westminster
(c) Authorities which have not yet sent returns for all, or part, of 1991. No authority reporting for part of 1991 has recorded any local authority housing starts	Bexley, Brent, Enfield, Haringey, Hillingdon, Kingston upon Thames, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Newham, Richmond upon Thames, Southwark, Tower Hamlets

Tenants' Participation

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the Housing Corporation's document "Tenant Participation Strategy".

Mr. Yeo: The corporation has not yet completed its review of tenant participation strategy. As soon as it publishes a strategy document, I shall be happy to arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Orimulsion

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has received from his European opposite numbers with regard to orimulsion.

Mr. Baldry: None.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the burning of orimulsion; and to which power stations they relate.

Mr. Baldry: I have received a number of representations concerning the burning or proposed burning of orimulsion generally and at individual power stations such as Pembroke and Ince. A considerable number have also been received by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in respect of applications for authorisation under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to burn orimulsion at Padiham and Pembroke power stations.

Nature Reserves

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what restrictions are placed on developments by local authorities of designated local nature reserves; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Local planning authorities can grant themselves planning permissions under the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1976. Authorities are required to give their proposals the same publicity, to make them subject to the same consultations, and to consider them against the same criteria and policies, as they would an ordinary planning application for similar development. On 27 February the Department of the Environment issued for consultation a draft planning policy guidance note on nature conservation which provides up to date guidance on how the Government's policies on the conservation of our natural heritage are to be reflected in land use planning.

Wind Farms

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on wind farm developments; and what proposed developments he has called in.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on such developments in response to the Department's consultations and proposed planning policy guidance note on renewable energy. He has called in two planning applications for wind farms: at Kirkby moor in south Lakeland, and Ovenden moor, Halifax.

Business Rates

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the amounts outstanding in unpaid business rates for 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Portillo: I estimate that up to 31 December 1991 a total of £9,130 million was collectable from non-domestic rates in respect of properties on local rating lists for the 1990-91 financial year. By 31 December 1991 local authorities had collected £8,960 million.

For 1991-92, I estimate that £10,600 million of non-domestic rates are collectable within the year. By 31 December 1991 local authorities had collected £8,180million.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the revenue available to local authorities from business rates for each year from 1979-80 to 1992-93 showing the figures in £ million and constant prices.

Mr. Portillo: The available information is as follows:

Local authority non-domestic rates

	[1]*Non-domestic rates £ million*	*1991-92 prices £ million*
1979-80	3,354	7,798
1980-81	4,169	8,191
1981-82	5,013	8,982
1982-83	5,685	9,509
1983-84	6,042	9,659
1984-85	6,361	9,684
1985-86	6,740	9,725
1986-87	7,566	10,569
1987-88	8,088	10,715
1988-89	8,819	10,901
1989-90	9,595	11,138
1990-91	10,429	11,159
1991-92	12,408	12,408
1992-93	12,306	11,776

[1] For the years 1979-80 to 1989-90 this represents non-domestic rate yields net of rate relief. For the years 1990-91 to 1992-93 this represents the distributable amount from the non-domestic rates pool.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish his best estimates of the amount of business rates being transferred between gainers and losers under the uniform business rate safety net arrangements for 1992-93, showing the amounts deferred for both categories.

Mr. Portillo: I estimate that the amount of business rate increases in England being deferred for losers is about £475 million. An equal amount of reduction for gainers is also being deferred.

Local Government (Political Control)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in rank order, showing political control, the all ages social index for local authorities for 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Portillo: A table showing the information requested has been placed in the Library.

Market Testing

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list any area within his Department that have been identified since 18 November *(a)* by individuals or organisations from the private sector or *(b)* otherwise as possibly suitable for market testing and contracting out; and what steps are being taken to prevent any non-governmental organisations successfully tendering to carry out work currently undertaken by civil servants facing a conflict of interest between the public interest requirement of this work and other commercial activities they are involved in or other clients they represent;

(2) if he will list the individuals or organisations from the private sector who have been involved since 18 November *(a)* in determining areas within his Department for market testing or contracting out or *(b)* who have advised him of areas that should be market tested or contracted out to market consultants, the total fees or other costs to date and the full costs likely to be charged.

Mr. Heseltine: My officials are currently drawing up proposals for new market testing areas within the Department in line with the timetable set out in the Financial Secretary's letter to the Home Secretary of 17 December. A market testing adviser from the private sector is to be appointed soon to assist in this task. The market testing areas are to be selected from the list of possible candidates set out on page 13 of the White Paper "Competing for Quality" (Cm 1730). My Department will carefully vet all non-government organisations involved in tendering for work currently undertaken by civil servants to ensure conflicts of interest do not arise.

Reptiles (Indonesia)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what scientific advice he has received on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species appendix 2 status for reptile species from Indonesia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My scientific advisers, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), are currently considering new information from the Indonesian authorities about these species. The European Commission proposes to arrange discussion of this information by representatives of EC member states during the current conference of the parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. The JNCC will give advice at this meeting, which will decide whether or not the EC should lift its current ban on the import of certain species from Indonesia.

Water Supply, Hull

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has decided to take in respect of the supply of water unfit for human consumption in Hull in 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The drinking water inspectorate has reported to me on the progress of its investigations into the outbreak of cryptosporidiosis in the Hull area in December 1989 and January 1990. This investigation has inevitably been difficult and lengthy because of gaps in scientific knowledge about cryptosporidium, which a research programme funded by the Department is seeking to remedy.

This case has raised a number of new and complex issues, and necessarily continues to involve external advisers as well as the inspectorate. An outbreak control group, comprising representatives of the health authorities, the local authorities, the water company and the Public Health Laboratory Service, was established in the locality during the outbreak and its report was essential to the inspectorate's investigations. The group was not able to complete its report until March 1991. Advice then had to be sought from the Government's Chief Medical Officer and, in view of the possibility of a prosecution, from leading counsel.

The case is being taken forward as quickly as possible and I shall make a further statement as soon as there is further progress to report.

Local Government Commission

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance will be available to the Local Government Commission in assessing the identities and interests of local communities.

Mr. Portillo: We commissioned two research projects as a contribution to thinking on how to assess community identity in the restructuring of local government. The research is intended as a starting point for the Local Government Commission in its work in recommending changes to local government structure and boundaries. I have placed in the Library copies of the reports "Identification with local areas" by Alan Hedges and "Application of Geographic Information Systems to community boundary definition" by the centre for urban and regional development studies at Newcastle university. Copies have also been sent to the local authority associations and the Audit Commission.

Water Pollution

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received the report by the drinking water inspectorate on the incident at the Iver treatment works of Three Valleys Water in July 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I have now received the drinking water inspectorate's report on the incident at the Iver treatment works in July 1992, and copies have been placed in the Library of the House. A summary of the findings and recommendations is being made widely available.

The inspectorate found that the normal disinfection processes failed on Saturday 20 July 1991 because, when a changeover occurred from one bulk liquid chlorine storage tank to another tank, a valve on the outlet from the second tank was not opened and remained shut for 4½ hours. The effect of this failure was mitigated however by mixing that occurs at the treatment works and in the distribution networks part of the normal operation of the system, and by the fact that chlorine is applied at various stages. Having weighed all the evidence, the inspectorate has concluded that there is no reason to believe that the water supplied by the company in the period following the incident was unfit for human consumption. Any breach of the quality standards in the Water Quality Regulations is likely to have been trivial.

The inspectorate is critical of the company for not taking appropriate remedial action at the works within a reasonable period. It has nevertheless concluded that, on the basis of the situation at that time and the information available, senior management took a prudent decision on the Saturday night to issue advice to consumers to boil water. However the water undertakers owned by Three Valleys Water which supply water from the Iver works, Colne Valley Water Company Plc and Rickmansworth Water Plc, contravened the Water Quality Regulations by failing to notify each local authority and district health authority affected by the incident. At the time of the incident there were no powers to take enforcement action in relation to a contravention of this nature, but I can confirm that this gap in the legislation has now been filled for the future.

The report identifies specific deficiencies in the instrumentation at the Iver works, in operational and management procedures, in emergency plans, and in contingency plans for communicating with consumers in such circumstances. Although microbiological analysis would not have provided results until the following day, the inspectorate is nevertheless critical of the company's failure to carry out comprehensive sampling and analysis particularly of water leaving the Iver works. The report also identifies weaknesses in the response to the incident by local authorities and district health authorities.

The report puts forward 13 recommendations. Most of these have already been met by action which Three Valleys Water has subsequently taken, and the company has accepted the remaining recommendations. Some of the recommendations about contingency planning also require the co-operation of the relevant local authorities, district health authorities and police forces, and of the media, and I hope that this will be forthcoming.

In a covering letter to the report, the chief inspector has drawn attention to a number of points which have implications for the approach adopted by water companies generally to preventing failures of disinfection and ensuring that the necessary contingency plans are in place. I have accepted the conclusions and recommendations of the report, and the chief inspector's advice that further guidance should be given to all water companies on these matters. He will be writing to companies promptly for this purpose, and special attention will be paid to emergency procedures in the annual inspections of water companies.

In the light of the conclusions of this report, my Department will discuss with the Department of Health and the Home Office whether further guidance needs to be given to local authorities and health authorities about their role in responding to incidents affecting water supply. To ensure that liaison with the media functions effectively on future occasions and to secure a prompt response, we are also drawing the attention of water companies to the BBC guide on facilities for broadcasting emergency announcements. We are recommending them to make appropriate standing arrangements both with the BBC and with other television and radio stations serving their areas.

The inspectorate's report is commendably thorough. The findings that, although we have a very high standard of drinking water in this country, and this particular incident did not cause damage to health, there is scope for improving procedures in order to provide more effective safeguards for the future. I confirm that the necessary action has either been taken or is in hand.

United Nations Conference

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what matters are on the agenda for the final preparatory committee meeting in New York from 2 March to 2 April for the forthcoming United Nations conference on environment and development.

Mr. Baldry: The main items for consideration at the final United Nations conference on environment and development preparatory committee are 900 pages of proposed action under the heading of "Agenda 21—a statement of principles on the world's forests and the Earth Charter".

Inland Waterways

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the results of his consultation into the management of the navigation of inland waterways; and what changes he is considering in navigation rights as part of this review following the River Derwent judgment.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* Responses are still being received. The outcome of the review will be announced as soon as possible.

Peat Extraction

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment following the agreement between English Nature and Fisons plc *(a)* who now owns the mineral rights for the sites concerned and *(b)* to what habitat-type it is intended to restore cut over areas of lowland raised peatbog once the peat has been extracted.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* Of the 8,000 acres of land involved, English Nature will immediately assume ownership of mineral rights over some 2,800 acres; Fisons will retain the mineral rights for the remainder.

The objective has been to restore lowland peat vegetation on the cutover areas, but I am advised that a mosaic of other habitats, such as fen, is likely to be the end result.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Duchy Visits

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many visits he plans to make to the Duchy in the period before April.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have no present plans to visit the Duchy in my capacity as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster during the coming month.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Recycled Paper

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee (1) what target is set for the use of recycled writing paper in the House.

(2) if he will make arrangements to supply all stores in the House with recycled writing paper;

(3) what is the cost of recycled House writing paper expressed as a percentage of the cost of non-recycled paper;

(4) what proportion of writing paper used by hon. Members is recycled;

(5) what was the level of recycled writing paper used in the House 12 months ago;

(6) why it is not possible to order House of Commons writing paper which has been recycled for delivery in less than three weeks.

Mr. Orme: There is no target set for the use of recycled writing paper in the House. At its meeting on 18 June 1991 the Services Committee approved a resolution of the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee that a range of recycled items of stationery should be stocked on a permanent basis in addition to existing ranges of equivalent stationery of archival quality, but that, for the present, it should be supplied only from the Serjeant at Arms stores. The Serjeant at Arms has taken steps to draw Members' attention to the availability of recycled writing paper and I have asked him to write to the hon. Member.

Telephones

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many telephones there are in the House of Commons; and what was the total telephone bill for the last available year.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 5 December 1991]:* I understand there are 2,972 telephones in the House of Commons; the House telephone bill for the year ended 31 March 1991 was £1,212,831·49.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what monitoring of telephone calls made from public areas of the House of Commons takes place; and what percentage of telephone expenditure takes place from such locations.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 5 December 1991]:* The monitoring of telephone calls in the House has in the past caused Members great concern, particularly on the ground of the threat to their privacy. I am aware a number of Members make frequent use of telephones in the corridors and currently there is no monitoring of telephones in these areas or in any others.

Over recent months the Director of Finance, appointed as a result of the Ibbs report, has been considering how to measure telephone usage and expenditure throughout the House. The Director of Finance is aware of the sensitivities of Members to the monitoring of telephone calls and it is now for him to make a proposal to the House of Commons Commission on the principle of monitoring if he wishes to do so.

If telephone monitoring were to be introduced in any part of the House in the future, Members and staff would be given adequate warning and explanation of the measures planned. There remains, however, at present the need for the House to balance the identification of telephone expenditure against the preservation of privacy for Members in their use of the telephones throughout the House.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the policy towards supplying Members and authorised users with a key or pass card to access telephones in the public parts of the House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 5 December 1991]:* Proposals to limit the use of telephones will be considered by the Administration Committee shortly after the Easter recess and it is hoped to introduce new measures when the telephone exchange is upgraded in mid-1992; it is unlikely that a key or pass card will form part of these proposals.

EMPLOYMENT

Doncaster Unemployment Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the unemployment office in Trafford way, Doncaster, was first open for business; and when it received its official opening.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Market Testing

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Empoyment if he will list any areas within his Department that have been identified since 18 November *(a)* by individuals or organisations from the private sector or *(b)* otherwise as possibly suitable for market testing and contracting out; and what steps are being taken to prevent any non-governmental organisations successfully tendering to carry out work currently undertaken by civil servants facing a conflict of interest between the public interest requirement of this work and other commercial activities they are involved in or other clients they represent.

Mr. Jackson: A study to determine the most promising areas for market testing within the Department is not yet complete. The Department follows the guidance on the ethics of conducting business with the private sector contained in the Treasury's public competition and purchasing unit's guidance—CUP No. 16.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the individuals or organisations from the private sector who have been involved since 18 November 1991 *(a)* in determing areas within the Department for market testing or contracting out or *(b)* who have advised of areas that should be market tested or contracted out to market consultants; the total fees or other costs charged to the department by them to date and the full costs likely to be charged.

Mr. Jackson: Two companies have been used by this Department in considering areas for market testing or contracting out, namely Ernst and Young, chartered accountants and Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte. The fees agreed with these organisations for their services are commercially confidential.

Health and Safety

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give figures for the number of health and safety inspectors and the number of industrial accidents in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* the United Kingdom for the years 1979 and 1991.

Mr. Forth: The number of Health and Safety Executive inspectors based in Wales and the total number employed in Great Britain in 1979 and 1991 is as follows:

Year (1 April)	*Inspectors based in Wales*	*Inspectors employed in Great Britain*
1979	[1]69	1,426·5
1991	62	1,342·0

[1] Excludes mines and quarries and industrial air pollution inspectors as centrally held records for 1979, for these staff, cannot be analysed by location.

The information available on the total number of occupational injuries occurring in Wales and in Great Britain in 1979 and the financial year 1990-91 is as follows:

Total injuries reported[1] to Health and Safety Executive's Factory and Agricultural Inspectorates and Local Authorities

	Wales	*Great Britain*
[2]1979	[3]n/a	269,763
[4] [5]1990-91	9,629	180,450

[1] Reported under various pieces of health and safety legislation in 1979 and the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR) for 1990-91.

[2] Injuries to employees only compulsorily reportable.

[3] Regional analysis of injuries in 1979 is not available.

[4] Injuries to employees, self-employed people and members of the public injured as a result of someone else's work activity in year commencing 1 April 1990.

[5] Provisional.

Responsibility for occupational health and safety matters in Northern Ireland lies with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Unemployment, London

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has for reducing unemployment in inner London.

Mr. Jackson: The Employment Service and training and enterprise councils deliver a wide range of employment, enterprise and training programmes to help employment prospects for unemployed people. In inner London, as elsewhere, these programmes are often designed to take account of special local circumstances to help people find the best and quickest route back to employment.

Noise

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his Department's actions to combat noise in industry and other places of work since 1987.

Mr. Forth: During this period the Government introduced the Noise at Work Regulations 1989 requiring measures to control noise and protect workers. The Health and Safety Executive supplemented the regulations by publishing extensive guidance and free leaflets for employers, employees and machinery makers and suppliers, explaining the new legislation.

Health and safety inspectors have been active in enforcing the legislation. They have mounted a series of campaigns and other initiatives to monitor compliance and to raise the awareness of the hazard created by excessive noise at work and improve understanding of the means of controlling it.

TRANSPORT

Ports Privatisation

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what timetable has been established for the privatisation of the port of Tilbury in accordance with the Ports Act 1991; what criteria he has laid down for management-employee buy-outs; how many bidders have submitted bids; when he expects to receive any recommendation as to the proposed successful bidder; when he proposes to announce his decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Final bids for the port of Tilbury were to be submitted by 28 February. Once they have assessed the bids, the Port of London authority board will make its recommendation to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, who will announce his decision as soon as he is able to do so. The objectives of sale for the port of Tilbury include the following criterion in respect of management and employee share-ownership:

> "In considering competing bids, the PLA will have regard to . . . the desirability of encouraging the disposal of the whole or a substantial part of the equity share capital of the company to managers or other persons employed by the company; or to another company the whole or a substantial part of whose equity share capital is owned by managers or other persons so employed."

The number of bidders for the port is a matter of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what submissions he has received from the port of Dover for the privatisation of the port in accordance with the provisions of the Ports Act 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no proposals for privatisation from that port.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what timetable has been established for the privatisation of the port of Medway in accordance with the Ports Act 1991; what criteria he has laid down for management-employee buy-outs; how many bidders have submitted bids; when he expects to receive any recommendation as to the proposed successful bidder; when he proposes to announce his decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Final bids for the Medway ports authority's undertakings were submitted on 24 February. Once it has assessed the bids, the Medway ports authority board will make its recommendation to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, who will announce his decision as soon as he is able to do so. The objectives of sale for the Medway ports authority include the following criterion in respect of management and employee share-ownership:

> "the Authority will have particular regard to the desirability of encouraging the disposal of the whole or a substantial part of the Company to managers and employees."

The number of bidders for the port is a matter of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what timetable has been established for the privatisation of the Port of Forth in accordance with the Ports Act 1991; what criteria he has laid down for management-employee buy-outs; how many bidders have submitted bids; when he expects to receive any recommendation as to the proposed successful bidder; when he proposes to announce his decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. and learned Friend has agreed in principle to the privatisation of the Forth ports authority's undertaking by means of a flotation. The date of the flotation has not yet been announced. In considering the authority's detailed proposals my right hon. and learned Friend has had particular regard to the desirability of encouraging the disposal of the whole or a substantial part of the equity share capital to managers and employees.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what submissions he has received from the port of Ipswich for the privatisation of the port in accordance with the provisions of the Ports Act 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no proposals for privatisation from that port.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what timetable has been established for the privatisation of the port of Clyde in accordance with the Ports Act 1991; what criteria he has laid down for management-employee buy-outs; how many bidders have submitted bids; when he expects to receive any recommendation as to the proposed successful bidders; when he proposes to announce his decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Final bids for the Clyde port authority's undertaking were submitted on 14 February. Once it has assessed the bids, the Clyde port authority board will make its recommendation to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, who will announce his decision as soon as he is able to do so. The objectives of sale for the Clyde port authority include the following criterion in respect of management and employee share-ownership:

> "the Authority will have particular regard to the desirability of encouraging the disposal of the whole or a substantial part of the equity (and voting rights) in the successor company to managers or other employees of the successor company (or to a company in which such managers or other employees have a substantial interest)."

The number of bidders for the port is a matter of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what submissions he has received from the port of Tyne for the privatisation of the port in accordance with the provisions of the Ports Act 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no proposals for privatisation from that port.

Service Areas

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the provision of services on new stretches of national non-motorway roads.

Mr. Chope: Policy on the provision of services on all-purpose trunk roads, new and old, is set out in the Department's circular "Roads 4/88". A copy is in the Library. The need is for facilities, preferably comprehensive ones, at appropriate intervals to meet the needs of all users. Local authorities are encouraged to help to identify locations where facilities are not adequate. The Department will in general comment favourably on planning applications which conform to the advice in the circular. Non-motorway roads other than all-purpose trunk roads are the responsibility of local highway authorities.

Canary Wharf

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which authorities are empowered to introduce traffic-calming measures at Canary wharf.

Mr. Chope: The introduction of traffic calming on the private roads at Canary wharf is primarily at the discretion of the developers, in consultation as necessary with the local highway authority.

Thames River Bus

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much public money supports the Thames river bus service.

Mr. Freeman: The Thames river bus service received a £500,000 grant in 1989-90 to promote and improve the service in recognition of its road decongestion and docklands regeneration benefits. Discussions are in progress about the possibility of further support on the basis of benefits to road decongestion from river transport. The case is yet to be made.

Motorway Service Areas

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the largest sum tendered since 1975 for a motorway service area.

Mr. Chope: It has been the consistent practice to treat the sums tendered for motorway service areas as confidential between the tenderer and the Department.

Road Services

Mr. John Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make a statement on the expenditure and improvement of road services within and to Bournemouth since 1987, including those improvements currently under way or approved.

Mr. Chope: The following major improvement schemes have been completed by the local highway authority Dorset county council, in each case with the assistance of 50 per cent. transport supplementary grant from central Government.

Scheme	*Cost £ million*
Wessex Way, Bournemouth	9·13
Winton and Moordown Relief Road	6·86
Holes Bay Road, Poole	11·93

No major trunk road improvement schemes have been carried out in the Bournemouth area since 1987. However, there are four schemes in the national programme at various stages of preparation:

Scheme	*Estimated cost £ million*
A31 Ashley Heath Grade Separated Junction	8·1
A31 Ringwood—Ashley Heath Improvement	3·8
A31 to Mannings Heath Relief Road	28·4
Poole Harbour Bridge Replacement	21·0

In addition, the Department of Transport has carried out a number of small improvements to the A31 in the Bournemouth area. This includes one at Ashley Heath roundabout (£150,000) and approximately £0·5 million on other improvements.

Ports Workers

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the number of casual or temporary workers engaged in the ports industry.

Mr. McLoughlin: The British Ports Federation's survey of numbers employed in the United Kingdom port industry on 2 April 1991 found 16,543 manual workers, of whom 638 were in temporary employment.

British Rail

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when next he intends to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss the external financing limit and train procurement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend has regular meetings with Sir Bob Reid, the British Rail chairman, to discuss a variety of railway issues, including external financing and train procurement.

Roads Programme

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to review the Government's roads programme.

Mr. Chope: The White Paper (Cm 693) "Roads for Prosperity" is the basis of the trunk road programme in England. We keep this under review and from time to time I report progress to Parliament, and any modifications to our plans.

Port of London Authority

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for the future role of the Port of London authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Apart from those which it will lose with the sale of the Port of Tilbury, I have no proposals for changes in the statutory functions of the Port of London authority as the harbour authority for the tidal reaches of the Thames. These include conservancy, regulation of navigation, pilotage and the development, with a view to disposal, of its surplus land holdings.

Air Services

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he received from British Midland for assistance on its decision to withdraw the air service from Liverpool to London.

Mr. McLoughlin: None.

Maritime Transport Service

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information on the Department's definition of substantial employee share ownership and management buy out preference has been given to Maritime Transport Service; in addition to that which has been given to any other bidder for any trust port under the Ports Act 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: The chairman of Maritime Transport Services met officials of the Department on 4 February at his request. As regards a price preference for a management and employee buy-out, officials said that my right hon. and learned Friend had made it clear that he was prepared to consider a limited price preference in the light of the particular circumstances of the situation and that they were not able to add further to that statement. As regards the level of employee share ownership, officials said that this was a matter for the relevant port authority boards to consider in assessing bids against the objectives of sale agreed for their port before making their recommendation to my right hon. and learned Friend as to the sale of the port and suggested that Maritime Transport Services should seek any necessary clarification from the port authority boards as to how they would view the level of employee share ownership in assessing bids. The Department has given Maritime Transport Services no information on these matters which is not already available to other bidders for trust ports.

Traffic, Hazel Grove

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the need for a grant from his Department to assist with traffic-calming measures in the town of Hazel Grove.

Mr. Chope: None since last year when the council was advised that a scheme may be eligible for consideration for transport supplementary grant if the council demonstrated road safety benefits.

Market Testing

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list any areas within his Department that have been identified since 18 November *(a)* by individuals or organisations from the private sector or *(b)* otherwise as possibly suitable for market testing and contracting out; and what steps are being taken to prevent any non-governmental organisations successfully tendering to carry out work currently undertaken by civil servants facing a conflict of interest between the public interest requirement of this work and other commercial activities they are involved in or other clients they represent.

Mr. McLoughlin: A study to determine the most promising areas for market testing within the Department is not yet complete. Guidance on the ethics of conducting business with the private sector is contained in the Treasury's public competition and purchasing unit's guidance—CUP No. 16—which has been circulated to Departments.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the individuals or organisations from the private sector who have been involved since 18 November 1991 *(a)* in determining areas within his Department for market testing or contracting out or *(b)* who have advised him of areas that should be market tested or contracted out to market consultants; the total fees or other costs to date charged to his Department by them and the full costs likely to be charged.

Mr. McLoughlin: After considering a number of possibilities, Mr. Dick Walker, a senior executive with ICI, has been appointed on a short-term contract to assist in the development of market-testing targets for the Department and its agencies. The Department will reimburse Mr. Walker's ICI salary.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the estimated rate of return on investment for the previously proposed channel tunnel rail link route and the current estimated rate of return from investment for the route which he has now decided.

Mr. Freeman: Estimates of the relative benefits and costs of different route options are contained in British Rail's "Comparison of Routes", published in October 1991, copies of which were placed in the Library of the House. British Rail is currently refining the easterly route, and it is too early to provide information on rates of return.

Rail Electrification

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to consider social and economic factors in assessing new rail electrification projects to include such factors in the calculation of the internal rate of return; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The electrification of lines is expected to earn an 8 per cent. return compared with the alternative of diesel services. However, it is the policy to take into account external benefits where a project would not otherwise meet the relevant appraisal criteria.

Coaches

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with coach operators concerning regulations for the discharge of waste from coach toilets.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* The law already prohibits a toilet fitted in a wheeled motor vehicle from being capable of discharging directly on to a road.

We have had no consultations with coach operators on this subject.

Road Building

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department has undertaken on the effects of the road building programme on sites of importance for nature conservation.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* The effects of road schemes on sites of importance for nature conservation are assessed on a site specific basis as part of the environmental assessment carried out for each scheme. Consultation with English Nature takes place during this assessment.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will amend the present method of cost-benefit analysis of road building assessment, so as to include an assessment of the environmental impacts of road building.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* The Department's current methods for appraising trunk road schemes already include a comprehensive assessment of environmental effects. Effects are quantified as far as possible, but are not given monetary values at present. The Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment has recently reviewed the question of monetary valuation in environmental assessment. Its report and the Government's response will be published shortly.

Cars

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department has undertaken on the environmental consequences of the forecast increase in the number of cars on roads in Great Britain.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* My Department devotes a significant part of its research programme to many environmental issues relating to current and future road transport. For example, we are planning to develop a more accurate assessment of how vehicles perform in order to improve our forecasting of future emissions. We are also reviewing research on alternative vehicle engines and fuel. We are looking at ways of reducing urban congestion and pollution, including the scope for road pricing and the role of enhanced public transport in reducing emissions. Current forecasts of increased road traffic are relevant background to all this research. They are also taken into account in the environmental impact assessments carried out for each of our new road schemes.

SCOTLAND

Local Government Finance

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the total of local government *(a)* revenue and *(b)* capital expenditure by local government within Scotland for each year from 1978-79 to 1991-92 (estimated).

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is as follows:

	Total revenue expenditure £ million	Total capital expenditure £ million
1978-79	1,738·0	543·1
1979-80	2,096·1	643·9
1980-81	2,616·5	657·4
1981-82	2,927·3	723·8
1982-83	3,145·7	780·4
1983-84	3,316·3	929·3
1984-85	3,490·8	859·8
1985-86	3,606·0	875·2
1986-87	3,824·2	917·7
1987-88	4,085·0	1,094·3
1988-89	4,426·0	1,161·7
1989-90	4,724·1	1,246·7
1990-91	5,178·9	1,234·5
1991-92	5,647·4	1,253·4

Notes:

1. The revenue figures are final outturn for the years up to and including 1989-90: provisional outturn for 1990-91: and budget estimate for 1991-92.

2. The capital figures are final outturn for the years up to and including 1990-91: and estimated outturn for 1991-92.

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the proportion of local authority revenue expenditure in Scotland financed by *(a)* Government grant, *(b)* non-domestic rates and *(c)* local domestic taxation in each year from 1978-79 to 1990-91 and estimates for 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The table shows the proportion of Scottish local authorities' income from each source. This differs from revenue expenditure only to the extent that local authorities made use of balances to fund expenditure.

	Central Government Grant Per cent.	Non-Domestic Rates Per cent.	Domestic Rates/ Community Charge Per cent.
1978-79	64·9	22·2	12·9
1979-80	63·1	24·2	12·8
1980-81	60·3	25·8	13·8
1981-82	53·9	29·7	16·4
1982-83	52·9	30·1	17·0
1983-84	54·1	29·4	16·5
1984-85	55·1	28·6	16·3
1985-86	53·6	28·6	17·8
1986-87	51·0	30·0	19·0
1987-88	50·3	30·1	19·6
1988-89	51·3	29·4	19·3
1989-90	52·4	25·9	21·7
1990-91	54·9	23·8	21·3
1991-92	60·9	23·8	15·3
1992-93	63·1	20·6	16·4

Notes:

1. The rate and revenue support grant figures used in calculating the percentages are final amounts or those applying to the most recent order.
2. The domestic rate figures used are net of domestic relief and are inclusive of rebates.
3. For 1991-92 Government support includes community charge grant.
4. The 1992-93 community charge income proportions are calculated from budget estimate amounts taken from the provisional outturn/budget estimate 1992 returns made to the Scottish Office by local authorities. For those authorities whose returns have not yet been received, amounts have been estimated based on assumed payment rates for 1991-92.
5. The proportions for 1991-92 and 1992-93 are estimates.
6. From 1984-85 onwards central Government support includes revenue support grant and specific grants. A breakdown of specific grants is not available for earlier years.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the total numbers of *(a)* summonses and *(b)* liability orders issued for poll tax debt in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: None. The procedure for recovery of debts, including community charge arrears, is different in Scotland from that in England and Wales.

There is no equivalent of summonses for community charge arrears in Scotland.

The nearest equivalent to a liability order is a summary warrant. It is however customary for local authorities to apply for a single warrant in respect of many debtors. Information on the total number of persons subject to summary warrant procedure is not held centrally.

The number of summary warrants issued in respect of the community charge for the two years for which figures are available are:

Year	Number
1989	76
1990	876

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what amount of poll tax income is still owed to local authorities for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The amount of local authorities' budgeted community charge income uncollected at 31 December 1991—the most recent date for which information is available—is as follows:

Year	£ million
1989-90	68·7
1990-91	157·6
1991-92	351·0

Health Service Staff

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the increase of staff in health boards since April 1989.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not held centrally for the month of April 1989. Between 30 September 1989 and 30 September 1991, however, the whole-time equivalent of all NHS staff in Scotland fell from 120,677·7 to 117,600·8, a decrease of 2·5 per cent. The data for medical, dental and nursing staff at 30 September 1991 are provisional.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of people employed by the NHS in Scotland on a full-time and part-time basis.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest available information held centrally shows that at 30 September 1991 there were 85,600 full-time and 56,465 part-time employees in the NHS in Scotland. The data for medical, dental and nursing staff are provisional.

Employees (Expenditure)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the net capital expenditure per employee in *(a)* Renfrewshire, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* Net capital expenditure per employee in manufacturing industries for Renfrewshire, Strathclyde and Scotland is set out in the table. The latest available figures are for 1989.

Net Capital Expenditure Per Employee—1989

Area	*Net Capital Expenditure £ per employee*
Renfrewshire	3,745
Strathclyde	2,983
Scotland	3,313

Source: Annual Census of Production.

Manufacturing Productivity

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the level for the most recent date for which figures are available of manufacturing productivity in *(a)* Renfrewshire, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* The official data on manufacturing productivity are published by the Employment Department in the *Employment Gazette*. However, separate regional figures are not included.

Expressing manufacturing productivity in terms of gross value added per employee, the figures for Renfrewshire, Strathclyde and Scotland are set out in the table. The latest available figures are for 1989.

Manufacturing productivity—1989

Area	*Gross value added £ per employee*
Renfrewshire	31,014
Strathclyde	23,128
Scotland	22,340

Source: Annual Census of Production.

Paisley Pattern Goods

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will encourage Scottish Enterprise to fund a feasibility study into the development of the manufacture of Paisley pattern goods in Paisley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* I wrote to the local enterprise company about the manufacture of Paisley pattern goods in Paisley following a meeting I had with the hon. Member and the hon. Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams) on this subject on 4 September last year.

It is a matter for the local enterprise company how it chooses to pursue this issue. I have however noted the hon. Member's suggestion of a feasibility study and will pass it on to the local enterprise company. If he wishes also to pursue the proposal direct with Renfrewshire Enterprise then I would be happy for him to do so.

Local Enterprise Companies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the formula for determining the apportionment of resources to local enterprise companies; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the resources allocated to each local enterprise company *(a)* in financial terms and *(b)* on a per capita basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* The basis on which resources are allocated to local enterprise companies is a matter for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, in their respective areas. I have asked the chairmen of these two bodies to write to the hon. Member with the information he has requested.

Employment Growth, Renfrewshire

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate employment growth in Renfrewshire over the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* The information is not available in the precise form requested. The total level of employment in Renfrew district is estimated to have increased by 19·8 per cent. between 1987 and 1989, the latest year for which data are available.

Employment Performance

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the employment performance of *(a)* Renfrew district, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland between 1980 and 1990.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* Available data from the September 1981 and September 1989 censuses of employment show that *(a)* the number of employees in employment in Renfrew district was 10,800 in 1989 and 13,000 in 1981; *(b)* the number in Strathclyde was 861,200 in 1989 and 885,000 in 1981; and *(c)* the number in Scotland was 1,966,500 in 1989 and 1,965,500 in 1981.

Exports

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of Scottish exports came from Renfrewshire in each year since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* The information requested is not available.

Renfrew Enterprise

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the Renfrew Enterprise annual *(a)* capital and *(b)* revenue budgets is already legally committed in the financial year 1991-92 and each of the subsequent four years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer, 27 February 1992]:* Renfrewshire Enterprise Company's forward financial commitments are a matter for the company.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the percentage of total employment within Renfrewshire in each sector in *(a)* 1975, *(b)* 1980, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1990.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer, 27 February 1992]:* Available data from the Employment Department's census of employment relate to the years 1975, 1981, 1984 and 1989. For each of these years, the percentage of employees in employment in each sector in Renfrew district is shown in the table:

	Percentage 1981	 1984	 1989
1980 Standard Industrial Classification			
Sector:			
Agriculture	0	[1]	[1]
Energy and Water Supply	1	2	[1]
Manufacturing	42	52	33
Construction	18	[1]	[1]
Services	38	40	58

	Percentage 1975	 1981
1968 Standard Industrial Classification		
Sector:		
Primary Production	0	0
Manufacturing Industry	57	43
Construction	21	18
Service Industries	22	38

[1] Indicates figure unable to be provided due to the very small number of census units.

Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Departmental Staff

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of employees in his Department; and how many are *(a)* black and *(b)* disabled.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* At 1 April 1991 the total number of staff employed in the Scottish Office and associated departments was 6,186. Of that number, 29 have described themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority. At 1 June 1991, the Departments employed 80 staff who were registered disabled and an unrecorded number of people with a disability who had chosen not to register.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women in his Department in each of grades (i) 1, (ii) 2, (iii) 3, (iv) 4, (v) 5, (vi) 6, (vii) 7, (viii) SEO, (ix) HEO, (x) administrative trainee, (xi) EO, (xii) CO and (xiii) CA.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* The information at 1 April 1991 for my Department is set out in the tables:

The Scottish Office

Grade	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Grade 1	1·0	—	1·0
Grade 2	9·5	—	9·5
Grade 3	24·0	2·0	26·0
Grade 4	17·0	2·0	19·0
Grade 5	110·0	12·0	122·0
Grade 6	175·0	34·5	209·5
Grade 7	365·0	51·5	416·5
Senior Executive Officer	419·0	35·5	454·5
Higher Executive Officer	650·0	222·5	872·5
Administration Trainee	4·0	2·0	6·0
Executive Officer	639·0	486·0	1,125·0
Administrative Officer	432·0	861·5	1,293·5
Administrative Assistant	414·0	774·5	1,188·5

Scottish Record Office

Grade	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Grade 5	1·0	—	1·0
Grade 6	2·0	—	2·0
Grade 7	5·0	4·0	9·0
Senior Executive Officer	4·0	2·0	6·0
Higher Executive Officer	9·0	1·0	10·0
Executive Officer	6·0	4·0	10·0
Administrative Officer	13·0	10·0	23·0
Administrative Assistant	33·0	16·0	49·0

General Register Office for Scotland

Grade	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Grade 4	1·0	—	1·0
Grade 5	1·0	—	1·0
Grade 7	9·0	—	9·0
Senior Executive Officer	9·0	1·0	10·0
Higher Executive Officer	29·0	8·5	37·5
Executive Officer	35·0	29·5	64·5
Administrative Officer	40·0	61·0	101·0
Administrative Assistant	40·0	68·5	108·5

Notes:

Figures are for the grades stated and their equivalents.

Part-time staff are counted as half units.

RETEX

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement on the European Community RETEX programme, its application in Scotland and whether the Paisley area is eligible for assistance;

(2) if he will make a statement on the method of application of the additionality rule to the European Community RETEX programme;

(3) which agencies are eligible to apply for assistance through the European Community RETEX proposal; what assistance is available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* We are considering the draft notice to member states which the Commission sent us on 22 January. Decisions on eligible areas, agencies eligible to apply and levels of assistance, will not be taken until the final shape of the initiative is known. The United Kingdom Government will naturally seek to ensure the most effective coverage of United Kingdom textile areas while avoiding any unfair competition against United Kingdom producers. The new arrangements for ERDF spending announced by my right hon. Friend on 17 February at column 22 will apply to RETEX.

Textile Industry

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will request Scottish Enterprise to undertake a study into how the damage to local economies through the loss of textile jobs may be minimised or alleviated ; and what financial assistance is available from public agencies at all levels of government.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* Addressing these sorts of issues is a central part of the role which the Government intended for Scottish Enterprise and the local enterprise companies when deciding to set up the new framework.

Scottish Enterprise and the local enterprise companies monitor carefully the effects of industrial closures in Scotland and have a range of measures at their disposal to help minimise or alleviate the effects of job losses. In the case of the textiles industry, Scottish Enterprise has recently completed an internal review of the industry and is now considering how best to implement the strategy which that has identified. Scottish Borders Enterprise, along with the industry, has established the borders textiles initiative to provide practical support for design, marketing and promotion of the industry. The full range of the enterprise company's powers and functions are deployed to assist with economic development, training and job creation in the area.

In addition, the enterprise initiative provides a wide range of assistance to industry, including assistance under the Government's regional policy. The full range of Employment Service functions are also available to help those made redundant as a result of industrial closures.

There is in place, therefore, a range of measures to tackle precisely the concerns which the hon. Member has raised.

Psychiatric Patients

Mr. Eadie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the use by health boards of the pocket money of long-stay psychiatric patients to buy their personal clothing: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 February 1992]:* Hospitals are strongly encouraged by boards to use the savings of patients who are unable to look after their own affairs in an imaginative way for their benefit. They know that balances should not build up to high levels unless there are particular personal circumstances to justify this. Many of these patients are very elderly, frail and suffer from dementia. The opportunities to spend money on them creatively are limited. Buying new clothes and dressing well is one of the few pleasures nursing staff can help very dependent elderly people to enjoy.

Unemployment, Cunninghame

Mr. Lambie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what initiatives he is prepared to propose to deal with unemployment in Cunninghame.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 26 February 1992]:* The development of initiatives to deal with unemployment in particular areas, where action is necessary to supplement the very broad range of measures alread in place, is a matter for local enterprise companies. I am confident that Enterprise Ayrshire will bring forward any new proposals which are necessary to address unemployment in Cunninghame.

Inspector of Constabulary

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the post of Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland is full or part-time.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* Her Majesty's inspectorate for Scotland consists of one Her Majesty's inspector (full-time) and one Her Majesty's chief inspector (full-time). Both are former chief constables.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the current annual amount of *(a)* low level, *(b)* intermediate level and *(c)* high level nuclear waste generated in Scotland; if he will express this as a percentage of the total United Kingdom figure; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* Information relating to the rate of generation of low, intermediate and high level radioactive waste at United Kingdom nuclear establishments including those in Scotland is contained in the regular statements of the United Kingdom radioactive waste inventory published jointly by the Department of the Environment and UK Nirex Ltd. The statements are published every other year, the most recent being Department of the Environment report DOE/RW 89-110 which is in the Library.

Nursery School Places

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the capital and revenue costs of providing nursery school places for all children in the three to five age group.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 February 1992]:* Local authorities have the power to provide for nursery education as they deem appropriate in response to local needs and circumstances and their own spending priorities.

The Opposition have made various claims about the importance of providing nursery places for all three and four-year-olds, but I am not aware of any estimates of the total cost of providing these places.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Shareholders

2. **Sir Donald Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners own shares.

Mr. Scott: The latest information available suggests that in 1988 approximately 1·35 million pensioners owned shares and other marketable securities.

Lone Parents

6. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of lone parents receive regular maintenance payments.

Mr. Jack: A survey of the circumstances of lone parent families in the United Kingdom carried out in 1989 found that only 30 per cent. of lone mothers received regular amounts of maintenance for their children. Our proposals for a new system of child maintenance aim to remedy the situation.

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to help lone parents who want to re-enter the labour market.

Mr. Jack: Currently, significant help is built into the benefits available to lone parents who want to work. In particular, family credit gives considerable encouragement. Lone parents get the same adult credit as a two-parent family, and one parent benefit is disregarded in calculating their income. Disability working allowance, which is to be introduced on 6 April 1992, will make the same provision for lone parents as family credit.

In housing benefit and community charge benefit, those lone parents not on income support, benefit from the higher, £25, earnings disregard and from a lone parent premium which is higher than the rate of lone parent premium in income support.

From 7 April 1992, this help will be further enhanced by two measures. First, family credit will be available to those working at least 16 hours a week rather than 24. This will enable many lone parents to work the qualifying number of hours and fit them around school hours, and so benefit from the more generous provisions of family credit.

Secondly, from the same date, the first £15 of maintenance they receive will be disregarded in calculating income in family credit, housing benefit, community charge benefit, and disability working allowance. This will increase the disposable income of all such recipients.

In addition, when the new Child Support Agency starts work in April 1993, more lone parents will receive higher amounts of child maintenance and be able to take full advantage of the changes in family credit.

On 11 December 1991, we announced a grant of £1 million to the National Council for One Parent Families to enable it to provide courses for lone parents who are thinking of going back to work. The courses will help lone parents to improve their job search skills, and will provide a range of information on local facilities and personal finances.

Housing Benefit

13. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to meet the housing associations to discuss the level of housing benefit for income support claimants.

Miss Widdecombe: We have no plans to do so and I am not aware of any requests to this Department for such a meeting.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the latest estimates for England of *(a)* the number of households receiving housing benefit, *(b)* the average amount of housing benefit paid and *(c)* the cost of housing benefit, distinguishing (i) those households which receive income support and those which do not, (ii) rent rebates and rent allowances and (iii) pensioner households, lone parent families, two parent families, childless couples and others.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 26 February 1992]:* The information available is set out in the table.

Housing Benefit Expenditure

	1990-91		*1991-92*	
	IS	*NON IS*	*IS*	*NON IS*
	£ million		*£ million*	
Rent Rebate (England)				
Pensioners (Claimant or partner aged 60 or over)	621	692	483	752
Lone Parents[1]	441	47	462	47
Others[2]	590	176	712	212
Total	1,652	915	1,657	1,010
Rent Allowance (Great Britain)[3]				
Pensioners (Claimant or partner aged 60 or over)	257	281	250	371
Lone Parents[1]	197	26	259	33
Others[2]	546	238	862	341
Total	1,000	545	1,371	744

Source: 1990-91 data is consistent with the Departmental Report. Estimated outturn expenditure figures have been provided for 1991-92.

Notes:

[1] Lone parents are defined as those in receipt of the lone parent premium.

[2] "Others" include two parent families and childless couples because the information on these two categories is not available.

[3] Information for England only is not available.

Housing benefit cases in England (May 1990)

	Rent rebate		*Rent allowance*	
	Cases	*Average benefit £*	*Cases*	*Average benefit £*
With income support				
Pensioners (claimant or partner aged 60 or over)	571,000	21·94	189,000	24·67
Lone Parents[1]	327,000	25·05	91,000	36·74
Others[2]	444,000	22·82	235,000	34·61
Total	1,343,000	22·98	515,000	31·28
Without income support				
Pensioners (claimant or partner aged 60 or over)	737,000	15·95	201,000	18·50
Lone Parents[1]	37,000	18·34	10,000	36·24
Others[2]	190,000	17·24	200,000	18·03
Total	964,000	16·28	411,000	19·07
Total all cases				
Pensioners (claimant or partner aged 60 or over)	1,308,000	18·57	390,000	21·49
Lone Parents[1]	365,000	24·36	100,000	36·69
Others[2]	634,000	21·15	436,000	26·98

	Rent rebate		Rent allowance	
	Cases	Average benefit £	Cases	Average benefit £
Total	2,307,000	20·18	925,000	25·86

Source: Housing benefit and Community Charge Benefit Management Information System annual 1 per cent. sample for May 1990.

[1] Lone parents are defined as those in receipt of the lone parent premium.

[2] "Others" includes two parent families and childless couples because the information on these two categories is not available.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has for the improvement of contact between his Department and London local authorities to speed up the payment of housing benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department and the Benefits Agency keep the arrangements for housing benefit liaison with local authorities under constant review. Discussions are currently taking place with the Benefits Agency and the local authority associations on the preparation of a national service level agreement. This will provide a model framework for individual local authorities and social security districts throughout Great Britain, allowing them to negotiate local agreements which more closely suit local needs. One of the first local agreements will operate between certain London authorities and the Glasgow benefits centre. In addition to these initiatives, regular liaison meetings, at working and management levels, are actively encouraged. Finally, the forms used by the Benefits Agency to supply information to local authorities are to be improved later this year. With these improvements in place, all authorities should see gains in the quality of service provided.

Unemployment Benefit

14. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many unemployed benefit claimants there were in St. Helens in December 1978 and in December 1991.

Mr. Scott: In December 1978 there were 14,288 unemployed people registering in the Wigan and St. Helens travel-to-work area. In December 1991 there were 22,740 people signing unemployed in that area.

Incomes

16. **Dame Peggy Fenner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have incomes in excess of £20,280 a year solely by virtue of receiving overtime and bonus payments.

Mr. Jack: It is estimated from the April 1991 "New Earnings Survey" that nearly three quarters of a million employees have gross weekly earnings above £390—the equivalent of £20,280—by virtue of overtime, bonus and other premium payments.

Upper Earnings Limit

17. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the estimated revenue yield in 1992-93 of abolishing the employee's national insurance upper earnings limit from October 1992.

Mr. Newton: We estimate that the contribution yield in 1992-93 would be £1·1 billion.

National Insurance

18. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the average cost to a non-pensioner of the imposition of national insurance contributions at 9 per cent. on income from savings above £3,000.

Mr. Newton: We estimate that in the United Kingdom the average cost in 1991-92 to a non-pensioner would be £770.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the annual cost of providing full national insurance benefits to those with earnings below the lower earnings limit.

Mr. Jack: The cost would depend on various factors, including the scope of the benefits scheme proposed and the incidence of claims among low earners. I regret that the information on which such an estimate could be made is not presently available.

However, some 3 million employees earning less than the lower earnings limit might be affected from such an arrangement and as a result payment for such benefit could cost billions in the longer term.

22. **Mr. Norris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the revenue yield *(a)* of a 4·5 per cent. rate of national insurance contributions applied to all income in excess of £20,280 a year and *(b)* an increase in the national insurance contributions upper earnings limit to £26,000 a year.

Mr. Jack: We estimate that a 4·5 per cent. charge on earnings over £20,280 a year would yield about £1·5 billion in respect of 1991-92.

Raising the upper earnings limit for employees to £26,000 a year, would yield about £0·6 billion.

Disability Benefits

19. **Sir William Shelton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures are being taken to improve awareness of the new disability benefits due to be introduced in April.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to publicise improvements to the system of benefits for disabled people.

Mr. Scott: The advertising campaign for disability living allowance and disability working allowance commenced on 5 February. The campaign includes television commercials, supported by advertising in the national press, specialist, and ethnic press as well as a number of other publications. The advertisements invite people to telephone or send off a coupon to a freepost address to obtain the "Guide to New Benefits for Disabled People". I am very pleased to announce that we have already received 120,000 responses to the advertising.

The advertisements form part of a larger publicity campaign targeted at disabled people, carers, advisers, and health professionals. As part of this campaign, we have written to over one million existing beneficiaries of attendance allowance and mobility allowance to let them know about the benefit changes and how to claim extra help, if appropriate. We are also writing to organisations of and for disabled people, advisers, and health professionals—such as doctors, nurses and therapists—telling them about the benefits and how they can help their clients and patients to claim. We are also making use of the new out-of-hours service BBC Select to broadcast a series of information programmes about DLA and DWA.

The key materials—including the commercials and advertisements—have been researched with disabled people, and the campaign has been prepared in liaison with representatives of organisations of and for disabled people.

27. **Mr. Lester:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps have been taken to consult disabled people and their representatives in the design and promotion of the new disability living allowance and disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: There has been considerable consultation and testing with disabled people and their representative organisations on many of the key elements of the new benefits, including proposals for the new assessment and adjudication arrangements, draft claim packs, regulations and leaflets. In addition the key materials for the publicity campaign—including the television commercials and press advertisements—have been researched with disabled people, and the campaign has been prepared in liaison with representatives of organisations of and for disabled people.

23. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what response his Department has received to the current advertising campaign for disability working allowance and disability living allowance.

25. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what response his Department has received to the current advertising campaign for disability working allowance and disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: In response to the advertising campaign for the new disability benefits which began on 5 February we have received more than 120,000 inquiries so far. I regard this as a very successful start to the campaign, and one which reflects the Government's commitment to ensuring that as many disabled people as possible learn of the new opportunities that the benefits provide.

Expenditure

20. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what percentage total expenditure on social security has increased since 1979 in real terms.

Miss Widdecombe: Total expenditure on Social Security increased by 52 per cent. in real terms between 1978-79 and 1991-92.

21. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the likely increase in expenditure that will result from the change from mobility allowance and attendance allowance to disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: We expect by next year to be spending nearly £¼ billion extra on additional help for around 300,000 disabled people as a result of introducing disability living allowance. This expenditure comes on top of several other substantial improvements introduced during this Parliament and, of course, on top of an increase of over £7 billion in real terms since 1979 in the benefits we pay to disabled people.

Family Credit

24. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the value of the average family credit award expressed as a proportion of gross wages for those who receive family credit.

Mr. Jack: In August 1991, a 5 per cent. sample of family credit recipients showed that the average is 30 per cent. of the gross weekly earnings of the main earner.

Self-employed People

28. **Mr. Dicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many self-employed people earn more than £20,280 a year.

Mr. Jack: As I confirmed to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark), we estimate that in 1991-92 about 400,000 self-employed people will earn above the upper profits limit of £20,280.

Occupational Pension Schemes

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further representations he has received concerning the existing legal basis for occupational pension schemes.

Mr. Newton: My Department has received a number of representations from Members of Parliament, interested organisations and members of the public on the basis of which occupational pension schemes operate.

Household Incomes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of household income derives from social security payments in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Jack: The information requested can be found in table 31 of the 1990 "Family Expenditure Survey". These percentages are affected by the interplay of a wide range of demographic and economic, as well as social, factors.

Claimants

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many, and what proportion, of supplementary benefit and income support claimants in Great Britain were in receipt of benefit because they were unemployed for each year since 1979.

Mr. Jack: The information available for the period is in the table:

Year	*Total number of supplementary benefit/income support claimants* *thousands*	*Number of supplementary benefit/income support claimants who were unemployed thousands*	*Proportion of supplementary benefit/income support claimants who were unemployed*
1979	2,855	566	1 in 5·04
1980	3,118	854	1 in 3·65
1981	3,723	1,318	1 in 2·82
1982	4,267	1,722	1 in 2·48
1983	4,349	1,826	1 in 2·38
1984	4,609	1,953	1 in 2·36
1986	4,938	2,121	1 in 2·33
1987	4,896	1,957	1 in 2·50
1988	4,352	1,511	1 in 2·88
1989	4,161	1,216	1 in 3·42
1990	4,180	1,063	1 in 3·93

Note: Figures for claimants have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

Income Support

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether unemployed claimants who are receiving income support who participate in European social fund vocational training courses provided either by *(a)* voluntary organisations or local authorities, or *(b)* training and enterprise councils or local enterprise companies are required to be available for, and actively seeking, employment.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to her on 26 February at column *537*.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total value for the last 12-month period for which records are available, of assistance paid to mortgagors currently in receipt of income support, for *(a)* direct help with mortgage interest payments, *(b)* passported help from the social fund for help with the cost of furniture and other essential household items and *(c)* other passported help from the social fund, by category; and if he will subdivide the figures into childless, couples with children, and lone parent household categories.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 27 February 1992]*: The information required for *(b)* and *(c)* is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The information requested for *(a)* is as follows:

Status	*Number of claimants* *(000s)*	*Amount included in assessments for mortgage interest* *(£ million)*
Childless	169	231
Couples with children	64	146
Lone parents	77	177
Total	310	554

Source: Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiry, May 1990.
Notes:
1. All numbers of claimants have been rounded to the nearest thousand.
2. All amounts of money have been rounded to the nearest million.

Over-60s Card

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to introduce the European Community over-60s card.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) on 3 February at columns *96-7*. I will send him a copy of the letter I wrote to Members of the European Parliament on 20 January 1992.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list each private sector consultancy firm which has been retained by each agency within his Department, and for his Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme; and whether the appointment in each case was the result of competitive tendering.

Mr. Jack: Individual agencies within the Department have not retained a private sector consultancy firm to give advice on market testing. Price Waterhouse has been retained to advise the Department as a whole on potential areas for market testing. The appointment was made following competitive tendering.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list any areas within his Department that have been identified since 18 November 1991 *(a)* by individuals or organisations from the private sector or *(b)* otherwise as possibly suitable for market testing and contracting out; and what steps are being taken to prevent any non-governmental organisations successfully tendering to carry out work currently undertaken by civil servants facing a conflict of interest between the public interest requirement of this work and other commercial actitivies they are involved in or other clients they represent.

Mr. Jack: Since 18 November 1991 the Department has been working to draw up a three to five-year programme of market testing, informed by studies undertaken with the private sector, as required by the White Paper "Competing for Quality". All support areas are being considered.

Contract documents include a clause on confidentiality covering both commercial and other information. All contractors' employees are bound by the same conditions on confidentiality as civil servants under the Official Secrets Acts of 1911 and 1989 and section 19 of the Social Security Act 1989 and are required to sign a declaration to that effect.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the individuals or organisations from the private sector who have been involved since 18 November 1991 *(a)* in determining areas within his Department for market testing or contracting out or *(b)* who have advised him of areas that should be market tested or contracted out to market consultants and the total fees or other costs to date charged to his Department by them and the full costs likely to be charged.

Mr. Jack: Price Waterhouse has been contracted by this Department to advise on potential areas for market testing. The fees charged on individual contracts are regarded as commercial in confidence and cannot be divulged.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list changes in the criteria for attendance allowance made between May 1990 and May 1991.

Mr. Scott: From 1 October 1990 people with a terminal illness who are unlikely to live long enough to satisfy the six-month qualifying period for the benefit have been able to qualify for the higher rate automatically, and do not have to satisfy the qualifying period.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) when attendance allowance was first paid to Mrs. Mary Wood of Fairfax place, Dartmouth; when it was withdrawn; when a doctor appointed by his Department last carried out a medical examination of Mrs. Wood; when he expects to make a decision on Mrs. Wood's entitlement to the allowance; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessments were made of the entitlement of Mrs. Mary Wood of Fairfax place, Dartmouth to receive attendance allowance in *(a)* May 1990 and *(b)* May 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and copies will be placed in the Library and Public Information Office.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the circumstances under which payment of attendance allowance may be discontinued.

Mr. Scott: Payment may be discontinued because:

(a) the medical criteria for an award are no longer satisfied;
(b) more than 28 days have been spent as an inpatient in a health service hospital and/or publicly funded residential accommodation;
(c) the residence and presence conditions are no longer satisfied;
(d) there is a complete overlap with constant attendance allowance;
(e) of imprisonment or detention in legal custody.

Benefits

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many benefit claimants in Glasgow have requested a review of their supplementary benefit entitlement under the regulation 72 take-up campaign; how many of these *(a)* have had their requests for review refused, *(b)* are pending and *(c)* have received payments; what is the total amount of back-dated benefit paid out to Glasgow claimants as at 31 January; and what was the average amount of such payments;

(2) if he will list the number of claimants for each individual benefit at each of his Department's offices serving the Glasgow, Maryhill constituency as at 30 December.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the public information office.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many additional people who at present have reduced entitlement to benefits would qualify for full entitlement to benefit as a result of increasing the initial capital cut off point from £3,000 to £6,000, while retaining the present upper limits and tapers for *(a)* income support, *(b)* family credit, *(c)* housing benefit and *(d)* community charge benefits; and what would be the full year cost in each case;

(2) what is the number of people who receive reduced entitlement to benefit as a result of the rules on capital limits for *(a)* family credit, *(b)* income support, *(c)* housing benefit and *(d)* community charge benefit;

(3) how many additional people, who at present have reduced entitlement to benefits, would qualify for full entitlement to benefit as a result of increasing the initial capital cut off point from £3,000 to £4,000, while retaining the present upper limits and tapers for *(a)* income support, *(b)* family credit, *(c)* housing benefit and *(d)* community charge benefits; and what would be the full year cost in each case;

(4) how many additional people who at present have reduced entitlement to benefits would qualify for full entitlement to benefit as a result of increasing the initial capital cut off point from £3,000 to £5,000, while retaining the present upper limits and tapers for *(a)* income support, *(b)* family credit, *(c)* housing benefit and *(d)* community charge benefits; and what would be the full year cost in each case.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 25 February 1992]*: Where a claimant's capital exceeds £3,000, a weekly income is assumed in each of the income-related benefits according to a tariff income formula. However, any actual interest earned by the capital is not counted as income when deciding entitlement to benefit. In many cases, this interest exceeds the tariff income taken into account.

The estimated numbers of recipients of income-related benefits, whose entitlement to benefit is affected because they have capital in excess of £3,000 are as follows:

(a) Family Credit: 3,000
(b) Income Support: 73,000
(c) Housing Benefit: 174,000
(d) Community Charge Benefit: 608,000

Increasing the existing lower capital limit of £3,000 would affect all claimants with capital above £3,000. The numbers of claimants who, on the latest information available, would not have tariff income taken into account if the lower capital limit were increased to the levels stated, and the estimated costs of raising the lower level for all cases with capital, are in the table:

	£4,000	*£5,000*	*£6,000*
Income Support	39,000	58,000	69,000
Family Credit	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Housing Benefit	59,000	101,000	130,000

	£4,000	£5,000	£6,000
Community Charge Benefit	165,000	289,000	389,000
Estimated costs across the income-related benefits	£90 million	£150 million	£200 million

Sources: (latest information available)
August 1991 Family Credit Statistical System
May 1990 Annual Statistical Enquiry of Income Support recipients
May 1990 Housing Benefit Management Information Statistics.

Notes:

1. Costs of increasing the lower capital limit are based on the results of modelling using data drawn from the 1987-88-89 family expenditure surveys at 1992-93 prices and benefits levels.
2. Estimates of capital holdings drawn from the family expenditure survey are imputed from reported income from investment and savings and are therefore uncertain.

[1]— Less than 2,500 claimants.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest figures for Coventry and Warwickshire for the number of claims to *(a)* income support, *(b)* family credit and *(c)* housing benefit; and what were the figures one year ago.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available, and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Social Fund

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications to the social fund for *(a)* community care grants, *(b)* budgeting loans and *(c)* crisis loans were made by applicants at each of his Department's offices covering the Glasgow, Maryhill constituency between 1 July 1991 and 31 December; how many were successful; and how many were awarded to pensioners.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and Public Information Offices.

Cold Weather Payments

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants in Glasgow have automatically received the £6 cold weather payment during the month of January 1992, via the income support computer system.

Mr. Scott: Such information as is available is in the Library.

Benefit Changes

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of *(a)* the saving from a 100,000 fall and *(b)* the cost of a 100,000 increase, in the number of people unemployed, arising from changes in benefits.

Mr. Jack: The latest estimate of the effect of variation of 100,000 is contained in figure 25 on page 18 of the "Departmental Report" (Cm 1914). The estimate for 1992-93 is £330 million.

Earnings-related Supplement

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cash value of earnings-related supplement to unemployment benefit in 1992 for *(a)* a person on half average male earnings, *(b)* a person on average male earnings and *(c)* a person on one-and-a-half average male earnings if the supplement had not been abolished in 1991 and assuming it had been uprated by the pre-1981 formula.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* In 1980 the formula for calculating ERS was 33 per cent. of reckonable weekly earnings in the last complete tax year between £17·50 (the then lower earnings limit for payment of national insurance contributions) and £30, plus 15 per cent. of earnings between £30 and £120 (the then upper earnings limit for payment of national insurance contributions). Because ERS was found not to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in the employment field it was abolished in January 1982 and the resulting savings targeted elsewhere within the social security system.

Values in 1992 would be:

Earnings base for calculating ERS	*Cash value of supplement to UB £*
Half average male earnings	18·10
Average male earnings	38·90
One-and-a-half average male earnings	55·85

Notes:

1. Earnings related supplement has been uprated from its 1980 level.
2. Average male earnings are taken from the April 1991 new earnings survey.

Using a 1980 base the net cost of re-introducing ERS is estimated at about £530 million which takes account of a £120 million reduction in payments of income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit.

DEFENCE

Departmental Flats and Maisonettes

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many flats or maisonettes under his Department's control were constructed by the Jesperson 12M system; how many are *(a)* now demolished or *(b)* scheduled for demolition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is no central record within the Ministry of Defence of how many married quarters, either flats or maisonettes, were constructed using this system nor of how many may have been demolished.

HMS Daedalus

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department will co-operate with Gosport borough council, the Gosport Aviation Society and other interested bodies in order to ensure the maximum possible retention within Gosport of historical artefacts and preservation of sites of historical interest, following the closure of HMS Daedalus.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes. Contact with both Hampshire county council and Gosport borough council has already been established at local level. No approach from the Gosport Aviation Society has been received to date.

Departmental Orders

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of orders placed by his Department with Rolls-Royce in Scotland, British Aerospace, Prestwick, GEC/Ferranti, Edinburgh, Babcock, Rosyth, Babcock Renfrew and Yarrow on the Clyde in the last 10 years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following is the information:

Company	*Number of contracts since 1 April 1989*	*Total value of contracts placed since 1 April 1989 £ million*
Rolls-Royce	20	81·6
British Aerospace Prestwick	62	3·3
GEC-Ferranti Edinburgh	149	53·7
Babcock Rosyth	345	141·3
Babcock Renfrew	44	0·6
Yarrow Clyde	94	19·6

Information on orders placed prior to 1 April 1989 could be obtained only with disproportionate cost and effort.

Service Contracts

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the total value of contracts awarded to local firms by RAF Lossiemouth, RAF Kinloss, RAF Leuchars, RN Bases Coulport, Faslane and Rosyth and Royal Marine Base Condor.

Mr. Alan Clark: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Maintenance and Repair Contracts

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the value of maintenance and repair contracts awarded by his Department during the last 10 years to Scottish industrial engineering companies and to Scottish shipyards and dockyards.

Mr. Alan Clark: I will write to my hon. Friend.

"Options for Change"

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the firms in the engineering and allied industries that have been consulted about his policy statement in "Options for Change".

Mr. Alan Clark: Decisions on the content of the defence programme arising from our proposals for Britain's defence for the 1990s are for Government. However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I regularly meet firms from all sectors of the defence industry to discuss a wide range of issues. Subject to the necessary constraints of security and confidentiality, we would always wish companies to be briefed as fully as possible on future requirements in which they may have an interest.

Equipment Sales

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the second phase of the Al Yamamah contract for Tornadoes, Hawks and support equipment is likely to be signed.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the next phase of purchases of British equipment under the Al Yamamah agreement with Saudi Arabia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I am not in a position to make a statement at this time.

Armed Forces Pension Scheme

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current estimate of the cost of the additional expenditure which would be incurred if beneficiaries of the armed forces pension scheme who were invalided from the service prior to 1973 received the improvement in benefits made to the scheme in 1973; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The additional cost of providing benefits under the armed forces pension scheme to personnel invalided from service before 31 March 1973, on the same basis as applies to personnel invalided on or after that date, is estimated to be in the region of £400 million per year.

Advanced Short-range Air-to-air Missile

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when an announcement on the advanced short-range air-to-air missile is to be made.

Mr. Alan Clark: We hope to be in a position to make an announcement shortly.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Conscripts)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation which have conscript military forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following North Atlantic Treaty Organisation member states have conscript military forces:

Belgium
Denmark
France
Germany
Greece
Italy
The Netherlands
Norway
Portugal
Spain
Turkey

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 3 March 1992

TRANSPORT

Rail Developments, London

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the total estimated full cost *(a)* in cash and *(b)* at constant 1992 prices of (i) the Jubilee line extension, (ii) east-west crossrail and (iii) other currently agreed new rail developments in London.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

£ million

	Cash	*1992 prices*
Jubilee Line Extension	1,811	1,699
CrossRail	2,376	1,939
Croydon Tramlink	166	141
Chelsea-Hackney Line	[1]—	2,000
DLR Lewisham Extension	[1]—	150
Heathrow Express	[1]—	250-300

[1] Project expenditure profiles not available.

These projects are at different stages of planning and approval. Construction of the Jubilee line extension is expected to begin shortly after Royal Assent. Construction of crossrail is expected to begin in 1995-96. The route of the Chelsea-Hackney line has been safeguarded, but no decision has been taken about when or whether the project should proceed. The Croydon tramlink, the DLR Lewisham extension and the Heathrow express are all projects which the Government expect to be taken forward by the private sector.

Bridge, Portrack

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report,* column 99, what are his reasons for maintaining the high-level road bridge at Portrack.

Mr. Chope: A new crossing at a lower level is not economically justified and it would be unreasonable to divert traffic via the existing Cannon Park lifting bridge.

Rail Electrification

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of rail routes are electrified in Scotland, England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: The percentage of rail routes electrified is as follows:

	Total route miles	*Electrified route miles*	*Percentage electrified*
Scotland	1,705	389	22·8
England	7,969	2,663	33·4
Wales	631	0	0
Northern Ireland	210	0	0
Total United Kingdom	10,515	3,052	29·0

Sources: British Rail, Northern Ireland Railways Co. Ltd, Transport Statistics Great Britain.

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what rate of return on investment he requires from projects for electrification of main railway lines in Scotland;

(2) if he will take social and economic cost benefits into account in reaching his decision on the electrification of the railway line from Edinburgh to Aberdeen.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on Monday 2 March 1992.

Airspace

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the results of the survey of infringements of regulated airspace in the first half of 1990.

Mr. McLoughlin: Matters of flight safety are the responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority. I have asked the chairman of the authority to write to the hon. Member.

River Thames

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for the future administration of navigation and shipping on the River Thames.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are no plans to change the existing arrangements for the administration of navigation and shipping on the River Thames.

Tugs

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review his policy of excluding certain tugs from regulations requiring safe manning certificates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The new Safe Manning Document Regulations will give effect to an amendment to the international convention for the safety of life at sea 1974 and will require all United Kingdom sea-going ships of 500 tonnes or over to be provided with a document specifying the level of manning considered necessary to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the ship. Sea-going tugs of 500 tonnes or over will be included and the voluntary safe manning document scheme currently in place will be retained for all vessels under 500 tonnes. In addition, Department surveyors are able to assess the minimum manning requirements of a vessel during any inspection.

Railway Imports

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many railway engines and new or used rolling stock have been imported into the United Kingdom in the last five years; and what were the countries of origin.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not collected by the Department.

Training Certificates

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether provisional certificates of training issued under EC directive 89/684 EC issued by his Department to meet the requirements of the directive will be recognised by the other EC member states.

Mr. Chope: They can only be used in the country of issue.

Dangerous Substances (EC D[illegible]ctive)

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take urgent action in relation to EC directive 89/684 EEC to ensure that British LGV drivers of vehicles carrying dangerous substances will not be stopped from entering other European Community states by not having in their possession the certificates and documentation required by the directive when it comes into effect on 1 July.

Mr. Chope: A[illegible]ministrative arrangements are in hand for training courses to run from April 1992 enabling drivers of road tankers, tank containers and vehicle carrying explosives to obtain the certificates before 1 July.

British Rail

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when Her Majesty's Government intend to raise the external financing limit for British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: In June 1991 we raised British Rail's external financing limit for 1991-92 by £400 million, to a revised total of £1,522 million. The limit for 1992-93 was set in the autumn statement at £2,041 million, in real terms the highest ever figure and an increase of 28 per cent. over 1991-92.

Birmingham to Manchester Route

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total cost to the Exchequer of the competition for a new privately funded route from Birmingham to Manchester; how many proposals were received; and what studies have been carried out on the M6 widening scheme.

Mr. Chope: It is not possible to disaggregate departmental staff costs for this competition from those for other privately financed road schemes. The Department obtained financial advice from consultants at a cost of approximately £50,000.

Four groups responded to the invitation for privately financed proposals.

Since the M6 widening scheme entered the trunk road programme in 1989, a detailed study of options for widening has been undertaken by consultants commissioned by the Department. The study has included engineering, environmental, traffic and economic assessments.

Departmental Staff

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those parts of his Department, including executive agencies, carrying out reviews over the last 12 months into the pay and grading of staff; and the firm of consultants engaged, where appropriate.

Mr. McLoughlin: Pay and grading reviews have been carried out during the past 12 months in the following parts of the Department, including executive agencies:

The Air Accident Inspection Branch (Inspector grades);
The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency;
The Driving Standards Agency (Senior Driving Examiner grades).

Consultants Price Waterhouse were involved in the DVLA review. Private consultants were not used in either of the other reviews.

Car Ownership

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what figures his Department holds showing the number of people owning cars for the years 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Chope: Information on car ownership is given in "Transport Statistics Great Britain". Table 2.14 of the 1991 edition showed that, in 1989, 66 per cent. of households, or 14·3 million households, in Great Britain had the regular use of a car. Figures for 1990 will be available in mid-1992.

Railway Investment

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail about its investment priorities for 1992-93.

Mr. Freeman: Investment priorities are regularly discussed with British Rail. BR is currently finalising its investment programme for the coming year as part of its budget, within the external finance limit of £2,041 million for 1992-93—the highest ever figure in real terms.

Inland Waterways

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of successful applications for inland waterways freight facilities grants, section 36 grants, since they were set up in 1981.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government have awarded seven inland waterway freight facilities grants under section 36 of the Transport Act 1981. The awards have been as follows:-

	£
Millgate Investments Ltd, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire	369,340
Varma Services Ltd, Deptford, London SE	859,200
Sheffield Haulage and Storage Ltd, Rotherham	61,375
West Country Fuels Ltd, Gloucester	26,950
Colwick Petroleum Ltd, Nottingham	63,494
Sand & Gravel (Leeds) Ltd	20,640
Wimpey Hobbs Ltd, Greenwich, London SE	402,832

Roads

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what figures his Department holds showing the amount of money spent on building, maintaining and policing roads in 1991.

Mr. Chope: The Department of Transport's report for 1992—Cm 1907—contains outturn figures for 1990-91 and provisional outturn figures for 1991-92 for:—

(a) Capital expenditure on new construction and improvement of national roads—those for which the Secretary of State is the highway authority,

(*b*) capital expenditure on structural maintenance of national roads,
(*c*) current expenditure on national roads,
(*d*) expenditure on priority routes in London,
(*e*) current expenditure on local roads—those for which local authorities are the highway authorities, and
(*f*) capital expenditure on local roads.

These figures relate to England. Roads in Scotland and Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Wales.

Information from the Home Office on the costs of policing roads in 1991 is not yet available.

Secondary Traffic Signals

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport at how many road junctions secondary traffic signals have been removed, pursuant to his departmental advice note TA/18/81; what extension of this scheme is proposed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: It is for individual highway authorities to decide on the layouts of their traffic signals. The information requested is not available centrally. The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 1981 define the essential requirements and these are supplemented by departmental advice. There are no plans to revise departmental advice note TA/18/81 in respect of the provision of secondary signals.

Liverpool to London Flights

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of British Midland to discuss the proposed withdrawal of the service betwen Liverpool and London.

Mr. McLoughlin: The chairman of British Midland has not requested a meeting. The decision to suspend air services between Liverpool and London was a matter for the company to determine in the light of its commercial judgment.

Birmingham Northern Relief Road

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce an agreement for the construction of the Birmingham northern relief road; and if he will make a statement on the timetable he envisages.

Mr. Chope: I am pleased to announce that we have been able to complete with Midlands Expressway Ltd. the concession agreement for the Birmingham northern relief road. This will be the first privately financed toll motorway in the United Kingdom and the first road authorised under the provisions of the New Road and Street Works Act 1991. This project has been strongly backed by Midlands Expressway Ltd.'s parent companies, Trafalgar House and Iritecna of Italy.

The new road, which should be opened in the late 1990s, will provide welcome relief to the M6 and to local traffic in the A5/A38 corridor. The agreement provides for a concession of 53 years and the concessionaire envisages that, on opening, tolls will be about £1·50 for cars and £3 for lorries at 1990 prices. The cost of engineering the Birmingham northern relief road will be some £270 million, including substantial measures for the mitigation of environmental impact.

Midlands Expressway Ltd.'s latest design reflects a significant number of changes to the scheme which was accepted as a basis for public consultation in the memorandum of agreement signed on 12 August 1991. This revised scheme will, I hope, address most of the points raised in the public consultation. Towards the end of this year I hope to bring forward orders to implement the scheme.

A35 (Wilmington Bypass)

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements he is making to ensure the building of a bypass for the village of Wilmington on the A35 at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 20 February 1992]:* We shall be inviting bids from consulting engineers for the design work on this scheme soon.

Roads (Expenditure)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the total of revenue expenditure on *(a)* trunk roads and *(b)* all other roads in (i) Greater London and (ii) England for each year from 1980-81 to 1990-91.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* Total current expenditure by central Government and local authorities in £ million was as follows:

(i) Greater London

	£ million
Trunk Roads (including Motorways):	
1980-81	n.a.
1981-82	n.a.
1982-83	8·3
1983-84	6·4
1984-85	5·6
1985-86	6·8
1986-87	12·0
1987-88	13·4
1988-89	14·9
1989-90	16·9
1990-91	17·6
All Other Roads:	
1980-81	n.a.
1981-82	n.a.
1982-83	60·8
1983-84	63·0
1984-85	74·1
1985-86	70·7
1986-87	79·0
1987-88	78·1
1988-89	94·7
1989-90	101·5
1990-91	n.a.

(ii) England

Year	*£ million*
Trunk Roads (including Motorways):	
1980-81	50
1981-82	69
1982-83	60
1983-84	64
1984-85	78
1985-86	77
1986-87	93
1987-88	84
1988-89	102

Year	£ million
1989-90	105
1990-91	121
All Other Roads:	
1980-81	894
1981-82	1,012
1982-83	1,037
1983-84	1,084
1984-85	1,124
1985-86	1,191
1986-87	1,248
1987-88	1,319
1988-89	1,302
1989-90	1,592
1990-91	1,592

The figures are from "Transport Statistics Great Britain", an annual publication, copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

Figures for Greater London were not held prior to 1982-83. The figure for all London boroughs' expenditure on other roads for 1990-91 is not yet available.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the total of capital investment in *(a)* trunk roads and *(b)* all other roads in (i) Greater London and (ii) England for each year from 1980-81 to 1990-91.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* Total capital investment by central Government and local authorities in £ millions was as follows:

(i) Greater London

Year	£ million
Trunk Roads (including Motorways):	
1980-81	N/A
1981-82	N/A
1982-83	30·4
1983-84	22·6
1984-85	22·1
1985-86	59·6
1986-87	92·2
1987-88	97·2
1988-89	73·9
1989-90	135·7
1990-91	166·1
All Other Roads	
1980-81	N/A
1981-82	N/A
1982-83	139·5
1983-84	150·0
1984-85	147·1
1985-86	175·0
1986-87	174·6
1987-88	166·5
1988-89	198·0
1989-90	263·5
1990-91	N/A

(ii) England:

	£ million
Trunk Roads (including Motorways):	
1980-81	472
1981-82	557
1982-83	672
1983-84	641
1984-85	718
1985-86	734
1986-87	766
1987-88	872
1988-89	897
1989-90	1,239
1990-91	1,689
All Other Roads:	
1980-81	429
1981-82	375
1982-83	456
1983-84	503
1984-85	508
1985-86	604
1986-87	629
1987-88	652
1988-89	873
1989-90	854
1990-91	831

The figures are from "Transport Statistics Great Britain", an annual publication, copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

Figures for Greater London were not held prior to 1982-83. The figure for all London boroughs' expenditure on other roads for 1990-91 is not yet available.

M25

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the traffic generated on other roads as a result of the building of the M25 motorway.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* It is estimated that the amount of heavy goods vehicle traffic in central London has declined by 20 per cent.

Unleaded Fuel

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the latest figures for *(a)* how many and *(b)* what proportion of (i) new cars use unleaded fuel and (ii) car owners have converted their cars to unleaded fuel and what proportion this is of cars that can be converted, (iii) new cars have a catalytic converter, (iv) new cars made in the United Kingdom have catalytic converters and (v) car owners have had a catalytic converter fitted.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* The Information for (i) and (ii) is not available in the form requested although the hon. Gentleman may also wish to know that in December 1991, 43 per cent. of petrol sold in the United Kingdom was unleaded.

According to a recent survey of barriers against further uptake of unleaded petrol, carried out by the Department of the Environment, some relevant information is as follows:

(i) 95 per cent. of drivers with cars under two years old and whose cars can run on unleaded fuel, use it.

(ii) 39 per cent. of regular drivers can and do use unleaded fuel. 7 per cent. of regular drivers can but do not use unleaded fuel.

The rest of the information is as follows:

(iii) According to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, in the fourth quarter of 1991, 24 per cent. of new cars sold in the United Kingdom had a catalytic converter.

(iv) In the time available it has not been possible to produce comparable figures for new cars made in the United Kingdom.

(v) It is not known how many car owners have had a catalytic converter fitted.

ENVIRONMENT

Toxic Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on *(a)* discussions undertaken and *(b)* decisions agreed on toxic waste exports, at the recent European Environment Council meeting in Estoril.

Mr. Baldry: The topic of toxic waste exports was not on the agenda for the recent informal meeting of EC Environment Ministers in Estoril.

Rainfall

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the rainfall in each National Rivers Authority region during the last six month period for which figures are available; what is the normal average rainfall for each region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The monthly rainfall, and the monthly average over the period 1941-1970, for each region of the national Rivers Authority to October 1991 is published by the Water Services Association in "Waterfacts 1991". More recent information is available from the Meteorological Office.

National Heritage Memorial Fund

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the level of funding made from the National Heritage Memorial Fund for the purposes of safeguarding landscape features and wildlife habitats in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Grants made available by the trustees of the National Heritage Memorial Fund to assist in the acquisition, maintenance or preservation of land of scenic and/or scientific interest over the last five financial years were as follows:

	£ million
1986-87	1·429
1987-88	1·500
1988-89	1·157
1989-90	5·887
1990-91	1·071

Local Government Finance

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the county councils that are now free of long-term debt.

Mr. Portillo: Returns to the Department indicate that at 31 March 1991, Dorset, Lincolnshire, Suffolk and West Sussex were free of long-term debt.

Travellers

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received the representation from Nottinghamshire county council regarding the establishment of a permanent gipsy site at Fox Covert, Worksop; and what is the reason for the delay in announcing his decision.

Mr. Yeo: Outstanding supporting information was received from Nottinghamshire county council on 3 January. The issues raised by all parties require very care[illegible] consideration, but the Secretary of State expects to issue his decision shortly.

Home Acquisition

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average cost of acquisition by a local authority of a home in *(a)* London, *(b)* metropolitan districts and *(c)* non-metropolitan districts.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* Local authorities acquire relatively few dwellings for continued housing use. Reliable information from which to derive unit costs of acquisition is not available centrally.

Archaeological Heritage

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to ratify European conventions on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* We shall ratify this convention at the earliest opportunity.

Planning Applications (Publicity)

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he intends to publish details of how local authorities are to apply the new publicity arrangements for planning applications; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he intends to issue guidelines as to the procedures to be carried out by local authorities for compulsory publicity for all planning applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 5 February 1992, *Official Report*, column *166*.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Proliferation

Sir Patrick Duffy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to attend a meeting of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council to discuss nuclear proliferation; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The NACC will meet on 10 March in order to admit members of the CIS. There are no other formal items on the agenda. I will represent my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

We are working closely with our allies in NATO on ways to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, materials and expertise from the former Soviet Union, some of which may be raised at the meeting.

Expresso Lucitania

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise with the presidency troika under European political co-operation, the banning by the Government of Indonesia of the Portuguese ship Expresso Lucitania; and if he will deliver a protest to the Indonesian embassy in London over the banning.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have no plans to do so.

Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to answer the letter sent to him by the Merseyside fire and civil defence authority dated 10 February.

Mr. Key: The Department replied on 25 February to Merseyside fire and civil defence authority's letter.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Lease Defaults

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Attorney-General what steps are being taken to review and protect the position of those who sell commercial or private leases on property from liability if the purchaser of the lease defaults; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: In 1988 the Law Commission published its report," Landlord and Tenant Law: Privity of Contract and Estate", Law Com No. 174. It recommended that all the obligations created by leases should bind the parties who for the time being are interested in the land and that those parties should cease to have any liability when they part with those interests, except in cases in which it is objectively reasonable that their liability continue. It is envisaged that in many cases a landlord consenting to an assignment by a tenant of his interest will be able to impose a condition that the tenant guarantees the performance of the lease covenants by his successor, but only until any subsequent assignment. The Lord Chancellor is actively considering the report's recommendations and hopes to be able to make an announcement about them in the near future.

Recorders and Judges

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Attorney-General how many recorders and circuit judges are *(a)* men and *(b)* women.

The Attorney-General: As at 1 March there were 795 recorders in office, of whom 752 were men and 43 were women. There were also 469 circuit judges, of whom 447 were men and 22 were women.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Attorney-General how many county court judges are *(a)* men and *(b)* women.

The Attorney-General: County court judges comprise circuit judges and district judges. As at 1 March there were 469 circuit judges in office, of whom 447 were men and 22 were women. There were also 232 district judges, of whom 220 were men and 12 were women.

THE ARTS

Libraries, Cheshire

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister for the Arts what was the expenditure of public libraries in Cheshire on book provision for the last 10 years at constant prices.

Mr. Renton: Statistics about the public library service are collected and published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. Real terms costs in Cheshire for the 10-year period up to 1990, the latest date for which figures are available, are:

Year	*Expenditure on books per 1,000 population* £
1980-81	1,205
1981-82	1,298
1982-83	1,318
1983-84	1,377
1984-85	1,204
1985-86	1,367
1986-87	1,291
1987-88	1,479
1988-89	1,324
1989-90	1,362

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many librarians were employed by Cheshire county council on *(a)* a full-time basis and *(b)* a part-time basis in 1979 and 1991.

Mr. Renton: This information is not available. However, staff numbers in English library authorities as a whole have remained constant over the last 10 years.

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art

Mr. Channon: To ask the Minister for the Arts what proposals he has for dealing with the problems encountered in the last report of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art; and when he proposes to announce his intentions.

Mr. Renton: Following the examination of the system of controls on the export of works of art by the reviewing committee, I have consulted widely on the alternative approaches which would enable pre-eminent works of art to be retained in the United Kingdom. I have asked to receive representations before the end of March. I can assure my right hon. Friend that these representations, involving difficult and complex issues, will be fully taken into account before I take any decisions.

CIVIL SERVICE

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list each private sector consultancy firm which has been retained by each agency within his Department, and for his Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme; and whether the appointment in each case was the result of competitive tendering.

Mr. Renton: Ernst and Young have been engaged to advise on the market testing programme for my Department and its agencies. The appointment was by single tender.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list those parts of his Department, including executive agencies, carrying out reviews over the last 12 months into the pay and grading of staff; and the firm of consultants engaged, where appropriate.

Mr. Renton: During the last 12 months, two pay and grading reviews have been undertaken in my Department, one in the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency, the other in the Civil Service Occupational Health Service. Outside consultants were not engaged in either case.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes were recorded in Wales in 1979 and 1983 and the latest year available.

Mr. John Patten: The number of notifiable offences recorded in Wales was 127,467 in 1979, 160,882 in 1983 and 229,248 in 1990 which is the latest available year.

Voluntary Admissions

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answers of 26 February, *Official Report*, column *515* and 5 February, *Official Report*, column *163*, for what reasons information about the number of officers engaged in obtaining voluntary admissions during 1990-91 is available from the Chief Constable of Northumbria, but not from other forces, where more than 20 per cent. of their clear-up rate is accounted for by this practice.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the number of detectives employed in obtaining voluntary admissions in Northumbria was available because of a special study reviewing this practice which was undertaken in that force. Such studies are at the discretion of the chief officer.

Wrongful Imprisonment

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the compensation for wrongful imprisonment so far paid to *(a)* the four people convicted of the Guildford and Woolwich bombings, *(b)* Mrs. Maguire and her six co-defendants and *(c)* the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings; and when he expects to reach a final settlement in each case.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend has paid interim awards of compensation to each of those concerned, on the advice of the independent assessor, but it is not our practice to publish details of individual payments to applicants for compensation. We are in touch with those representing the applicants in these cases and will make final payments as soon as possible.

Mr. Ki Tang

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to reply to the letters from the hon. Member for Islington, North dated 8 March 1989, 12 May 1989, 4 April 1990, 5 September 1990 and 17 October 1991, regarding his constituent Ki Tang and the question of rights of appeal for his family who applied to join Ki Tang under the provisions of the United Nations convention on refugees (family reunion).

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I very much regret the combination of circumstances which has caused this delay and shall reply to the hon. Member very shortly.

Overseas Voters

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of overseas voters registered for each parliamentary constituency in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Rumbold: Final figures for the electoral register for 1992-93 will be published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in the summer; available figures will be published immediately before the general election, should it take place before then. The numbers of overseas electors included in the draft electoral register for 1992-93, together with totals for each constituent part of the United Kingdom, are set out in the table. The figures do not include valid applications which were received too late for inclusion in the draft register, which was published on 28 November 1991.

Overseas electors included in the draft electoral register published on 28 November 1991 by parliamentary constituency

	Number
England	28,179
Aldershot	113
Aldridge-Brownhills	23
Altrincham and Sale	64
Amber Valley	15
Arundel	70
Ashfield	8
Ashford	69
Ashton-under-Lyne	13
Aylesbury	93
Banbury	51
Barking	9
Barnsley, Central	2
Barnsley, East	4
Barnsley, West and Penistone	14
Barrow and Furness	28
Basildon	35
Basingstoke	78
Bassetlaw	19
Bath	89
Batley and Spen	27
Battersea	142
Beaconsfield	110
Beckenham	86
Berwick-upon-Tweed	25
Bethnal Green and Stepney	27
Beverley	55
Bexhill and Battle	92
Bexleyheath	33
Billericay	60
Birkenhead	30
Birmingham, Edgbaston	58
Birmingham, Erdington	8
Birmingham, Hall Green	12
Birmingham, Hodge Hill	4
Birmingham, Ladywood	15
Birmingham, Northfield	31
Birmingham, Perry Barr	14
Birmingham, Selly Oak	79
Birmingham, Small Heath	7
Birmingham, Sparkbrook	23
Birmingham, Yardley	11
Bishop Auckland	16
Blaby	45
Blackburn	26

	Number
Blackpool North	19
Blackpool South	22
Blaydon	17
Blyth Valley	15
Bolsover	4
Bolton North East	20
Bolton South East	9
Bolton West	42
Boothferry	49
Bootle	16
Bosworth	46
Bournemouth East	63
Bournemouth West	63
Bow and Poplar	24
Bradford North	13
Bradford South	14
Bradford West	28
Braintree	87
Brent East	43
Brent North	112
Brent South	28
Brentford and Isleworth	114
Brentwood and Ongar	94
Bridgwater	46
Bridlington	46
Brigg and Cleethorpes	61
Brighton, Kemptown	92
Brighton, Pavilion	94
Bristol East	22
Bristol North West	40
Bristol South	20
Bristol West	168
Bromsgrove	15
Broxbourne	46
Broxtowe	43
Buckingham	87
Burnley	13
Burton	31
Bury North	34
Bury South	67
Bury St. Edmunds	62

	Number
Calder Valley	40
Cambridge	259
Cannock and Burntwood	24
Canterbury	84
Carlisle	22
Carshalton and Wallington	53
Castle Point	39
Central Suffolk	50
Cheadle	72
Chelmsford	77
Chelsea	188
Cheltenham	86
Chertsey and Walton	137
Chesham and Amersham	129
Chesterfield	11
Chichester	96
Chingford	33
Chipping Barnet	83
Chislehurst	81
Chorley	53

	Number
Christchurch	89
Cirencester and Tewkesbury	77
City of Chester	78
City of Durham	37
City of London and Westminster South	174
Colne Valley	47
Congleton	45
Copeland	25
Corby	39
Coventry North East	11
Coventry North West	21
Coventry South East	16
Coventry South West	47
Crawley	63
Crewe and Nantwich	33
Crosby	70
Croydon Central	49
Croydon North East	51
Croydon North West	31
Croydon South	89
Dagenham	10
Darlington	35
Dartford	40
Daventry	43
Davyhulme	44
Denton and Reddish	13
Derby North	32
Derby South	27
Devizes	99
Dewsbury	23
Don Valley	13
Doncaster Central	17
Doncaster North	9
Dover	64
Dudley East	8
Dudley West	20
Dulwich	96
Ealing, Acton	128
Ealing North	53
Ealing, Southall	56
Easington	6
East Berkshire	117
East Hampshire	154
East Lindsey	30
East Surrey	73
Eastbourne	82
Eastleigh	95
Eccles	19
Eddisbury	69
Edmonton	29
Ellesmere Port and Neston	60
Elmet	32
Eltham	36
Enfield North	20
Enfield, Southgate	89
Epping Forest	58
Epsom and Ewell	93
Erewash	28
Erith and Crayford	18
Esher	153
Exeter	53
Falmouth and Camborne	51

	Number
Fareham	110
Faversham	59
Feltham and Heston	43
Finchley	88
Folkestone and Hythe	54
Fulham	172
Fylde	60
Gainsborough and Horncastle	44
Gateshead East	19
Gedling	27
Gillingham	36
Glanford and Scunthorpe	44
Gloucester	32
Gosport	63
Grantham	73
Gravesham	50
Great Grimsby	11
Great Yarmouth	29
Greenwich	60
Guildford	125

	Number
Hackney North and Stoke Newington	49
Hackney South and Shoreditch	36
Halesowen and Stourbridge	32
Halifax	33
Halton	15
Hammersmith	93
Hampstead and Highgate	225
Harborough	60
Harlow	21
Harrogate	63
Harrow East	63
Harrow West	93
Hartlepool	18
Harwich	61
Hastings and Rye	64
Havant	87
Hayes and Harlington	28
Hazel Grove	37
Hemsworth	7
Hendon North	44
Hendon South	100
Henley	134
Hereford	58
Hertford and Stortford	110
Hertsmere	78
Hexham	53
Heywood and Middleton	4
High Peak	68
Holborn and St. Pancras	97
Holland with Boston	20
Honiton	78
Hornchurch	26
Hornsey and Woodgreen	192
Horsham	143
Houghton and Washington	11
Hove	92
Huddersfield	38
Huntingdon	79
Hyndburn	14
Ilford North	23
Ilford South	48
Ipswich	45
Isle of Wight	55
Islington North	97
Islington South and Finsbury	98
Jarrow	15
Keighley	54
Kensington	162
Kettering	26
Kingston upon Hull East	11
Kingston upon Hull North	31
Kingston upon Hull West	8
Kingston upon Thames	138
Kingswood	31
Knowsley North	15
Knowsley South	21
Lancaster	72
Langbaurgh	44
Leeds Central	8
Leeds East	14
Leeds North East	46
Leeds North West	49
Leeds West	13
Leicester East	15
Leicester South	52
Leicester West	18
Leigh	15
Leominster	89
Lewes	98
Lewisham, Deptford	31
Lewisham East	56
Lewisham West	72
Leyton	25
Lincoln	37
Littleborough and Saddleworth	26
Liverpool, Broadgreen	26
Liverpool, Garston	26
Liverpool, Mossley Hill	27
Liverpool, Riverside	14
Liverpool, Walton	12
Liverpool, West Derby	5
Loughborough	38
Ludlow	38
Luton South	36
Macclesfield	101
Maidstone	57
Makerfield	19
Manchester, Blackley	14
Manchester, Central	16
Manchester, Gorton	30
Manchester, Withington	79
Manchester, Wythenshawe	16
Mansfield	10
Medway	54
Meriden	51
Mid Bedfordshire	87
Mid Kent	45
Mid Norfolk	32
Mid Staffordshire	52
Mid Sussex	81
Mid Worcestershire	48
Middlesbrough	14
Milton Keynes	110
Mitcham and Morden	39

	Number
Mole Valley	117
Morecambe and Lunesdale	44
Morley and Leeds South	4
New Forest	86
Newark	37
Newbury	128
Newcastle upon Tyne Central	83
Newcastle upon Tyne East	16
Newcastle upon Tyne North	23
Newcastle-under-Lyme	33
Newham North East	11
Newham North West	20
Newham South	6
Normanton	13
North Bedfordshire	108
North Colchester	104
North Cornwall	61
North Devon	55
North Dorset	70
North Durham	17
North East Cambridgeshire	38
North East Derbyshire	23
North Hertfordshire	88
North Luton	51
North Norfolk	51
North Shropshire	27
North Thanet	37
North Warwickshire	27
North West Durham	17
North West Hampshire	94
North West Leicestershire	24
North West Norfolk	56
North West Surrey	141
North Wiltshire	84
Northampton North	35
Northampton South	58
Northavon	95
Norwich North	46
Norwich South	92
Norwood	68
Nottingham East	37
Nottingham North	6
Nottingham South	42
Nuneaton	21
Old Bexley and Sidcup	44
Oldham Central and Royton	18
Oldham West	12
Orpington	83
Oxford East	101
Oxford West and Abingdon	199
Peckham	22
Pendle	29
Penrith and The Border	32
Peterborough	40
Plymouth, Devonport	35
Plymouth, Drake	40
Plymouth, Sutton	53
Pontefract and Castleford	4
Poole	89
Portsmouth North	42
Portsmouth South	56
Preston	42
Pudsey	28

	Number
Putney	156
Ravensbourne	72
Reading East	100
Reading West	69
Redcar	27
Reigate	106
Ribble Valley	55
Richmond (Yorks)	51
Richmond and Barnes	222
Rochdale	21
Rochford	58
Romford	25
Romsey and Waterside	84
Rossendale and Darwen	45
Rother Valley	10
Rotherham	10
Rugby and Kenilworth	102
Ruislip—Northwood	54
Rushcliffe	60
Rutland and Melton	76
Ryedale	50

	Number
Saffron Walden	73
St. Albans	164
St. Helens North	23
St. Helens South	13
St. Ives	57
Salford East	20
Salisbury	115
Scarborough	34
Sedgefield	14
Selby	50
Sevenoaks	106
Sheffield, Attercliffe	30
Sheffield, Brightside	19
Sheffield, Central	24
Sheffield, Hallam	113
Sheffield, Heeley	23
Sheffield, Hillsborough	20
Sherwood	31
Shipley	60
Shoreham	85
Shrewsbury and Atcham	31
Skipton and Ripon	43
Slough	46
Solihull	67
Somerton and Frome	71
South Colchester and Maldon	71
South Derbyshire	54
South Dorset	54
South East Cambridgeshire	84
South East Cornwall	76
South East Staffordshire	16
South Hams	64
South Norfolk	68
South Ribble	47
South Shields	13
South Staffordshire	43
South Suffolk	41
South Thanet	55
South West Bedfordshire	83
South West Cambridgeshire	115

	Number
South West Hertfordshire	113
South West Norfolk	49
South West Surrey	120
South Worcestershire	50
Southampton Itchen	53
Southampton Test	76
Southend East	47
Southend West	38
Southport	72
Southwark and Bermondsey	23
Spelthorne	77
Stafford	79
Staffordshire Moorlands	31
Stalybridge and Hyde	31
Stamford and Spalding	58
Stevenage	63
Stockport	39
Stockton North	2
Stockton South	94
Stoke-on-Trent Central	10
Stoke-on-Trent North	7
Stoke-on-Trent South	8
Stratford-on-Avon	86
Streatham	121
Stretford	26
Stroud	81
Suffolk Coastal	81
Sunderland North	7
Sunderland South	16
Surbiton	83
Sutton and Cheam	81
Sutton Coldfield	59
Swindon	63
Tatton	51
Taunton	61
Teignbridge	61
The Wrekin	38
Thurrock	18
Tiverton	75
Tonbridge and Malling	84
Tooting	92
Torbay	64
Torridge and West Devon	63
Tottenham	23
Truro	59
Tunbridge Wells	88
Twickenham	132
Tyne Bridge	5
Tynemouth	46
Upminster	45
Uxbridge	45
Vauxhall	131
Wakefield	17
Wallasey	40
Wallsend	17
Walsall North	10
Walsall South	12
Walthamstow	30
Wansbeck	10
Wansdyke	37
Wanstead and Woodford	51
Wantage	97
Warley East	16
Warley West	3
Warrington North	21
Warrington South	16
Warwick and Leamington	90
Watford	92
Waveney	52
Wealden	85
Wellingborough	33
Wells	56
Welwyn Hatfield	91
Wentworth	11
West Bromwich East	8
West Bromwich West	5
West Derbyshire	43
West Dorset	61
West Gloucestershire	52
West Hertfordshire	104
West Lancashire	33
Westbury	89
Westminster North	158
Westmoreland and Lonsdale	58
Weston-Super-Mare	45
Wigan	23
Wimbledon	138
Winchester	99
Windsor and Maidenhead	112
Wirral South	48
Wirral West	54
Witney	79
Woking	168
Wokingham	134
Wolverhampton North East	11
Wolverhampton South East	4
Wolverhampton South West	14
Woodspring	69
Woolwich	16
Worcester	52
Workington	12
Worsley	14
Worthing	75
Wycombe	97
Wyre	50
Wyre Forest	59
Yeovil	64
York	63
Wales	890
Aberavon	2
Alyn and Deeside	13
Blaenau Gwent	4
Brecon and Radnor	27
Bridgend	51
Caernarfon	24
Caerphilly	10
Cardiff Central	61
Cardiff North	37
Cardiff South and Penarth	20
Cardiff West	38
Carmarthen	31
Ceredigion and Pembroke North	39
Clwyd North West	33
Clwyd South West	26

	Number
Conwy	29
Cynon Valley	0
Delyn	41
Gower	29
Islwyn	6
Llanelli	18
Meirrionnydd Nant Conwy	8
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney	0
Monmouth	56
Montgomery	13
Neath	13
Newport East	11
Newport West	23
Ogmore	7
Pembroke	38
Pontypridd	27
Rhondda	3
Swansea East	7
Swansea West	31
Torfaen	2
Vale of Glamorgan	64
Wrexham	21
Ynys Môn	27
Scotland	1,679
Aberdeen North	16
Aberdeen South	51
Angus East	28
Argyll and Bute	14
Ayr	35
Banff and Buchan	9
Caithness and Sutherland	8
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	14
Central Fife	6
Clackmannan	5
Clydebank and Milngavie	13
Clydesdale	7
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	17
Cunninghame North	29
Cunninghame South	12
Dumbarton	38
Dumfries	15
Dundee East	31
Dundee West	12
Dunfermline East	13
Dunfermline West	18
East Kilbride	24
East Lothian	20
Eastwood	45
Edinburgh Central	91
Edinburgh East	26
Edinburgh, Leith	37
Edinburgh, Pentlands	65
Edinburgh South	97
Edinburgh West	61
Falkirk East	23
Falkirk West	18
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	28
Glasgow, Cathcart	20
Glasgow Central	15
Glasgow, Garscadden	8
Glasgow, Govan	15
Glasgow, Hillhead	51
Glasgow, Maryhill	15
Glasgow, Pollok	18
Glasgow, Provan	4
Glasgow, Rutherglen	10
Glasgow, Shettleston	3
Glasgow, Springburn	5
Gordon	40
Greenock and Port Glasgow	3
Hamilton	5
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	33
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	11
Kincardine and Deeside	55
Kirkcaldy	16
Linlithgow	13
Livingston	13
Midlothian	22
Monklands East	2
Monklands West	7
Moray	15
Motherwell North	4
Motherwell South	9
North East Fife	44
North Tayside	38
Orkney and Shetland	9
Paisley North	11
Paisley South	4
Perth and Kinross	28
Renfrew West and Inverclyde	30
Ross, Cromarty and Sky	25
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	12
Stirling	60
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	45
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	30
Western Isles	5
Northern Ireland	151
Belfast East	15
Belfast North	9
Belfast South	14
Belfast West	3
East Antrim	7
East Londonderry	9
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	8
Foyle	4
Lagan Valley	6

	Number
Mid Ulster	12
Newry and Armagh	3
North Antrim	7
North Down	24
South Antrim	6
South Down	4
Strangford	13
Upper Bann	7
United Kingdom Total	30,899

Inquests

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many inquests were held into deaths which involved allegations of medical or social service negligence in the last five years;

(2) how many inquests were held into deaths which entailed potential collective or corporate responsibility in the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: These figures are not collected centrally.

Leeds Prison

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the director general of the Prison Service next intends to visit Her Majesty's prison, Leeds.

Mrs. Rumbold: The director general last visited the prison on 25 February and has not yet fixed a date for a further visit.

National Lottery

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to consult the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds concerning proposals for a national lottery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) on 13 February, *Official Report*, column *582*.

Obscene Publications Squad

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the total cost from 1987 to 1990 of the Operation Spanner investigation by the obscene publications squad;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the number of occasions on which police forces other than the Metropolitan police consulted or liaised with the obscene publications squad in each year from 1987 to 1991;

(3) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the total running costs of the obscene publications squad in 1990 and 1991, and the projected cost in 1992;

(4) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the cost of the installation of the obscene publications squad's paedophile database, the number of officers that are employed to maintain it, the number of names of persons currently listed on the database and the nature of other databases maintained by the obscene publications squad.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The total and projected manpower costs of the obscene publications squad are as follows:

	£
1990-91	[1]855,286
1991-92	[1]883,606
1992-93	[1][2]871,302

[1] These costs cover salaries for police and civilian staff and a personnel administration charge for recruitment, training and the pay roll function. Other costs are not recorded separately.

[2] Estimated.

The squad does not have a computerised paedophile or other database. Two civilian staff do however maintain a manual index containing about 12,000 records. There is a close liaison between the squad and other police forces when the need arises but no record is kept of the number of times police forces consult or liaise with the obscene publications squad.

Records are not maintained in such a way that it would be possible to identify easily the costs of Operation Spanner. This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Metropolitan Police of the Metropolis officers appointed to the obscene publications squad, the method of application or secondments used in selecting the officers appointed, the length of time for which officers are appointed to the squad and the considerations used in determining the time limit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are currently 18 officers, including the superintendent and detective inspector, working in the obscene publications branch. Vacancies in the branch are advertised in Metropolitan police notices.

The criteria for selection are that applicants should be mature and well balanced, and able to carry out sensitive investigation in a professional manner with a minimum of supervision.

Three years is the normal period for which Metropolitan police officers are attached to specialist units, but this is not an inflexible rule and it can be varied with an individual's suitability for the work.

Informants

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the Home Office's guidelines on the use of informants.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: General guidance about the use of informants by the police is included in the consolidated circular to the police on crime and kindred matters, at paragraph 1.92. Similar guidance about the use of resident informants is contained in Home Office circular 9/92. Copies of these circulars are in the Library.

Offences

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in rank order the number of offences committed per head of population in the most recent year available for each police authority in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: The available information is given in the table:

Notifiable offences recorded by the police per 100,000 population England and Wales 1990

Police force area	*Offences per 100,000 population*
Northumbria	14,236
Cleveland	13,363
Nottinghamshire	13,122
Greater Manchester	13,112
Humberside	12,201
Metropolitan Police District[1]	11,642
West Yorkshire	11,420
South Wales	10,649
West Midlands	10,123
Bedfordshire	10,110
Merseyside	9,614
Durham	9,114
Avon and Somerset	8,987
Northamptonshire	8,353
South Yorkshire	8,286
Leicestershire	8,160
Gloucestershire	8,007
Lancashire	7,785
Thames Valley	7,551
Norfolk	7,298
Dorset	7,294
Hampshire	7,178
Gwent	7,084
Staffordshire	6,979
Warwickshire	6,811
Cambridgeshire	6,803
Cumbria	6,782
Kent	6,780
Sussex	6,700
Lincolnshire	6,677
Essex	6,552
Derbyshire	6,501
North Yorkshire	6,403
Devon and Cornwall	6,167
Wiltshire	6,013
Suffolk	5,888
West Mercia	5,836
North Wales	5,805
Cheshire	5,786
Surrey	5,724
Hertfordshire	5,513
Dyfed-Powys	4,427
TOTAL	8,986

[1] Including City of London.

Television Licence Fees

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will announce the television licence fees which will take effect from 1 April 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to my reply of 22 October 1991, column Nos. 536-637]:* On 22 October 1991, at column *537*, I announced that from 1 April the fee for a colour licence would be £80 and the fee for a monochrome licence £26·50. My right hon. Friend has today laid before the House the regulations necessary to bring these fees into force. The regulations also increase the fee for a duplicate licence to £3·25 and for a dealer demonstration licence to £3·50.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Ethnic Minority Teaching

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science for what reasons he has not replied to letters to him dated 19 November, 20 December 1991 and 22 January 1992 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to courses for teachers of ethnic minority children; and if he will now reply as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Fallon: The Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, CATE, submitted advice to my right hon. and learned Friend last year, following a review it conducted on teaching English as a foreign language, teaching English as a second language, and teaching English to speakers of other languages as specialisms in courses of initial teacher training.

My right hon. and learned Friend has recently decided to accept CATE's advice and is writing to the right hon. Member to confirm his decision.

Seven-year-olds (Testing)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, if he will publish the test results of seven-year-olds for Lambeth and Tower Hamlets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I undertook on 19 December that I would publish the test results from Lambeth and Tower Hamlets as soon as I had them. Parents and community charge payers have every right to know how their schools are performing. My Department had to press these two LEAs to get their results out.

The results demonstrate that both Lambeth and Tower Hamlets need to give urgent attention to raising standards in their schools. In every single table both authorities are in the bottom quarter of LEAs. In the fundamental skill of reading, Lambeth succeeds in getting only 66 per cent. of its seven-year-olds to the level 2 targets for the age group and Tower Hamlets only 53 per cent. This must be a cause for immediate concern.

The table sets out those results which were missing from the report on the national and local results published on 19 December. Copies of the tables published on 19 December, revised to take in the results from Lambeth and Tower Hamlets, have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

	Percentage of pupils at level 2 and above	*Percentage of pupils at level 3*
English		
Lambeth	71	19
Tower Hamlets	64	15
Mathematics		
Lambeth	68	10
Tower Hamlets	63	7
Science		
Tower Hamlets	85	23
Lambeth	80	26

	Percentage of pupils at level 2 and above	Percentage of pupils at level 3
Reading		
Lambeth	66	21
Tower Hamlets	53	14
English, Mathematics and Science		
Lambeth	73	18
Tower Hamlets	71	15

The results are based on returns from 83 per cent. of relevant primary schools in Lambeth and from 74 per cent. of relevant primary schools in Tower Hamlets.

This summer I will require all local education authorities to send me the results of the tests of seven-year-olds from all of their schools. I do not expect the delays that occurred in last year's exercise to happen again.

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list each private sector consultancy firm which has been retained by each agency within his Department, and for his Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme; and whether the appointment in each case was the result of competitive tendering.

Mr. Atkins: Following competitive tendering, the Department has appointed KPMG Management Consulting to advise on its market testing programme.

Libraries, Cheshire

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the expenditure on school libraries in the county of Cheshire in the last ten years.

Mr. Fallon: This information is not collected centrally.

Schools (Commercial Products)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidelines he issues to local education authorities about the free distribution in schools of commercial products; and what actions he intends to take with regard to the distribution of the product of which details have been sent to him.

Mr. Fallon: This Department does not issue guidelines to local education authorities about the free distribution in schools of commercial products. The distribution of particular free products is a matter for headteachers and their governing bodies to agree.

Education, Cambridgeshire

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state the amount of the increase in the central Government contribution to the cost of education in Cambridgeshire in 1991-92 over *(a)* 1990-91 and *(b)* 1978-79; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: Local authorities are free to determine their own spending priorities between services within the framework of the annual local authority finance settlement. The overall amount of RSG which Cambridgeshire receives and its share of payments from the national non-domestic rate pool is based on its standard spending assessment, SSA, the Government's assessment of the expenditure which the authority would need to incur to provide a standard level of service. The education component for Cambridgeshire's SSA for 1991-92 was £225 million; and for 1990-91 it was £193·4 million—cash figures. There was no equivalent of SSAs in 1978-79. Cambridgeshire's outturn recurrent expenditure on education in 1978-79 represented some £191 million at 1991-92 prices. That figure includes the cost of higher education which in 1989-90 became the responsibility of the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council, PCFC.

Education, Bournemouth

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those changes in education and to schools in Bournemouth since 1987 and those currently under way or approved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: In common with other parts of the country, schools in Bournemouth will have benefited from the reforms introduced by the Education Reform Act 1988.

Statutory proposals have been approved for the enlargement of five voluntary aided primary schools, and for a new county primary school, providing additional places. Approval has been given for one secondary school to change its age range from 11 to 16 to 11 to 18.

My right hon. and learned Friend has approved the applications for grant-maintained status from two local secondary schools, one of which has been operating since September 1990. He is currently considering an application from one other secondary school.

I understand that the local education authority have plans to transfer one county secondary school to new premises and to make improvements at one voluntary aided primary school.

Sport

Mr. Denis Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what Government grants have been paid to the cities of Edinburgh, Sheffield and Birmingham in the last 10 years in order to provide sports facilities of international standards; and if he will pay grants to cities providing facilities in connection with the Manchester Olympic bid.

Mr. Atkins: All Government funds for sport in England and Scotland are channeled through the respective sports councils which allocate them according to their policies and priorities. Cities are eligible to apply for grant from existing Government programmes provided normal grant criteria are met.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Foot and Mouth Disease

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the number of outbreaks of foot and mouth disease, and the county in which the outbreaks took place, in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years, and to date in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: There have been none.

Set-aside Scheme

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 5 February, *Official Report*, columns *187-88*, if he will list the amount of payments recovered or withheld under the set-aside scheme in England for each year since 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 13 February 1992]:* This information is set out in the table. It takes account of developments since my earlier answer of 5 February and this has resulted in some very minor discrepancies between the two sets of figures.

Set-aside scheme: England: Payments recovered/withheld

County	*1988-89* £	*1989-90* £	*1990-91* £
Avon	—	—	—
Bedfordshire	623·80	668·00	478·80
Berkshire	6,898·00	8,230·00	459·00
Buckinghamshire	2,805·00	6,055·00	5,913·00
Cambridgeshire	114·75	643·95	774·92
Cheshire	—	—	—
Cleveland	—	—	521·49
Cornwall	—	1,010·00	815·70
Cumbria	—	—	—
Derbyshire	—	585·00	—
Devonshire	2,808·60	329·00	—
Dorset	—	—	—
Durham	—	—	—
Essex	—	1,065·00	1,712·70
Gloucestershire	—	2,024·00	—
Greater London	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	—	—	—
Hampshire	—	—	—
Hereford and Worcester	—	—	—
Hertfordshire	—	1,175·40	—
Humberside	—	—	256·00
Isle of Wight	—	—	—
Kent	3,060·00	—	—
Lancashire	—	—	—
Leicestershire	—	—	20,261·90
Lincolnshire	1,276·00	2,747·72	1,026·00
Merseyside	—	—	—
West Midlands	—	—	—
Norfolk	—	4,834·00	105·14
Northamptonshire	—	—	16,000·50
Northumberland	162·00	80·00	—
Nottinghamshire	—	150·00	6,193·20
Oxfordshire	2,133·00	6,711·00	9,259·00
Shropshire	—	—	—
Somerset	—	—	—
Staffordshire	—	—	2,184·00
Suffolk	—	300·00	—
Surrey	2,800	—	4,438·00
East Sussex	—	—	—
West Sussex	—	—	—
Tyne and Wear	—	—	—
Warwickshire	4,081·50	—	831·00
Wiltshire	—	—	—
North Yorkshire	—	—	586·00
South Yorkshire	—	—	3,048·00
West Yorkshire	—	—	2,692·00
Total	26,762·65	36,608·07	77,556·26

Group Marketing Grant

Mr. Hague: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the group marketing grant.

Mr. Curry: The scheme will fall into two phases. In the first, farmers, growers and other producers will be able to carry out a feasibility study, which will need to demonstrate that the proposal has long-term benefits to producers, and is a viable proposition.

With the aid of the feasibility study applicants will be able to apply for the second phase, of grant for developing existing groups or starting up new ones. Under this second phase aid is available for legal costs, salaries of key staff, training and expenses of outside directors. The maximum grant per group will be £107,000.

This scheme has been designed expressly to help producers respond to the shortcomings perceived by supermarkets and other big buyers. It will encourage producers to come together in large professionally managed groups, so that they have the confidence and the clout to deal with retailers on equal terms. Producers will be able to choose the format which suits their enterprise —the scheme will not be limited to cooperatives.

The scheme has been drawn up by MAFF after full consultation with the industry. It will be administered by MAFF with the advice of "Food from Britain."

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. Watts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the benefits to importers from the postponed accounting system for value added tax from 1 January 1993; and what is the additional cost to the large domestic businesses which will be required to account for value added tax on a monthly basis from the autumn of 1992.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer to the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed (Mr. Beith), *Official Report* 25 November 1991, column *375*. A new forecast will be available with the Budget statement.

Some 90,000 businesses will make a cash flow saving in 1992-93 from the postponed accounting system equivalent to deferring payment for six weeks.

Some 1,600 of the largest businesses will also experience a reduction in cash flow in 1992-93 as a result of the introduction of accounting for VAT on a monthly basis. They will still have the cash flow benefit of VAT paid by customers before it is paid to the Exchequer, albeit for a shorter period.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the revenue yield, in the latest year for which information is available, from VAT on *(a)* hot takeway food and drink, *(b)* alterations to residential buildings, *(c)* alterations to non-residential buildings and civil engineering works, *(d)* newspaper advertising, *(e)* cereal bars, *(f)* non-residential construction and property development, *(g)* news services, *(h)* protective boots and helmets supplied by employers, *(i)* fuel and power supplied to businesses, and *(j)* water and sewerage services supplied to industry.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Detail about the revenue yield from VAT on specific items of expenditure is not collected on VAT returns. Estimated receipts for 1991-92 are as follows:

		£ million
(a)	Hot takeaway food and drink	400
(b) & (c)	Alterations to residential & non-residential buildings and civil engineering works	800
(d)	Newspaper advertising	100
(e)	Cereal bars	10
(f)	Non-residential construction and property development	500
(g)	News services	5
(h)	Protective boots and helmets supplied by employers	—[1]
(i)	Fuel and power supplied to businesses	100
(j)	Water and sewerage services supplied to industry	—[1]

[1] negligible

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what revenue was generated in 1991-92 by the increase in VAT to 17·5 per cent.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 13 February, *Official Report*, column 595.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the implementation of EC single market legislation associated with value added tax.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Commissioners of Customs and Excise have issued draft Finance Bill clauses relating to the VAT treatment of goods (and associated services), to relevant trade representative bodies for consultation. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

Taxpayers

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the average gain per taxpayer in 1992-93 from a one penny reduction in the basic rate of income tax for those with incomes *(a)* below £5,000, *(b)* between £5,000 and £10,000, *(c)* between £10,000 and £20,000, *(d)* between £20,000 and £30,000 and *(e)* over £30,000, giving in each case the average gain if the same money were instead spent on increasing the single person's tax allowance, in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maude: At 1992-93 levels a one penny reduction in the basic rate of income tax would cost about £1·95 billion in a full year. Increasing the personal allowance for taxpayers of all ages by £300 would also cost about £1·95 billion in a full year in 1992-93 compared with statutory indexation.

Average reduction in income tax (£ per year)

Annual income (£)	*One penny reduction in basic rate*	*Increase in personal allowance of £300*
0— 5,000	10	60
5,000—10,000	30	70
10,000—20,000	80	80
20,000—30,000	170	80
over 30,000	230	110
Total	80	80

Child Care Tax Allowance

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate the effect on Treasury revenues in 1992-93 of introducing an allowance against income tax of *(a)* £1,000 and *(b)* £2,000 for all working mothers, giving both full and first year costs;

(2) if he will estimate the effect on Treasury revenues in 1992-93 of introducing an allowance against income tax of *(a)* £1,000 and *(b)* £2,000 for all working mothers, with at least one child under age five years, giving both full and first year costs.

Mr. Maude: Estimates of the cost of introducing allowances against taxable incomes for working mothers and lone parents at 1992-93 levels are set out in the table:

	Cost (£ billion) allowance of	
	(a) £1,000 per year	*(b) £2,000 per year*
All working mothers[1]	0·6	1·2
All working mothers with a child under five[1]	0·2	0·3

[1] Including lone parents who are working.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect on Treasury revenues in 1992-93 and in a full year of allowing the cost of child care against the income tax of *(a)* working mothers and *(b)* either partner in a two-earner couple, giving figures separately for children under five and those aged five to 16 years.

Mr. Maude: Information on child care costs paid by working mothers and by two-earner couples with different levels of income is not available. It is therefore not possible to estimate the cost of such a measure.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect on Treasury revenues in 1992-93 and in a full year of introducing a child care tax allowance of £50 a week for *(a)* working women and *(b)* either partner in a two-earner couple, assuming that relief is available at the basic rate only, giving figures separately for (i) all families with dependent children and (ii) families with at least one child under five years.

Mr. Maude: Estimates of the full year cost of introducing such an allowance in 1992-93 are set out in the table:

	Cost (£ billion) Allowance of £50 per week restricted to basic rate relief and given to	
	(a) working mothers and lone parents	*(a) the higher earner in a two-earner couple*
All families with dependent children[1]	1·4	2·2
Family with at least one child under the age of 5	0·4	0·8

[1] Includes dependent children aged 16 to 18.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect on Treasury revenues in 1992-93 and in a full year of introducing a child care tax allowance of £50 a week for *(a)* working mothers and *(b)* either partner in a two-earner couple, giving figures separately for (i) all families with dependent children and (ii) families with at least one child under five years.

Mr. Maude: Estimates for 1992-93 are in the table:

	Cost (£ billion) allowance of £50 per week given to working mothers and lone parents	*Cost (£ billion) allowance of £50 per week given to* the higher earner in a two-earner couple
All families with dependent children[1]	1·4	2·3
Family with at least one child under the age of five	0·4	0·8

[1] Includes dependent children aged 16 to 18.

Income Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total and average income and earned income in 1990-91 and 1991-92 of *(a)* the top one per cent., *(b)* the top five per cent., *(c)* the top 10 per cent., *(d)* the bottome 70 per cent., *(e)* the bottom 50 per cent., *(f)* the bottom 10 per cent. of taxpayers and *(g)* all taxpayers.

Mr. Maude: Estimates are given in the table:

Quantile group of taxpayers	*Total income (£ million)*	*Average income (£)*	*Total earned income (£ billion)*	*Average earned income (£)*
1990-91				
Top 1 per cent.	28	107,400	20	78,000
Top 5 per cent.	68	53,000	54	42,200
Top 10 per cent.	101	39,600	84	32,800
Bottom 70 per cent.	160	8,900	145	8,100
Bottom 50 per cent.	95	7,400	86	6,700
Bottom 10 per cent.	12	4,700	11	4,200
All taxpayers	354	13,800	313	12,300
1991-92				
Top 1 per cent.	28	113,000	22	88,400
Top 5 per cent.	71	56,300	59	47,200
Top 10 per cent.	106	42,000	91	36,200
Bottom 70 per cent.	166	9,400	152	8,700
Bottom 50 per cent.	98	7,800	89	7,200
Bottom 10 per cent.	12	4,900	11	4,400
All taxpayers	368	14,600	332	13,300

Invisible Exports

Mr. Squire: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the value of invisible exports to the United Kingdom economy in each year since 1980.

Mr. Mellor: The latest estimates of the value of invisible exports were published in the balance of payments quarterly press notice of 11 December 1991. They are as follows:

	£ billion
1980	41
1981	57
1982	65
1983	66
1984	77
1985	80
1986	77
1987	80
1988	88
1989	108
1990	117

First estimates for 1991 will be published on 6 March.

Tax Changes

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update, to take account of the 1991 Budget, the information on tax changes contained in his answer to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 3 April 1990, *Official Report*, columns *525-26*, and including two additional ranges of income, those from £70,000 to £100,000 and those over £100,000.

Mr. Maude: Latest estimates of the reduction in tax liability resulting from the changes in tax rates, allowances and thresholds are in the following table. The 1978-79 income tax regime has been indexed to 1991-92 levels by reference to the statutory formula, and allowing for independent taxation. A reliable analysis of taxpayers with incomes over £80,000 is not available.

For the purposes of these calculations the indexed regime of 1978-79 is applied directly to the income base of 1991-92. In practice, retention of the regime, indexed as appropriate for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

Reduction in income tax compared with 1978-79 indexed regime

Range of individual's income in 1991-92 (£)	*Number of individuals 1991-92[1] (million)*	*Total reduction in tax (£ million)*	*Average gain per individual (£)*
Under 5,000	3·5	450	120
5,000—10,000	8·4	2,600	310
10,000—15,000	6·5	4,100	640
15,000—20,000	4·0	3,900	980
20,000—30,000	2·9	4,400	1,500
30,000—50,000	1·1	3,000	2,800
50,000—80,000	0·3	2,600	8,700
Over 80,000	0·1	6,600	45,600
Total	26·8	27,800	1,000

[1] Individuals who would be liable to tax under the indexed 1978-79 regime.

Return on Capital

Mr. Lawson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the average real rate of return on capital invested in British industry over the following periods: *(a)* 1964-1973, *(b)* 1973-1979 and *(c)* 1979-1989.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The average net real rates of return on capital employed by United Kingdom industrial and commercial companies are estimated as follows:

	Per cent.
(a) 1964-73	9·9
(b) 1973-79	6·5
(c) 1979-89	8·9

The figure for each year may be found in the Central Statistical Office Bulletin 71/91, a copy of which is in the Library.

Contract Compliance

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans the Government have to introduce contract compliance for firms employed on Government contracts and for organisations receiving Government funding.

Mr. Maude: None. All parties to a contract are expected to abide by its terms, which are legally enforceable.

Privatisation

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the value of debt to Government written off in each privatisation.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The table shows, by privatisation, debt written off and the type of debt concerned. This includes both debt written off as part of the privatisation process and debt written off in a company which was subsequently privatised.

Debt written off prior to privatisation

Privatisation	*Amount £*	*Type of debt*
British Aerospace	60,000,000	Public Dividend Capital
National Frei[illegible] Corporation[1]	100,000,000	National Loans Fund
British Transport Docks Board[2]	81,293,616	National Loans Fund
British Telecommunications	2,789,865,772	National Loans Fund
British Airways	160,000,000	Public Dividend Capital
BAA	43,503,340	National Loans Fund
British Steel	500,000,000	Public Dividend Capital
British Steel	3,480,000,000	Borrowing under Iron and Steel Act 1982
Water Holding Companies	4,973,332,672	National Loans Fund
Water Holding Companies	55,013,916	Public Works Loan Board
Scottish Electricity Companies[3]	1,043,573,600	National Loans Fund

[1] Privatised as National Freight Consortium (now NFC).

[2] Privatised as Associated British Ports.

[3] Prior to privatisation, National Loans Fund debt due to the South of Scotland Electricity Board nuclear programme of £1,368,390,398 was transferred to Scottish Nuclear Ltd. and subsequently written off.

Taxable Benefits

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list each social security benefit which is currently taxable indicating the numbers affected and the revenue obtained for the latest available tax year.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* The table lists the benefits liable to tax together with provisional estimates, where available, of the number of people liable to income tax in receipt of each benefit for the whole or part of 1991-92. Table 9.6 of the 1991 edition of the United Kingdom National Accounts (the CSO Blue Book) provides an estimate of income tax attributable in total to these benefits, applying the recipients' average rate of income tax on the whole of their income to the amount of benefit received.

Taxpayers receiving benefit in 1991-92

Taxable benefit	*Thousands*
Industrial death benefit	n.a.
Retirement pension	2,500
Widow's benefit	250
Old person's pension	n.a.
Invalid care allowance	n.a.
Income support	500
Unemployment benefit	500
Statutory sick pay	3,000
Statutory maternity pay	n.a.

n.a.—not available

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the cost of increasing mortgage tax relief for first-time buyers to (i) 40 per cent. and (ii) 50 per cent.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 2 March 1992]*: On the basis that such a relief would apply only to those buying for the first time after the relief was introduced, the cost of increasing mortgage interest tax relief from 25 per cent. to 40 per cent. for every 100,000 first-time buyers would be about £45 million in a full year. Increasing the relief to 50 per cent. would cost about £75 million for every 100,000 first time buyers.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the impact in 1992-93 on the retail prices index of raising £1 billion from *(a)* tobacco products, *(b)* beer, *(c)* wine and spirits, *(d)* petrol, *(e)* VAT and *(f)* vehicle excise duty.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 2 March 1992]*:

	Percentage change
(a) Tobacco products	0·4
(b) Beer	0·5
(c) Wine and spirits	0·7
(d) Petrol	0·2
(e) VAT	0·3
(f) Vehicle Excise Duty	0·2

These estimates are based on 1991 RPI weights. The weights for 1992 have yet to be finalised.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the most recent figures for the number of non-taxpayers who are claiming mortgage interest relief at source, in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 2 March 1992]*: MIRAS is available on all qualifying mortgages regardless of the tax status of the mortgagor. A very approximate estimate, based on household survey information, is that there are about 1 million non-taxpayers with MIRAS.

PRIME MINISTER

Libya

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Prime Minister if he will seek to arrange a meeting with Colonel Gadaffi to discuss a solution to the Libyan incident.

The Prime Minister: No.

Disability

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Prime Minister if he will appoint a specific Minister for the Disabled.

The Prime Minister: Since 1975, beginning with the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) there has been a Minister for Disabled People with specific responsibility for disability issues and co-ordinating Government policies for disabled people.

Open Government

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals he has for improving open government.

The Prime Minister: The Government will continue to review all areas of policy with a view to increasing transparency and enhancing accountability for the delivery of public services, and will announce future advances as and when they are made.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for 3 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Lockerbie Bombing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what progress has been made by the United Nations in creating a mechanism to allow the trial by a neutral body of the Libyans alleged to be responsible for the Lockerbie bombing; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 March 1992]*: UN Security Council resolution 731 makes no provision for any such mechanism. We now await a report from the UN Secretary-General about his recent efforts under that resolution to secure Libyan compliance with it.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Blood Plasma

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what evidence has been made available to his Department concerning the dumping on the United Kingdom market of blood plasma products such as 8SM high purity factor 8.

Mr. Redwood: My Department is aware of this and other complaints about the working of the market in blood products. These complaints are being pursued with the Department of Health and the Office of Fair Trading.

National Lottery

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many representations he has received proposing that post offices, *(a)* in rural areas and *(b)* elsewhere, should handle applications for a national lottery.

Mr. Leigh: I have received no representations in respect of post offices in any part of the country handling applications for a national lottery.

Network Marketing

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has to regulate the activities of network marketing companies; and what estimate he has of the expansion of this type of selling in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Leigh: Network marketing is already regulated under part XI of the Fair Trading Act 1973. Statistics are not collected on selling methods.

Beer

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of the effect the implementation of section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985 will have on the use of traditional hand pumps in dispensing draught beer.

Mr. Leigh: No estimate is available.

It will be possible to use hand-pumps. Whether or not to do so in any particular case will be a matter for the trade, as it is now.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what effect he estimates that the implementation of section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985 will have on the price of a pint of beer.

Mr. Leigh: The effect of implementing section 43 will be to increase the transparency of the price because it will then relate to a full pint of liquid, which it seldom does at present.

British Technology Group

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consultations he has held with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals on the privatisation of the British Technology Group.

Mr. Leigh: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) on 25 February 1992, *Official Report*, columns *472-73*.

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list those parts of his Department, including executive agencies, carrying out reviews over the last 12 months into the pay and grading of staff and the firm of consultants engaged where appropriate.

Mr. Leigh: No parts of the DTI, including its executive agencies, have carried out a review of pay and grading of staff in the last 12 months.

Sub-postmasters

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce regulations to require all appeals against termination of sub-postmasters' contracts to be heard by an independent person or tribunal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: The conduct of appeals procedures, in common with all other employment issues, is an operational matter and therefore the responsibility of the Post Office. It would not be consistent with Government policy to seek to make regulations on such matters. All appeals against termination of subpostmasters' contracts are heard by an appeals authority of Post Office managers not connected with the case in question. This arrangement has been agreed with the National Federation of Subpostmasters.

Electrical Appliances

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy that the proposal that all new electrical appliances can be sold only with a pre-fitted plug will be implemented in such a way as to ensure that all pre-fitted plugs meet the requirements of disabled people, including people with wasting of the muscles and other difficulties in manipulating appliances.

Mr. Leigh: The proposed regulations will allow suppliers of domestic electrical appliances to fit plugs that are suitable for use by the disabled.

Package Travel

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to consult interested parties on his proposals for implementing article 7 of the EC package travel directive.

Mr. Leigh: My Department has today issued a consultation letter on proposals to implement article 7 of the directive. This article requires the organiser and/or retailer parties to the contract to provide sufficient evidence of security for the refund of money paid over and for the repatriation of the consumer in the event of insolvency.

In our consultation document issued on 24 July 1991, we proposed the establishment of a licensing authority which would require all operators of packages, other than those already licensed through the air transport organisers licence system, to be licensed and bonded to a prescribed percentage of turnover. The outcome of this consultation has caused the Department to reconsider this proposal.

The Government's objective in implementing the directive has been to do so in a way which would provide full implementation and proper protection for consumers, but would impose the minimum burdens on industry. It is now clear that the numbers of licensable operators would be large, but their average size would be likely to be small. A licensing system would thus be expensive and would conflict with the Government's objective.

We now propose that it will be for organisers to have their own security for refunds in the event of insolvency. Failure to have adequate security will be a criminal offence, punishable by fines and personal liability, both criminal and civil, for any director or manager who has connived at the commission of the offence. Within the bounds of the implementing regulations, it will be for the individual operator to decide what form of security to adopt.

It is envisaged that three broad possibilities will be offered in the regulations:

> organisers may be bonded, in a sum equal to the maximum amount they hold by way of pre-payments during the period of the bond, to an approved organisation;
>
> organisers may arrange insurance against insolvency, again in the sum equal to the maximum amount they hold by way of pre-payments;
>
> organisers may place pre-payments in a designated account from which they should only be withdrawn when the service against which the pre-payment has been made has been performed.

In the case of packages abroad, organisers will be required to have security also against the cost of repatriation in the event of no longer being able to meet their obligations to customers.

Market Testing

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list any areas within his Department that have been identified since 18 November *(a)* by private individuals or organisations from the private sector or *(b)* otherwise as possibly suitable for market testing and contracting out; and what steps are being taken to prevent any non-governmental organisations successfully tendering to carry out work currently undertaken by civil servants facing a conflict of interest between the public interest requirement of this work and other commercial activities they are involved in or other clients they represent.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* Studies to determine the most promising areas for market testing within the Department are not yet complete. Guidance on the ethics of conducting business with the private sector is contained in the Treasury's public competition and purchasing units guidance—CUP No. 16—and the Department's own procurement and supply manual, which have been circulated to all purchasing units within the Department.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the individuals or organisations from the private sector who have been involved since 18 November 1991 *(a)* in determining areas within his Department for market testing or contracting out or *(b)* who have advised him of areas that should be market tested or contracted out to market consultants and the total fees or other costs to date charged to his Department by them and the full costs likely to be charged.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* The Department is establishing a review panel, including officials and representatives of the private sector, to identify the most promising areas for market testing in the Department. The first meeting of the panel will be held in the near future.

WALES

Local Authority Land Sales

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the total amount of land sold by each local authority in Wales at less than market value to *(a)* housing associations and *(b)* private developers for low-cost housing development in each year from 1988;

(2) what was *(a)* the total original market value and *(b)* the total actual sale price of land sold by each local authority in Wales at less than market value to (i) housing associations and (ii) private developers for low cost housing development in Wales in each year from 1988.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Air Pollution

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the sites in Wales currently utilised in order to monitor levels of *(a)* sulphur emission and *(b)* acid rain; and how much money has been allocated by his Department in order to undertake such work.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information is as follows:

(a) Sulphur dioxide—sites at Cardiff, Newport, Neyland, Port Talbot, Welshpool and Wrexham.

(b) Acid rain—sites at Beddgelert, Plynlimon, Llyn Brianne, and Tycanol Wood.

The monitoring network to which these sites belong are funded on a United Kingdom basis by the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment has been made by his Department of the use of fuel orimulsion to increase the output of power stations in Wales and the consequent effect of this action on acidification in upland areas and the level of sulphur emissions.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: One application to burn orimulsion fuel at a power station in Wales has been made by National Power, in respect of its plant at Pembroke. As required, National Power has made separate applications to the Department of Energy and to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under the Electricity Act 1989 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990 respectively. The Department is being consulted about both applications. In advance of decisions by the relevant bodies, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the proposals, or on the Department's assessment of them, particularly in view of Ministers statutory appellate role under the Environmental Protection Act.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by county areas how many tonnes of *(a)* sulphur dioxide, *(b)* nitrogen oxide and *(c)* particulate carbon were discharged into the atmosphere in Wales during the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not available on a county level basis. However, information on United Kingdom estimated emission levels, by emission source and type of fuel, can be found in the Department of the Environment's publication "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics" No. 13 1990.

For emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and particulate carbon, the latest available United Kingdom figures are for 1989—and are 3·67 million, 2·69 million and 0·15 million tonnes respectively.

Rural Housing

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress of Tai Cymru's scheme to encourage the development of affordable housing for young people in the rural areas of Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The village initiative, which was launched in 1989, has resulted in the provision of 160 additional homes—seven more than expected.

Housing for Wales is also finalising arrangements for joint working fora involving key organisations in north, mid and west Wales. These measures will help in targeting resources allocated to rural housing which in 1992-93 will amount to over 27 per cent. of housing for Wales's programme.

Accommodation Above Shops

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what grants are currently made available by his Department for developing accommodation currently available above shops for renting purposes or for purchase as affordable housing.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: In 1991-92, £4·6 million is being made available to assist Welsh local authorities in providing schemes, specifically in the private rented sector, including flats above shops. A further £5 million is available for similar schemes in 1992-93.

Market Testing Programme

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list each private sector consultancy firm which has been retained by each agency within his Department, and for his Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme; and whether the appointment in each case was the result of competitive tendering.

Mr. David Hunt: Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte have been retained to offer advice on potential market testing candidates within my Department, its executive agency and non-departmental public bodies. Their appointment followed a competitive tendering exercise.

Hospital Discharges and Deaths

26. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hospital discharges and/or deaths have occurred in Wales, in the age groups up to four years and five to 14 years, in the international classification of diseases (ICD) categories, in each of the years 1986 to 1991, 580 acute glomerulonephritis, *(a)* 581 nephrotic syndrome, *(b)* 582 chronic glomerulonephritis, *(c)* 583 nephritis and nepropathy, *(d)* 584 acute renal failure, *(e)* 997·5 acute postoperative renal failure, *(f)* 585 chronic renal failure, *(g)* 779·80 chronie renal failure in newborn, *(h)* 586 renal failure (unspecified), *(i)*788·9 uraemia, *(j)* 587 renal sclerosis, *(k)* 590 infections of kidney, *(l)* 591 hydronephrosis, *(m)* 753·2 congenital hydronephrosis, *(n)* 753·1 congenital cyst of kidney, *(o)* 593·6 postural proteinuria, *(p)* 593·7 vesicoureteric reflux, *(q)* 595 cystitis, *(r)* 599·0 urinary tract infection, site not specified and *(s)* 599·7 haematuria.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information for the years 1986 to 1990 is given in the table. Information for 1991 is not yet available.

Deaths and discharges from NHS hospitals with specified diagnosis recorded by age group

CD9 Diagnosis	*1986*		*1987*		*1988*		*1989*		*1990*	
	0-4 years	*5-14 years*	*0-4 years*	*5-14 years*	*0-4 years*	*5-14 years*	*0-4 years*	*5-14 years*	*0-4 years*	*5-14 years*
Code										
580 Acute glomerulonephritis	1	0	1	4	0	2	0	1	0	0
581 Nephrotic syndrome	11	25	12	29	13	16	7	20	5	21
582 Chronic glomerulonephritis	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0
583 Nephritis and nephropathy	0	5	0	16	3	8	1	17	2	4
584 Acute renal failure	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
585 Chronic renal failure	3	9	2	5	2	18	10	12	32	17
586 Renal failure, unspecified	0	4	5	0	0	2	1	2	0	0
587 Renal sclerosis, unspecified	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
590 Infections of kidney	5	9	1	18	1	16	1	10	3	6
591 Hydronephrosis	2	4	8	8	4	9	9	8	7	5
593·6 Postural protelnuria	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
593·7 Vesicouretono reflux	5	6	4	2	4	4	6	6	2	5
595 Cystitis	1	2	1	0	2	3	0	4	0	4
599·0 Urinary tract infection, site not specified	192	213	137	198	166	224	196	181	189	155
599·7 Haematuna	16	50	13	32	3	36	9	22	14	30
753·1 Cyetic kidney disease[1]	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	0
753·2 Obstructive defects of renal pelvis and ureter[2]	7	1	4	0	5	3	4	3	5	5
779·8 Other and ill-defined conditions originating in the perinatal period; other[3]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
788·9 Symptoms involving urinary systom system; other[4]	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
997·5 Urinary complications[5]	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

[1] Includes congenital cyst of kidney.

[2] Includes congenital hydronephrosis.

[3] Includes slow to respond.

[4] Includes extrarenal uraemia.

[5] Includes acute renal failure due to a procedure.

Note: The information is based on data provided by NHS hospitals for hospital activity analysis. It may understate the true position in that not all hospitals provide complete clinical details relating to patient discharges and deaths.

Libraries

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet *(a)* Clwyd county councillors and librarians and *(b)* the county council librarians of Wales, to discuss library provision; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The statutory duty to provide a comprehensive public library service rests with the library authorities. I would be prepared to consider a request to meet with those concerned with library provision, should one be made.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many public libraries there are in Wales; and what is his estimate of the numbers of people employed in them.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The published estimates for 1991-92 indicate that the 13 public library authorities in Wales have 1,171 service points and a staff establishment of 1,260.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the level of manufacturing investment in 1979 and the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. David Hunt: The value of net capital expenditure by manufacturing establishments—Divisions 2-4, SIC (revised) 1980—in Wales in 1979 was £472·1 million at current prices. The value in 1989, the latest year for which the figure is available, was £1,114·5 million.

Source: annual census of production, Central Statistical Office.

Rural Conversion Grants

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to set time limits for the payment of grants under the clawback arrangements for rural conversion grants awarded by the Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The procedural details governing this grant scheme are a matter for the Welsh Development Agency.

Cancer

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people develop cancer annually and are treated by *(a)* radiotherapy and *(b)* chemotherapy.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The latest available information about the number of usual residents of Wales who have developed cancer is given in the table:

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Malignant neoplasms	12,889	14,033	14,202	14,959	14,261
Benign and other neoplasms	812	1,066	1,316	1,572	1,691
Total	13,701	15,099	15,518	16,531	15,952

Source: Welsh Cancer Registry

Information about the treatment of those patients is not held centrally.

Coal Imports

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the amount of coal imported into Welsh ports annually for the last five years.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is as follows:

Anthracite, coking coal and steam coal imported through ports in Wales

Year	*Thousand tonnes*
1987	2,184
1988	2,499
1989	3,111
1990	3,587
[1]1991	3,680

Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise

[1] Provisional

GP Expenses

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about family health services authority allocations in respect of general medical services expenses.

Mr. David Hunt: The cash limited general medical services provision for 1992-93 will be £36·117 million. This covers direct reimbursement to GPs as part of their expenses on practice staff and premises improvements, and the development of computerisation. I am today announcing the allocations to family health services authorities. These are:

	£ million
Clwyd	4·698
Dyfed	5·056
Gwent	5·928
Gwynedd	3,823
Mid Glamorgan	5·984
Powys	2·194
South Glamorgan	4·652
West Glamorgan	3·782
Total	36·117

These allocations will enable an average of 3 per cent. real terms improvement on committed investment for this year in respect of premises and staff; and improve and underpin the targets for GP computing levels.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each of the local authorities in Wales *(a)* the amounts of poll tax to be collected in 1991-92, *(b)* the poll tax actually collected in 1991-92, *(c)* the poll tax outstanding for 1991-92, *(d)* the surcharge on the 1992-93 poll tax for non collection in pounds, *(e)* the numbers of summonses for poll tax outstanding, *(f)* the numbers of people already served summonses and *(g)* the number of people who have served gaol sentences for non-payment of poll tax.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* The information available by local authority is given in the following table. The total number of summonses issued by Welsh courts for the period 1 April 1990 to 30 September 1991 was 442,988; no breakdown is available by local authority area. Information relating to collection fund adjustments for 1992-93 is not yet available. Information relating to numbers of summonses outstanding and people committed for non-payment of community charge is not held centrally.

Illegitimate Births

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will list the number of illegitimate births to teenage girls in each year since 1980 in each registry area giving the age in years of the teenage mothers.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply.

Information for registry areas could be supplied only at disproportionate cost. Information for the mother's usual local authority of residence has been placed in the Library. Annual tables are available for 1980 and for 1982 to 1990, inclusive. Industrial action by registrars means that such a detailed analysis is impractical for 1981.

Community charges in 1991-92 including 1990-91 arrears

	Estimated amount to be collected[1] *£ million*	*Amount collected by 31 December 1991* *£ million*	*Estimated amount remaining to be collected* *£ million*
Alyn and Deeside	7·9	5·0	2·9
Colwyn	5·7	3·9	1·8
Delyn	6·8	4·5	2·3
Glyndwr	4·1	2·3	1·9
Rhuddlan	6·9	4·0	2·9
Wrexham Maelor	11·0	6·4	4·6
Carmarthen	2·8	2·2	0·7
Ceredigion	4·0	2·9	1·1
Dinefwr	2·1	1·9	0·2
Llanelli	5·3	3·5	1·8
Preseli Pembrokeshire	3·7	3·0	0·6
South Pembrokeshire	2·5	1·7	0·8
Blaenau Gwent	5·1	2·7	2·4
Islwyn	4·8	2·7	2·1
Monmouth	7·1	4·7	2·4
Newport	12·8	7·6	5·2
Torfaen	7·3	5·1	2·1
Aberconwy	4·5	3·5	1·1
Arfon	3·7	2·2	1·5
Dwyfor	2·2	1·8	0·4
Meirionnydd	3·0	2·4	0·5
Ynys Môn	5·9	4·0	1·9
Cynon Valley	3·0	2·0	1·0
Merthyr Tydfil	3·4	2·0	1·3
Ogwr	6·6	5·0	1·6
Rhondda	2·2	1·6	0·6
Rhymney Valley	8·1	4·7	3·4
Taff Ely	7·8	4·8	3·0
Brecknock	3·1	2·6	0·5
Montgomeryshire	3·5	2·7	0·8
Radnorshire	1·6	1·2	0·3
Cardiff	26·1	15·5	10·7
Vale of Glamorgan	9·2	7·0	2·2
Port Talbot	3·3	2·0	1·3
Lliw Valley	3·4	2·6	0·8
Neath	4·3	2·6	1·7
Swansea	16·5	10·6	5·9
WALES	221·4	145·0	76·4

[1] Estimated as the product of the average community charge for 1991-92 and register population at November 1990, less Community Charge Reduction Scheme Grant and estimated Community Charge Benefit, plus arrears of 1990-91 charges.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Theft

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his answer of 6 December 1991, *Official Report*, column *258*, how many arrests have been made by the police in connection with reported thefts from the Palace of Westminster since 1989.

Mr. MacGregor: The number of arrests made by the police in connection with reported thefts from the Palace of Westminster was as follows:

in 1989—one;
in 1990—one;
in 1991—six;
in 1992—nil to date.

Welsh Grand Committee

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Lord President of the Council what progress he has made in arranging a meeting of the Welsh Grand Committee in Cardiff to debate the future government of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Discussions are continuing through the usual channels and it is my hope that a Cardiff meeting of the Welsh Grand Committee can yet be arranged.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

India

Mr. Nelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the Rihand and Hindustan Zinc Corporation projects in India.

Mrs. Chalker: Rihand power station and the Hindustan zinc mine and smelter in India are two of Britain's largest aid projects involving £200 million of grant aid. I attended ceremonies in India last month to mark the successful completion of both. The projects have already achieved record levels of production and include the latest emission control technology of its time.

DEFENCE

RAF St. Athan

12. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of expenditure by his Department on the development and modernisation of the RAF facility at St. Athan over the next 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: About £40 million.

RN Workshops, Almondbank

13. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the future of the Royal Naval workshops, Almondbank.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am glad to be able to announce that the Royal Naval aircraft workshops at Almondbank are to become part of the new Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation defence support agency on 1 April 1992. I will be announcing later today full details of the new defence support agency, including the targets being set to enable the chief executive to achieve maximum efficiency and value for money.

Entertainment

14. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate for the amount to be spent by his Department on entertainment in 1991-92.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is estimated that around £3·6 million will be spent in the financial year to the end of March 1992. This figure includes expenditure incurred by the Ministry of Defence itself, by formations and establishments of the armed forces at home and abroad, and by individual officers occupying command and international appointments for which entertainment allowances are payable.

Commonwealth of Independent States

16. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet representatives of the Commonwealth of Independent States to discuss defence issues of mutual concern.

Mr. Tom King: I met Marshal Shaposhnikov for discussions when he accompanied President Yeltsin on his visit to London on 30 January. I hope to meet CIS representatives during the meeting between NATO Defence Ministers and their counterparts from the CIS and central and eastern Europe which is planned for 1 April.

Job Losses

17. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether following recent events at Brawdy and Trecwn he will review the way in which the Ministry of Defence communicates with employees when a decision involving closure or job losses is taken.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: All such decisions are handled strictly in accordance with the Department's consultation agreement with the trade unions. Since the way employees are informed of such decisions forms a part of that agreement, it would be wrong to review these procedures now.

Defence Cuts

18. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with other NATO Defence Ministers regarding cuts in defence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: I last met my NATO colleagues collectively at the Defence Planning Committee meeting in Brussels on 12 and 13 December 1991. A copy of the communiqué issued after that meeting has been placed in the Library of the House.

Trident

19. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what stage of procurement has been reached in respect of the fourth Trident submarine.

27. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the programme for ordering and commissioning a fourth Trident submarine.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Contract negotiations with Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. for the fourth Trident submarine are under way. We intend to place the order as soon as these negotiations have been satisfactorily concluded. Meanwhile, construction of steelwork and major engineering items is making good progress under long lead funding arrangements.

23. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the maximum number of nuclear warheads that will be carried when the Trident programme is completed; and how many the United Kingdom had 10 years ago.

Mr. Alan Clark: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to specify publicly the size of our nuclear weapon holdings. However, no United Kingdom Trident submarine will carry more than 128 warheads.

24. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on progress towards completion and commissioning of the first three Trident submarines.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Construction of the first three Vanguard class Trident missile submarines at Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. is making good progress, with all on schedule to meet their planned in-service dates.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the Trident programme.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Trident programe remains on time and within budget. The first submarine, Vanguard, is set to roll out of the Devonshire dock hall in Barrow tomorrow, and following a series of sea trials, will enter service with the Royal Navy in the mid-1990s.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the total cost of the Trident programme, including a breakdown of running costs and capital costs for each of the financial years 1992-93 to 1995-96.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The currently estimated cost of the Trident programme is £10·518 million. Estimated capital expenditure on the Trident programme for the financial years 1992-93 and 1993-94 is £1,019 million and £827 million respectively. It remains our practice not to provide detailed forecasts of project expenditure more than two years in advance. We do not expect the level of running costs of the Trident force to be significantly different from those of Polaris.

Equipment Expenditure

20. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on proposed defence spending on equipment for the years covered by the current public expenditure White Paper.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Our plans for equipment expenditure are outlined in the departmental report by the Ministry of Defence on Government expenditure plans from 1992-93 to 1994-95.

Advanced Short-range Air-to-air Missile System

21. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will announce a decision for the advanced short-range air-to-air missile system.

Mr. Alan Clark: Today.

Nuclear Deterrence

22. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, when he next meets his European counterparts, he will discuss with them levels of nuclear deterrence.

Mr. Tom King: My next meeting with my European counterparts will be at the meeting in Oslo on 5 and 6 March of the Independent European Programme Group, which deals with equipment procurement issues.

26. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the necessity for a continuing nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government believe, in common with our NATO allies, that nuclear weapons remain essential as the ultimate guarantee of our security.

Air-to-surface Missiles

25. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about discussions he has had with his German counterpart about basing of tactical air-to-surface missiles on German soil.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. Member by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 17 December 1991, *Official Report*, column 140.

Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about defence support agency status for the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation will be established as a defence support agency of the Ministry of Defence on 1 April 1992. The NARO comprises a Royal Navy aircraft yard at Fleetlands, Gosport, and the Royal Navy aircraft workshops at Almondbank, Perth. Together, they employ some 12 RN personnel and 1,652 civilians, who will transfer to the agency. Also included within the agency is a subsidiary storage site at Wroughton near Swindon, manned by contractors' personnel with a small MOD presence. The full cost budget for the NARO for 1992-93 is assessed at £141 million.

The role of the NARO is to provide repair, modification, overhaul and storage services for the tri-service helicopter fleet, their engines and selected components and for marine gas turbine engines and their components. The high professional standards of the NARO will be maintained and agency status will provide the chief executive with new opportunities to improve the efficiency and value for money of his organisation. Captain David Symonds, Royal Navy has been appointed as the agency's chief executive. The corporate strategy of the NARO will be centred on the following two principal targets:

To deliver the core programme of work to the required standards of quality and timeliness and to the customers' satisfaction.

to increase the efficiency of the utilisation of its capacity, assets and facilities by maintaining the optimum level of throughput, and by reducing the unit production cost of core work by 7·5 per cent. over the next three years and by 21 per cent. over the following seven years.

The chief executive has been set the following strategic targets:

Quantity—to complete 100 per cent. of the task as detailed in the DGA(N) schedule of identified repair work.

Quality—to reduce by 2 per cent. the weighted number of allied quality assurance publication non-conformances in 1992-93.

Timeliness—to complete more than 90 per cent. of contracts on time in 1992-93 and to increase this figure to over 95 per cent. by the end of 1994-95.

Cost—Based on the values at the time of launch:

—reduce cost of the direct output units—standard hour—by 2·5 per cent. by the end of 1992-93.

—reduce cost of the direct output units—standard hour—by 7·5 per cent. by the end of 1994-95.

Efficiency—Improve the efficiency index—measured work content divided by measured time taken—from 59·5 per cent. in 1990-91 to 62 per cent. by the end of 1992-93 and to 65 per cent. by the end of 1994-95.

Productivity—Improve productivity from the 1990-91 figure of 706·7 to an average of 720 direct output units per employee by the end of 1992-93 and 750 direct output units per employee by the end of 1994-95.

Market Testing—To commence a five-year market testing programme in 1992-93 to the value of £2 million.

Private Robert Sean Thomas

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne may expect to receive a substantive response to his letter of 23 October 1991, in the matter of number 24885335, Private Robert Sean Thomas.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces provided a substantive response to my hon. Friend on 27 February.

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list each private sector consultancy firm which has been retained by each agency within his Department, and for his Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme; and whether the appointment in each case was the result of competitive tendering.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have recently appointed Mr. Christopher Littmoden, finance director of Marks and Spencer, to act as a part-time private sector adviser on the Department's market testing programme. No consultancy firms are employed for this purpose.

Surplus Land

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the disposal of his Department's surplus land.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Surplus Ministry of Defence land is disposed of as quickly as possible.

AWE, Llanishen

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has for the future ownership and management of the atomic weapons establishment, Llanishen, Cardiff; and if he will state the timing proposed for changes and the policy considerations underlying his decision.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Following the passage of the Atomic Weapons Establishment Act through Parliament last year the Government intend to transfer the atomic weapons establishment, which includes the Cardiff site, to full contractor operation on 1 April 1993. The establishment will remain in government ownership. Contractorisation will enable the establishment to gain additional project and production management expertise as well as giving access to the corporate support of a major industrial company or consortium.

Underground Nuclear Explosions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the proceedings of the seminar on the detection and recognition of underground nuclear explosions, held at the Royal Astronomical Society on 14 February; and if he will make a statement on the utility to his Department of participation in such discussion meetings.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes. My Department welcomes and encourages participation in seminars in which there is an exchange of ideas aimed at resolving the technical problems associated with the detection and recognition of underground nuclear explosions.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Resettlement Units

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) under the revised strategy for the future of the resettlement units *(a)* to which voluntary agencies the resettlement units will be transferred, *(b)* what discussions have been held with voluntary organisations, local authorities and other interested parties concerning the proposal to transfer responsibility for the resettlement units, and *(c)* if it is intended to re-establish the regional review groups;

(2) following the transfer of the resettlement units to voluntary organisations, *(a)* if the planned closure of the units and the rehousing of residents to suitable accommodation will still take place, *(b)* if the voluntary organisations taking responsibility for the resettlement units will be able to use the proceeds from the sale of land and buildings arising from the closure programme to fund replacement beds and *(c)* if resources made available to voluntary organisations include an allowance for inflation for both capital and revenue costs.

Miss Widdecombe: The management of the Resettlement Agency is a matter for Mr. Tony Ward, the chief executive. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Child Support

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the value of child support for each child in standard rate tax-paying families in 1991 prices from 1961 to 1992-93.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is in the table:

Value of child support[1] for each child in standard rate tax-paying families expressed at April 1991[2] prices (£)

Date[3]	*Children under age 11*			*Children aged 11-15*			*Children aged 16 and over*		
	1st child	*2nd child*	*3rd[4] child*	*1st child*	*2nd child*	*3rd[4] child*	*1st child*	*2nd child*	*3rd[4] child*
April 1961	7·83	10·65	11·49	9·71	12·64	13·37	11·70	14·52	15·35
April 1962	7·41	10·08	10·87	9·19	11·96	12·65	11·07	13·74	14·53
April 1963	8·33	10·94	11·72	10·07	12·88	13·46	11·91	14·62	15·38
April 1964	8·16	10·73	11·48	9·87	12·62	13·19	11·67	14·33	15·00
April 1965	8·18	10·70	11·24	9·98	12·41	13·04	11·78	14·21	14·84
April 1966	7·90	10·33	10·85	9·64	11·98	12·59	11·37	13·72	14·33
April 1967	7·61	10·03	10·34	9·36	11·63	12·22	11·04	13·32	13·91
April 1968	7·34	9·20	9·76	8·96	10·81	11·30	10·57	12·35	12·91
April 1969	6·96	9·10	9·63	8·49	10·63	11·16	10·02	12·16	12·62
April 1970	6·59	8·62	9·12	8·04	10·06	10·57	9·49	11·51	11·95
April 1971	7·68	9·73	10·19	8·87	10·98	11·45	10·12	12·18	12·64
April 1972	7·22	9·15	9·59	8·34	10·33	10·77	9·52	11·45	11·89
April 1973	6·55	8·21	8·61	7·75	9·35	9·75	8·72	10·32	10·71
April 1974	7·52	8·91	9·25	8·66	9·95	10·34	9·60	10·89	11·28
April 1975	6·59	9·11	9·11	7·52	10·05	10·05	8·34	10·90	10·90
April 1976	6·91	9·06	9·06	7·70	9·85	9·85	8·41	10·54	10·54

Date[3]	*Children under age 11*			*Children aged 11-15*			*Children aged 16 and over*		
	1st child	*2nd child*	*3rd*[4] *child*	*1st child*	*2nd child*	*3rd*[4] *child*	*1st child*	*2nd child*	*3rd*[4] *child*
April 1977	6·64	7·60	7·60	7·31	8·27	8·27	7·89	8·82	8·82
April 1978	7·91	7·91	7·91	8·53	8·53	8·53	9·04	9·04	9·04
April 1979	9·81	9·81	9·81	9·81	9·81	9·81	9·81	9·81	9·81
November 1980	9·10	9·10	9·10	9·10	9·10	9·10	9·10	9·10	9·10
November 1981	8·98	8·98	8·98	8·98	8·98	8·98	8·98	8·98	8·98
November 1982	9·42	9·42	9·42	9·42	9·42	9·42	9·42	9·42	9·42
November 1983	9·98	9·98	9·98	9·98	9·98	9·98	9·98	9·98	9·98
November 1984	10·02	10·02	10·02	10·02	10·02	10·02	10·02	10·02	10·02
November 1985	9·71	9·71	9·71	9·71	9·71	9·71	9·71	9·71	9·71
July 1986	9·69	9·69	9·69	9·69	9·69	9·69	9·69	9·69	9·69
April 1987	9·48	9·48	9·48	9·48	9·48	9·48	9·48	9·48	9·48
April 1988	9·12	9·12	9·12	9·12	9·12	9·12	9·12	9·12	9·12
April 1989	8·44	8·44	8·44	8·44	8·44	8·44	8.44	8·44	8·44
April 1990	7·71	7·71	7·71	7·71	7·71	7·71	7·71	7·71	7.71
April 1991	8·25	7·25	7·25	8·25	7·25	7·25	8·25	7·25	7·25
October 1991	9·11	7·39	7·39	9·11	7·39	7·39	9·11	7·39	7·39
April [5]1992									

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[1] The combined value of child tax allowance after clawback and family allowance/child benefit.

[2] Based on the movement in the general index of retail prices at April 1991.

[3] Child tax allowance ceased after the 1978-79 tax year and uprating dates are shown from 1979 onwards.

[4] And subsequent children.

[5] April 1992 benefit rates at April 1991 prices not yet available.

Income Support

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of people in Wales in receipt of income support; and how many face prepayment deductions to meet various debts and unpaid bills.

Miss Widdecombe: The latest information available is contained in tables 1.4 and 10.1c of volume 3 of the "Department of Social Security Income Support Statistics Annual Statistical Enquiry, May 1990", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Social Fund

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he received the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee on the social fund; and if he has any plans to change the operation of the fund in response.

Mr. Scott: We have today received this report. We welcome its constructive approach, based on an endorsement of many of the principles on which the fund's operation rests and an acknowledgement of the services which social fund officers are providing. In considering its conclusions and recommendations, we shall wish also to take into account the findings of the university of York social policy research unit's report which we commissioned at the start of the fund and which should be published later this year.

Meanwhile, we have today placed details of the 1992-93 social fund allocations in the Library. The discretionary budget will be £302 million in total. The budget is now over 30 per cent., or almost £75 million, higher than the April 1991 figure. Budgets have increased for both loans, by £51 million, and community care grants, by £23·3 million, since April 1991. As a result of this latest increase, over 70 per cent. of districts will receive increases of 10 per cent. or more on their loans or grants budget and no office will have a reduced allocation. These increases show the Government's commitment to maintaining an adequate level of provision for the social fund.

These increased allocations will be supplemented with a number of improvements to the operation of the fund which are currently being introduced by the Benefits Agency. The improvements include a revised and improved application form; improved training for social fund officers; improved guidance to assist SFOs in understanding the legal framework and framework for making decisions; improved forms to assist SFOs in making their decisions; and improvements to some of the letters which are sent to applicants to make them clearer and more informative. All these changes are designed to smooth the process of application to the fund and to provide a better service for the people who use it. In addition, we are on target for the introduction of a new computer system next year to administer the social fund. This new system will both considerably speed up the processing of claims, and improve the quality of the decision making.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the amount of money being paid out each month in benefit excluding attendance allowance to residents of residential care homes in the county of Hereford and Worcester.

Miss Widdecombe: Information is not available in the form requested.

Disability Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many members selected to sit on the disability appeal tribunals are also in receipt of *(a)* invalidity benefit, *(b)* severe disablement allowance and *(c)* income support.

Mr. Scott: Responsibility for the administration of disability appeal tribunals lies with the president of the Independent Tribunal Service, his honour judge Holden. I have been advised by his office that the information requested is not yet available as recruitment of members is still taking place.

Pensioners (London Weighting)

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans for introducing a London weighting addition for people in receipt of state retirement pensions living in Greater London.

Miss Widdecombe: We have no plans to do so.

Pensions

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was *(a)* the amount of the old age pension for a single person and for a married couple, *(b)* the rate of inflation and *(c)* the level of average earnings for each year from 1970 to the latest year for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the table.

Date of benefit up-rating	*(a)*[1]	*(a)*[2]	*(b)*[3]	*(c)*[4]
November 1969	5·00	8·10	—	25·00
September 1971	6·00	9·70	16·5	30·70
October 1972	6·75	10·90	8·5	35·80
October 1973	7·75	12·50	9·9	40·40
July 1974	10·50	16·00	13·5	46·30
April 1975	11·60	18·50	17·7	55·70
November 1975	13·30	21·20	11·7	61·80
November 1976	15·30	24·50	15·0	69·30
November 1977	17·50	28·00	13·0	75·70
November 1978	19·50	31·20	8·1	87·40
November 1979	23·30	37·30	17·4	103·60
November 1980	27·15	43·45	15·3	118·60
November 1981	29·60	47·35	12·0	129·50
November 1982	32·85	52·55	6·3	138·40
November 1983	34·05	54·50	4·8	147·70
November 1984	35·80	57·30	4·9	159·60
November 1985	38·30	61·30	5·5	168·70
July 1986	38·70	61·95	1·7	176·70
April 1987	39·50	63·25	4·4	185·50
April 1988	41·15	65·90	3·9	200·60
April 1989	43·60	69·80	8·0	217·80
April 1990	46·90	75·10	9·4	237·20
April 1991	52·00	83·25	6·4	253·10

[1] Weekly rate of retirement pension for a single person.

[2] Weekly rate of retirement pension for a married couple.

[3] Percentage increase in the retail prices index (All Items) between benefit uprating dates.

[4] Average weekly earnings of adult male manual workers in the month of the benefit uprating.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Local Government Boundaries Review, Moyle

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations have been made by the Government of the Republic of Ireland in connection with the review of local government boundaries of Moyle district council.

Mr. Brooke: The question was discussed briefly at the intergovernmental conference in Dublin on 20 November 1991. Conference took note of the independence of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland in drawing up his recommendations.

Curriculum Monitoring

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the names of the schools involved in the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council monitoring programmes for English, mathematics and science in years one, five and eight.

Dr. Mawhinney: The schools are:

Primary
Kilmaine, Bangor
Tirkane, Maghera
St. Colmcille's Omagh

St. Comgall's, Antrim
St. Patrick's, Saul
Orangefield, Belfast

St. McCartan's, Dromore
Sion Mills, Strabane

St. Mary's, Strabane

St. Columbkille's, Carrickmore
Bridge, Banbridge
St. Colman's, Kilkeel
St. Mary's, Annalong
Londonderry Model
St. Joseph's Covent, Newry
Donaghadee
Dromara
Mersey Street, Belfast
Loanends, Crumlin
Fullerton Prep, Belfast
Mt. St. Catherine's, Armagh
Lisnasharragh, Belfast

Secondary
St. Patrick's College, Armagh
St. Columb's College, Londonderry
St. Joseph's, Londonderry

St. Louise's, Belfast
Kilkeel High
Faughan Valley High, Cross
Larne High
St. Colm's High, Draperstown
St. Eugene's, Castlederg
Lurgan High

Special
Manor House, Armagh
Greystone Hall, Limavady
St. Gerard's Resource Centre, Belfast
Jordanstown
Brookfield, Moira Fleming Fulton, Belfast

School Meals

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many children are not currently eligible for free school meals but would have been before the Social Security Act 1986; and what would be the gross and net costs of restoring their right to free school meals, in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

University Accommodation

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated level of funding required by *(a)* Queen's university, Belfast and *(b)* the university of Ulster, to meet identified maintenance needs and refurbishment of existing accommodation together with additional provision required for increasing student enrolment.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not currently available in the form required.

The Universities Funding Council, in consultation with its working party on capital policy, has recently appointed consultants to undertake a detailed study into the accommodation implications of the growth in student numbers over the next decade for all United Kingdom universities, including those in Northern Ireland. The council will advise the Department of Education for Northern Ireland on the needs of the universities in Northern Ireland in due course.

The Department has, however, recently agreed to provide grant of £5·34 million to the University of Ulster to enable it to construct an additional 3,000 sq m block of teaching and staff accommodation on its Jordanstown campus. It has also provided grant aid, and allowed Queen's university to use the proceeds of property sales, to fund an extensive programme of rationalisations and refurbishment amounting to over £10 million in the last five years.

SCOTLAND

Staff Accommodation

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is yet in a position to make an announcement on the future accommodation for Scottish Office staff in Edinburgh.

Mr. Lang: Staff are being informed today that subject to the satisfactory conclusion of detailed negotiations the Scottish Office is to occupy a major new office building of 290,000 sq ft to be provided by Forth Properties Limited at Victoria quay, Leith. The new building which will accommodate about 1,400 staff from New St. Andrew's House and some other central Edinburgh buildings will be ready in the summer of 1994. St. Andrew's House will remain the headquarters of the Scottish Office.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his plans regarding the debt formerly owed to the National Loans Fund by the Scottish Development Agency.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I have decided that Scottish Enterprise should continue to take responsibility for the National Loans Fund debt formerly owed by the Scottish Development Agency. In turn, Scottish Enterprise will benefit from interest and capital repayments arising from on-lending financed by National Loans Fund loans. The original intention had been to extinguish the National Loans Fund debt and to return direct to the Exchequer income arising from related loans to sub-borrowers. Scottish Enterprise has been consulted about and is content with the revised arrangements, which have the approval of the Treasury.

Education (Evening Classes)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the amount spent by each local education authority in Scotland in funding non-certificated evening classes in (i) 1989-90, (ii) 1990-91 and (iii) 1991-92 and any projected level of expenditure for 1992-93.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

EMPLOYMENT

Radiation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans the Health and Safety Executive has to evaluate the work of the Medical Research Council radiation biology unit on the links between low dose radiation and cell abnormality.

Mr. Forth: The study undertaken by the MRC radio biology unit is one of a number of studies on the effects of low-dose radiation currently under way which will need to be assessed together. This is a complex field and it would not be appropriate to evaluate the results of a single study in isolation.

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list each private sector consultancy firm which has been retained by each agency within his Department, and for his Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme; and whether the appointment in each case was the result of competitive tendering.

Mr. Jackson: No contracts have been undertaken by any of the agencies in the Department for this purpose. Two private sector consultancy firms have been retained by the headquarters section of the Department for this purpose—Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte and Ernst and Young. Both appointments were the result of competitive tendering.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those parts of his Department, including executive agencies, carrying out reviews over the last 12 months into the pay and grading of staff; and the firm of consultants engaged, where appropriate.

Mr. Jackson: Reviews of pay and grading within the Employment Department group are taking place within the framework of the Government's plans for reform of civil service pay and grading. These were announced by the Chancellor at the end of July 1991 and give Departments and agencies the opportunity to develop their own pay and grading systems, to suit their own needs.

The Employment Service conducted a small-scale study from July to October 1991, supported by Price Waterhouse Management Consultants.

The Health and Safety Executive has begun a review of pay and grading structures which will be undertaken with the support of external consultants over the next six months. The consultants have yet to be selected.

Low Pay

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the percentage of *(a)* female part-time workers, *(b)* male part-time workers, *(c)* female full-time workers, *(d)* male full-time workers, *(e)* all full-time workers, *(f)* all part-time workers and *(g)* all workers in (i) Scotland, (ii) Great Britain and (iii) each Scottish region, with hourly earnings of less than £3·40 an hour, excluding overtime; and if he will provide figures for the number of employees this percentage represents in each category in Scotland.

Mr. Forth: The percentages requested, which are available from the 1991 new earnings survey, are given in the following table.

It is broadly estimated, from the new earnings survey and other sources, that around 0·4 million employees in Scotland earned less than £3·40 per hour in April 1991, of whom two thirds were women and one half were part-timers.

Employees on adult rates whose pay was unaffected by absence: Percentage with hourly earnings (excluding overtime) below £3·40 April 1991

	Women	*Men*	*All*
Full-time			
Borders	28·2	[1]—	[1]—
Central	23·5	6·0	12·2
Dumfries and Galloway	[1]—	7·6	13·7
Fife	22·3	9·2	13·9
Grampian	20·7	8·5	12·3
Highland	23·4	7·4	13·6
Lothian	13·1	7·1	9·5
Strathclyde	15·8	7·3	10·5
Tayside	20·1	9·7	13·6
Islands	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Highland and Islands	23·4	7·9	13·6
Scotland	17·5	7·7	11·4
Great Britain	13·9	5·7	8·6
Part-time			
Borders	[1]—	[2]—	[2]—
Central	[1]—	[2]—	[2]—
Dumfries and Galloway	[1]—	[2]—	[2]—
Fife	54·8	[2]—	[2]—
Grampian	46·4	[2]—	[2]—
Highland	[1]—	[2]—	[2]—
Lothian	37·4	[2]—	[2]—
Strathclyde	38·6	[2]—	[2]—
Tayside	49·7	[2]—	[2]—
Islands	[1]—	[2]—	[2]—
Highland and Islands	[1]—	[2]—	[2]—
Scotland	42·4	[2]—	[2]—
Great Britain	38·8	39·0	38·8
Full-time and part-time			
Borders	[1]—	[2]—	[2]—
Central	32·3	[2]—	[2]—
Dumfries and Galloway	34·8	[2]—	[2]—
Fife	34·2	[2]—	[2]—
Grampian	30·5	[2]—	[2]—
Highland	30·2	[2]—	[2]—
Lothian	20·6	[2]—	[2]—
Strathclyde	23·3	[2]—	[2]—
Tayside	29·9	[2]—	[2]—
Islands	[1]—	[2]—	[2]—
Highland and Islands	31·2	[2]—	[2]—
Scotland	25·8	[2]—	[2]—
Great Britain	22·5	6·7	13·8

Source: New Earnings Survey.

[1] — Denotes sampling error too large or sample error too small for reliable estimate.

[2] — Denotes information not available.

Small Businesses

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will review the need for legislation to assist small businesses to obtain prompt payment of bills; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I have no plans at present to introduce prompt payment legislation, but I am keeping the issue under close review. Though I understand the frustrations felt by small businesses because of delayed payments, I remain to be convinced that legislation would be effective. The majority of organisations representing small firms share the Government's view that the effect of a legislative approach would be, at best, minimal and could even be damaging to the small firms sector. I have made it known, however, that I would be interested to receive views on how an effective legislative framework might operate.

This Department will continue to address late payment through a strategy of persuasion and education and, in addition to a number of measures already in place, I am considering what further initiatives may be appropriate.

Remploy

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress has been made in establishing a new financial arrangement with Remploy.

Mr. Howard: Discussions have been taking place between my Department and Remploy to establish arrangements which would enable the company to operate a more flexible financial regime within an agreed planning framework which would include quantified annual performance targets. Tomorrow, I will join the chairman of Remploy, Sir Ivor Cohen, to sign documents setting out the financial arrangements under which Remploy will operate from 1 April 1992.

These new arrangements, which will be operated on my behalf by the chief executive of the Employment Service, will enable the company to improve its efficiency, competitiveness and value for money. The greater commercial freedom which will be enjoyed by Remploy should benefit the workforce of severely disabled employees for whom the company was established.

I will arrange for copies of the documents describing the new arrangements, and in due course the annual performance agreement that I will have with Remploy, to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. Copies will also be made available by the Employment Service on request to individuals or organisations with a genuine interest in the arrangements.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the area boundaries laid down for the purposes of the budgets of training and enterprise councils in general, and East Anglia in particular.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* The boundaries of all training and enterprise councils—TECs —were established in discussion with the groups of employers who joined together in local areas to respond to the government's invitation to establish TECs. Those discussions took account of such factors as travel to work patterns, local demography and the structure of industry and commerce.

The budgets for individual TECs are negotiated between the TEC and this Department's regional directors and are not related to the geographical area covered.

HEALTH

Cost Rent Schemes

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to ring-fence funding for the cost rent scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Cash-limited allocations made by regional health authorities to family health services authorities (FHSAs) cover spending on general practitioner premises, practice staff and practice computers. How allocations are spent between these three headings is a matter for FHSAs in the light of local needs and priorities. There are no plans to ring-fence funds for cost rent schemes within these allocations.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent on cost rent schemes to improve general practitioners' surgeries in each of the last five years in *(a)* Waltham Forest, *(b)* London and *(c)* nationally.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is shown in the table for the last two years. Records of individual cost rent expenditure prior to 1989-90 are unavailable.

Cost-rent expenditure

	1989-90 *£ million*	*1990-91* *£ million*
Waltham Forest (including Redbridge)	0·534	0·785
London	15·341	28·487
Nationally	56·766	79·593

Drug Costs

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the cost to the NHS resulting from the prescription of branded drugs rather than their chemically identical generic version in each of the past four years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is not possible to estimate such a cost.

Nebulisers

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set out the arrangements concerning charging for NHS nebulisers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No charge can be made for nebulisers supplied by district health authorities as part of NHS treatment.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether he will ensure that adequate resources are made available for providing treatment for and giving advice on myalgic encephalomyelitis to general practitioners;

(2) if he will give details of the current funding of research into the treatment of myalgic encephalomyelitis; and what guidance is given by his Department to general practitioners in regard to treatment of this condition.

Mr. Dorrell: There is no question of patients not receiving the treatment they need when they visit their general practitioner, including referral to a specialist if that is necessary. It is not the practice of the Department to issue clinical guidance to doctors, but we are encourged by the increasing number of informed articles on myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) appearing in professional journals and by the number of regional health authorities approving courses for GPs in ME; the various ME groups do valuable work in this area too. With regard to research into causes of and treatment for myalgic encephalomyelitis, I refer my right hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) on 21 November 1991 at column *313*.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will fund research into the physical causes of myalgic encephalomyelitis and possible treatments.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) on 21 November 1991 at column *313*.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will reconsider the definition of myalgic encephalomyelitis as given in the DSS disability living handbook.

Mr. Scott: I have been asked to reply.

I will write to the hon. Member.

Fazakerley Hospital

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has received from the Mental Health Commission a report on staffing levels at Fazakerley hospital, Liverpool.

Mr. Dorrell: No. I understand that the commission has visited this hospital and are discussing its findings with the health authority. This reflects normal practice in handling the commission's reports.

Nurse Regradings

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements have been made to pay arrears to nurses regraded after appeals against a grade awarded in 1988 when the hospital concerned has become a trust in the intervening period; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Guidance issued to the national health service makes it clear that trusts assume all the rights, powers, duties and liabilities for the contracts of employment of people formerly employed by health authorities. Trusts are therefore responsible for any arrears of pay which may become due if a nurse is regraded following an appeal.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by individual health authority in England the provision made in the final accounts for 1990-91 for payments due to nurses who awaited settlement of the grading claims; if he will estimate the total sum due to be paid on 31 March 1991 for grading arrears to such nurses; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The provision made in the final accounts of health authorities for 1990-91 for payments due to nurses who awaited settlements of grading claims is not separately identifiable. No estimate of the total sum of arrears due to be paid as a result of grading appeals can be made.

Radiotherapy

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from the Radiotherapy Exposure Action Group; and what was his response.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No representations have been received.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will require all radiotherapy departments to routinely provide all patients with written information about radiotherapy they are to receive, with the information indicating any likely side effects; and if he will ensure that written consent is requested if the treatment is in any way experimental.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All patients have a right to reject or consent to treatment. They are entitled to as much information as they need, on an individual basis, to enable them to make a proper decision. Written consent should be obtained where a proposed procedure, including an experimental one, carries a substantial risk or substantial side effect. Most radiotherapy departments routinely provide patients with information on side effects of their treatment.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health approximately how many people develop cancer annually and are treated with radiotherapy.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, there were approximately 193,000 registrations of newly diagnosed cases of malignant neoplasms in England. Information on whether radiotherapy forms part of a patient's treatment is not routinely collected.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the staff size of the inspectorate set within his Department to enforce the Ionising Radiation Regulations 1988; when it was established; and what changes there have been in the level of radiation doses since 1988.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department of Health inspectorate to enforce the Ionising Radiation (Protection of Persons undergoing Medical Examination or Treatment) Regulations 1988 was established in 1989 and currently warrants are held by four officials. The inspectorate is supported by the Department of Health (DH) administrative division concerned with ionising radiation.

Currently, the DH inspectorate is concentrating on investigating incidents that have been reported, but since 1988 we have asked health authorities to introduce dose reduction strategies.

DH has endorsed the joint report of the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) and the Royal College of Radiologists entitled "Patient Dose Reduction in Diagnostic Radiology" and is currently funding, at NRPB, a national survey of diagnostic radiology doses which will be published in 1993.

All these initiatives are directed towards reducing doses in the diagnostic radiology field.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which professional bodies advise him on radiotherapy exposure.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department holds regular meetings with the Royal College of Radiologists and is offered advice on an informal basis by the British Nuclear Medicine Society. Both these professional bodies advise the Department on radiotherapy exposure among other issues.

The Administration of Radioactive Substances Advisory Committee (ARSAC) advises Ministers on the administration of radioactive medicinal products and related scientific and radiological safety matters. The members appointed to this committee are proposed by the relevant professional bodies.

The chief medical officer at the Department is advised by his radiotherapy adviser, Professor Bleehan, on radiotherapy matters relating to the NHS.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health from what sources he is provided with information about the extent and nature of damage from exposure to radiotherapy; and if he will establish a research programme to provide comprehensive information and to look at ways of preventing damage from both excess and inadequate exposure.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information about the extent and nature of damage from exposure to radiotherapy is available in the clinical literature, as a result of research carried out by doctors, radiobiologists and related medical scientists.

The Department circulated a document "Quality Assurance in Radiotherapy" to all radiography departments in May 1991, a copy of which is available in the Library. This document was produced by a working party established by the Standing Medical Advisory Committee. A research project to establish the applicability of this approach is being funded at two centres by the Department. The results of the research will be promulgated widely.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will require his radiation inspectorate regularly to inspect radiotherapy equipment and its use in all NHS hospitals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Employers in the NHS and private health sector are required by the Ionising Radiation Regulations 1985 to ensure that radiotherapy equipment is designed, constructed, installed and maintained so as to be capable of providing the required treatment with the minimum of exposure. These regulations are enforced by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the number of patients damaged by *(a)* excess radiotherapy and *(b)* inadequate amounts of radiotherapy.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information on which such an estimate could be based is not available centrally.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will require all district health authorities *(a)* regularly to monitor exposure to radiotherapy, *(b)* to record every incident of excess or inadequate exposure and *(c)* to prepare an annual report for him, to include details on the nature, quality and age of its radiotherapy equipment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All district health authorities are required by the Ionising Radiation (Protection of Persons Undergoing Medical Examination or Treatment) Regulations 1988 (IR(POPUMET) Regs 1988) to ensure their staff are adequately trained and that those who physically direct medical exposures

"ensure a dose of ionising radiation to the patient is as low as reasonably practicable in order to achieve the required diagnostic or therapeutic purpose".

Every radiotherapy treatment is calculated for a specific patient and involves the regular monitoring of exposures from radiotherapy machines, as well as the regular review and clinical audit of the results of such treatment. All radiotherapy departments are required by the IR(POPUMET) Regs 1988) to keep an inventory of radiotherapy equipment which would include details of the nature, quality and age of that equipment.

We would expect provider units to report any untoward incidents to the Department of Health inspectorate.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many qualified radiotherapists are in post within his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department does not employ any radiotherapists.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will establish a central fund to provide immediate no fault payments for those damaged by excess or inadequate radiotherapy.

Mr. Dorrell: No-fault compensation was proposed as part of the National Health Service (Compensation) Bill which was defeated on a free vote by a substantial majority at Second Reading. The Government's position remains that the basis for seeking compensation should be through proof of negligence actions through the courts.

Tinnitus

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are his estimates of the numbers of tinnitus sufferers in the United Kingdom; how many trained specialists are employed in the NHS to help alleviate this condition; what funding is currently provided to charities and research institutions working on tinnitus problems; and what are his plans for future funding and assistance.

Mr. Dorrell: It is estimated that between 0·5 per cent. and 1 per cent. of the population are seriously affected by tinnitus. There are 375 consultants in otolaryngology and 13 consultant audiological physicians employed by the NHS in England. The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research in the United Kingdom is the Medical Research Council (MRC) which receives its grant in aid from the Department of Education and Science. In 1991 the MRC spent £112,000 on research into tinnitus.

The Meniere's Society, many of whose members suffer from tinnitus, received a grant of £7,500 in 1991-92 and have applied for a further grant in 1992-93. Decisions on funding for 1992-93 onwards will be announced shortly. There are no plans for funding of any other voluntary organisations at present but any future applications will be carefully considered.

Thalidomide

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the research publications on the absence of the side effect of peripheral neuropathy in United Kingdom leprosy patients taking thalidomide;

(2) what, apart from producing teratogenic effects on the foetus, are the other major adverse effects of thalidomide; if he will ensure that every patient being given thalidomide on a named patient basis is warned that the drug can cause a severe and permanent loss of sensation; and if he will require manufacturers to give this information in a leaflet included in the packaging of the drug;

(3) if he will list the basis for the findings reported in the letter of 19 December from the Minister of Health to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South that none of the experts on leprosy has seen thalidomide neuropathy in their patients; and what evidence he has of the frequency of this adverse effect in patients with other diseases taking thalidomide.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A literature survey undertaken by the Department has failed to reveal any research publications on the absence of peripheral neuropathy in United Kingdom leprosy patients taking thalidomide.

Apart from the teratogenic effects of thalidomide on the foetus the other major adverse event is peripheral neuropathy. Thalidomide is used to treat a very few patients with rare diseases unresponsive to other treatments on a "named-patient" basis by an experienced group of physicians. They will be alert to the possibility of nerve damage and should be able to recognise it at an early stage.

The provision of warnings about the use of drugs prescribed on a "named-patient" basis lies with the doctor writing the prescription, not with the supplier. In the case of thalidomide, a practitioner should arrange for appropriate warnings about the possible side effects to be provided when it is dispensed to the patient.

My letter of 19 December 1991 to the right hon. Member was based on the clinical findings of the panel of leprosy opinion. This experienced group of physicians who treat a condition that affects peripheral nerves have not detected signs of peripheral neuropathy associated with the use of thalidomide. Their findings are in agreement with the absence of any report in the literature that thalidomide causes peripheral neuropathy in patients treated for leprosy. Peripheral neuropathy is a well known side effect in patients with other diseases being treated with thalidomide. There are no accurate figures for the frequency of this side effect.

Abortions

Mr. Duffy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give a breakdown of the total number of abortions under the terms of the Abortion Act 1967 in the Sheffield health authority area in 1991 *(a)* by the ground on which they were performed and *(b)* how many were repeat abortions.

Mr. Dorrell: Data for 1991 are not yet available.

Dentists' Fees

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will discuss with the British Dental Association the need to avoid cuts in fees paid by his Department; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the payment of the arrears of fees for dentists following the recommendations by the pay review body.

Mr. Dorrell: The proposed increase in target net income of 8·5 per cent. which was recommended by the Doctors and Dentists Review Body (DDRB) was accepted by the Government. To ensure that the level at which fees are pitched in the coming year will deliver this proposed increase in dentists' net income the health departments consulted the British Dental Association (BDA). Following discussions between the British Dental Association and the health departments, agreement was reached to hold a joint inquiry to review the level of payments to dentists in 1991-92, the results of which will be considered by the Health departments and the British Dental Association in May when they reconsider the appropriate fee scale for 1992-93; simultaneously, they will begin a more fundamental review of the structure of dentists' remuneration.

Southern Derbyshire Health Authority

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give figures for the number of patients in the Southern Derbyshire health authority area who have been waiting for more than two years for an operation; and if he will give equivalent figures for a year ago.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest provisional figures show that at December 1991 there were 29 patients waiting over two years for treatment in the Southern Derbyshire health authority area. The equivalent figure in December 1990 was 108. The authority expects to have no patient waiting over two years by 31 March.

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give figures for the number of health care staff working for Southern Derbyshire health authority in 1982 and the latest year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The whole-time equivalent number of health care staff working for Southern Derbyshire health authority in 1982 and 1990 were 4,740 and 4,960 respectively. These are direct care staff, which includes nursing and midwifery (including agency), medical and dental (including permanent paid, honorary and locum staff, but excluding consultants and senior registrars whose contracts are held by the region) and professional and technical staff. The sources of the data are the Department of Health's annual censuses of national health service medical and non-medical manpower.

Health Service Finance

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial information, including sets of accounts, will be made available at the annual meetings of NHS trusts.

Mr. Dorrell: At each annual public meeting NHS trusts are required to make available their audited annual accounts and any report made on those accounts by the auditor.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give details of the numbers of people waiting over two years for treatment who were removed from the lists between 1 October and 31 December because of *(a)* being treated and *(b)* for a reason other than being treated.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is not yet available centrally.

Illegitimate Births

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of illegitimate births to teenage girls in England in each year since 1980 in each registry area, giving the age in years of the teenage mothers.

Mr. Dorrell: Information for registry areas could be supplied only at disproportionate cost. Information for the mother's usual local authority of residence has been placed in the Library. Annual tables are available for 1980 and for 1982 to 1990 (inclusive). Industrial action by registrars means that such a detailed analysis is impractical for 1981.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 4 March 1992

ENERGY

Electricity Prices

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with the chairman of Nuclear Electric concerning the level of electricity prices to be offered to large industrial electricity consumers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of Nuclear Electric from time to time to discuss a range of issues.

ENVIRONMENT

Farm Shops

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what regulations or guidelines cover the proportion of the produce sold in a shop attached to a farm or smallholding which is required to have been grown on the farm or holding, in connection with planning requirements.

Mr. Yeo: There are no hard and fast rules but guidance is included in the new planning policy guidance note 7, "The Countryside and the Rural Economy". It is normally assumed that the use of a farm shop only for the sale of goods produced on that farm or smallholding is a use which is ancillary to the use as a farm/smallholding not requiring planning permission, whereas use as a farm shop selling a significant amount of "imported" produce amounts to a use on its own account and is therefore subject to planning control.

Sir Walter Raleigh Statue

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for the relocation of Sir Walter Raleigh's statue in Whitehall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: A study has been commissioned to consider the siting of the proposed new statue of Lord Alanbrooke on Raleigh green, Whitehall. Although the study is not yet complete, there are no current plans that include the relocation of Sir Walter Raleigh's statue elsewhere. However, it is clear that a repositioning within the green will be needed. The siting plans emerging from the study will shortly be ready for consultation with interested parties, including the Royal Fine Arts Commission, English Heritage and Westminster City Council and no final decision will be taken until that is complete.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the revenue support grant and standard spending assessment for Dorset for 1992-93 as compared with 1991-92.

Mr. Key: The standard spending assessment for Dorset county council at £369·8 million for 1992-93 is 8·2 per cent. above that for 1991-92 at £341·8 million. Revenue support grant at £125·1 million is 23·7 per cent. higher than the sum of RSG and community charge grant for 1991-92 of £101·2 million.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the impact of outstanding rating appeals both domestic and non-domestic on local authority finances in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* Rating appeals under the new non-domestic rating system have no impact on local authority finances. Within any given level of aggregate external finance, any variation in rates yield due to such appeals would be matched by a corresponding variation in the level of revenue support grant. Figures are not available nationally on the effects for those years of appeals in respect of the 1973 valuation lists. The effect of these appeals on local authorities' budgets and charges will depend on their own past budgeting decisions. As I announced on 27 February, we have decided to issue supplementary credit approvals totalling some £9·5 million to assist those authorities most affected in 1991-92 by the results of rating appeals notified to them after 1991-92 budgets had been set.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet a delegation of residents from Coventry to discuss the effect of the standard spending assessment for 1992-93 on the level of education provision and social services in the city.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* No. Within Coventry's budget, the spending priorities given to education and social services are a matter for the city council.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many meetings or other discussions his officials have had with local government officers or councillors from Coventry about the city's standard spending assessment in 1991 and 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 4 March 1992]:* Coventry City Council made representations on standard spending assessments for 1991-92 and I met a delegation from the West Midlands joint committee, including Coventry, to hear representations on the SSA for 1992-93. For 1992-93 Coventry's SSA increases by 5·8 per cent. and is, at £1,080 per adult, one of the highest of any metropolitan district.

Nuclear Reprocessing Plant

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will next meet the European Commissioner for environmental matters to discuss the impact of the Sellafield reprocessing plant on the Irish sea and the surrounding environment.

Mr. Baldry: Mr. right hon. Friend has no such plans.

New Towns (Land Sales)

Sir Charles Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to extend to other new towns his recent decision to allow the Commission for the New Towns to make land available at Telford at a price intended to facilitate the construction of low-cost housing.

Sir George Young: The Commission for the New Towns is a disengagement authority, charged with maximising the receipts obtainable from the sale of its assets. Disposal of housing land at less than the best price reasonably obtainable can normally be justified only where this can be expected to lead to an overall enhancement in the value of its remaining assets.

Sir Charles Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will extend to the Commission for the New Towns the power of local authorities to sell land for less than the market price.

Sir George Young: The role of the Commission for the New Towns is disengagement and to maximise the receipts for the Exchequer obtained from the sale of its assets. It is the responsibility of the local housing authorities to co-ordinate arrangements to ensure that the social housing needs of their areas are met.

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newport West, 24 January, *Official Report,* column *347,* when he received the non-governmental organisations' report of the Paris planning meeting for the forthcoming United Nations conference on environment and development; and which proposals made in the report have been included in the United Kingdom submissions for UNCED.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend has not yet received a formal report from the Paris meeting.

Long Leasehold Flats

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he plans to make to the proposals for the enfranchisement of long leasehold flats, which he announced last July; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Following extensive consultation the scheme for enfranchisement in England and Wales, which I announced last year, is to be modified and extended.

The main framework of the scheme to give long-leaseholders of flats the collective right to buy their freehold will not be changed. Nor will the compensation arrangements. But we shall simplify the criteria for qualification of long-leaseholders and buildings, and give a right to former freeholders to lease back parts of buildings let direct to renting tenants or used for business purposes.

In addition, we will give flat owners in blocks which are not eligible for enfranchisement a right to extend their leases, at market price. The details of this proposal will be subject to consultation.

We will also remove the rateable value, and rental equivalent value, limits on eligibility of houses for enfranchisement. Long leaseholders of houses of any value will be given the right to buy their freeholds at market value.

A revised information leaflet will shortly be available to the public on request from the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office. I will be placing copies of text, together with a brief resume of our proposals, in the Library. We will introduce this legislation when parliamentary time permits.

Air Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the present and planned sites for monitoring of air quality, stating for each which pollutants are measured.

Mr. Baldry: The Department of the Environment is currently operating the following number of air pollution monitoring sites:

	Number
Ozone:	18
Carbon monoxide:	6
Nitrogen oxides:	12
Acid deposition:	32
Atmospheric hydrocarbons:	4
Trace gases:	3
Smoke and sulphur dioxide:	258
Lead:	17

The enhanced urban monitoring initiative will place monitoring sites in 24 more towns and cities across the United Kingdom by the end of the decade. Each will measure ozone, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, small particulate matter—PM10—and toxic hydrocarbons.

The first 10 sites will be in Cardiff, Belfast, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Newcastle, London, Liverpool, Bristol, Leeds and Aberdeen, the Government are awaiting independent scientific advice before choosing the locations of the remaining sites.

Air Quality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on data for air quality in Greater London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Bristol at similar periods in each year from 1980 to 1991.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* Data for the cities and years requested are available only for smoke and sulphur dioxide.

The 98-percentile daily mean smoke and sulphur dioxide concentrations for representative urban sites in Greater London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Bristol are given in the table. The values can be compared with the EC directive limits for smoke and sulphur dioxide of 213 and 350 μgm^{-3}, respectively.

	Smoke μgm^{-3}	*SO_2 μgm^{-3} as 98-percentile daily mean*
Birmingham		
1980-81	51	156
1981-82	107	237

	Smoke μgm^{-3}	*SO_2 μgm^{-3} as 98-percentile daily mean*
1982-83	59	115
1983-84	68	128
1984-85	55	123
1985-86	46	111
1986-87	58	87
1987-88	64	96
1988-89	64	180
1989-90	65	91
1990-91	65	93
Bristol		
1980-81	66	115
1981-82	80	134
1982-83	—	—
1983-84	—	—
1984-85	—	—
1985-86	45	83
1986-87	44	90
1987-88	46	76
1988-89	55	49
1989-90	43	60
1990-91	29	43
Leeds		
1980-81	51	110
1981-82	87	115
1982-83	78	125
1983-84	89	139
1984-85	87	158
1985-86	69	129
1986-87	68	98
1987-88	62	94
1988-89	71	82
1989-90	47	79
1990-91	54	101
London (Enfield)		
1980-81	48	134
1981-82	56	138
1982-83	39	101
1983-84	49	113
1984-85	49	111
1985-86	41	97
1986-87	37	94
1987-88	49	137
1988-89	17	78
1989-90	28	90
1990-91	26	93
London (City)		
1980-81	54	184
1981-82	67	212
1982-83	62	176
1983-84	58	95
1984-85	51	85
1985-86	53	117
1986-87	49	142
1987-88	49	97
1988-89	40	66
1989-90	41	64
1990-91	62	88
London (Croydon)		
1980-81	63	144
1981-82	37	82
1982-83	19	58
1983-84	13	44
1984-85	16	42
1985-86	16	54
1986-87	47	84
1987-88	26	62
1988-89	20	62
1989-90	22	66
1990-91	32	66
Manchester		
1980-81	54	180
1981-82	98	250
1982-83	73	180
1983-84	84	181
1984-85	81	155
1985-86	66	122
1986-87	71	112
1987-88	75	151
1988-89	116	204
1989-90	91	126
1990-91	89	106

Local Authority Debt

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update his answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, on 11 February 1991, *Official Report*, column *295*, concerning council debts.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* I have arranged for the available information to be laid in the Library of the House.

Manchester Olympic Bid

Mr. Denis Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the report commissioned by the Government from financial consultants as to the feasibility of the Manchester Olympic bid.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 3 March 1992]:* The studies were commissioned by the Manchester Olympic bid committee with the financial support of the Government. It is not proposed that they should be published.

Repossessions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many repossessions have been stopped as a result of the agreement reached between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and mortgage lenders, as announced on 19 December.

Mr. Maples: I have been asked to reply.

It is too early to provide an estimate of the number of repossessions which have been prevented as a result of the measures agreed with the Council of Mortgage Lenders. However, excellent progress is being made on the implementation of the package. The Bill to suspend stamp duty on properties valued at up to £250,000 has received royal assent and the Bill to make income support payments of mortgage interest direct to lenders has passed all its Commons stages. In addition, the major lenders have committed themselves to helping borrowers in difficulties through mortgage rescue schemes involving funding of up to £¾ billion. Such schemes are now coming into operation. The various measures will have a substantial impact on the level of repossessions this year.

PRIME MINISTER

Charities (Europe)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Prime Minister which Government Departments will be involved in consultations on the proposal for a European Community regulation on the statute for a European association.

The Prime Minister: The Home Office will be taking the lead with the Charity Commission, bringing in other Departments in respect of their particular interests in the proposed statute.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Bolivia

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs where in Bolivia the land now being used for soya bean production, under a World bank programme, is situated; what acreage is involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The land involved is the eastern lowlands region in the department of Santa Cruz. The area cultivated for soya bean production in 1989, when the project started, was 110,000 hectares. I also refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 17 January, at column *679*, and my answers to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on 27 January, at column *421*, and 28 January, at column *531*.

WALES

Council House Sales

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dwellings have been sold under the improvement for sale scheme by each local authority in Wales in each year since 1988.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Since 1988 a total of 21 dwellings have been sold under the improvement for sale scheme. A breakdown is given in the table:

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Ogwr	9	3	6	—
Preseli Pembrokeshire	1	—	—	—
Carmarthen	—	—	2	—

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many properties have been sold under home leasing schemes in each local authority area in Wales for each year from 1988; and what is the total amount granted in improvement grants and mortgage finance within each local authority area for participants in such schemes.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Since 1988 a total of 12 properties have been sold under home leasing schemes, a breakdown of which is provided in the table. Information is not centrally available on improvements grants and mortgage finance issued for these properties.

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Arfon	1	—	—	—
Carmarthen	—	—	1	—
Delyn	—	—	1	—
Ogwr	2	—	2	—
Vale of Glamorgan	3	2	—	—

Source: Welsh Office housing returns.

Discount Housing Schemes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the total number of vacancies released to date under each transferable discount housing scheme operational in Wales; and how many vacancies are *(a)* two bed, *(b)* three bed, *(c)* four bed and *(d)* over;

(2) what is the total number of *(a)* formal grant applications, *(b)* grants approved, *(c)* grants paid, *(d)* applications withdrawn and *(e)* grants refused under each transferable discount scheme application in Wales to date;

(3) of the lettings released under each transferable discount scheme operational in Wales to date, how many were allocated to *(a)* those transferred from other local authority property *(b)* households accepted as homeless under part III of the Housing Act 1985 and *(c)* households from the authority's waiting list;

(4) if he will publish an anonymised list of all grant purchasers under transferable discount housing schemes showing in each instance *(a)* the amount of grant, *(b)* the property prices, *(c)* the location, *(d)* the household type and *(e)* household weekly income.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Agricultural Development Advisory Service

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans ADAS has to withdraw from Llandrindod Wells, Dolgellau new town, Brecon, Pontypool, Haverfordwest and Lampeter and to shed jobs at Caernarfon, Carmarthen and Trawscoed; and if he will make a statement on the future development of ADAS in Wales *(a)* prior to the setting up of the new Government agency and *(b)* from April onwards.

Mr. Curry: I have been asked to reply.

When ADAS becomes a Government agency on 1 April 1992 its organisation in Wales will be based on consultancy centres at Cardiff and Ruthin, and a research centre at Pwllpeiran. As my right hon. Friend made clear in his statement on 23 July 1991, *Official Report*, column *454*, ADAS will continue to operate after April 1992 from the existing locations, though the precise number and location of offices required to meet its business needs, and the needs of its clients, are being reviewed. The future development of ADAS in Wales will depend on the business it is able to secure for its customers.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much VAT was paid per annum by a family consisting of a married man on half of average male earnings, his wife, and two children in 1978-79; and what is the most recent estimate.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that reliable estimates of amounts of indirect taxes paid by families are available only for those earning between three quarters and one and a half times average male earnings. Outside this range error margins are too large for estimates to be meaningful.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amounts of VAT paid in Wales during 1990-91; and what is the estimated figure for the current financial year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 3 March 1992]:* Precise figures for VAT paid in Wales are not available, but it is estimated that the contribution to United Kingdom VAT in 1990-91 was around £1½ billion. The estimate for 1991-92 is about £1·3 billion to £1·4 billion.

Car Tax

Mr. Willian Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many persons and companies in Northern Ireland are registered for car tax; and, of these, how many make the vehicles on which tax is due.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Three companies in Northern Ireland are registered for car tax, one of which manufactures chargeable vehicles.

PAYE

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidance he issues on the treatment in the PAYE system of payments made to employees by way of compensation for breach of contract when they are not allowed to work their notice period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The Inland Revenue publication "Employer's Further Guide to Pay As You Earn" gives guidance in section L on the tax treatment of lump sum payments, including payments in lieu of notice, and advises employers who are uncertain about the position on any particular payment to contact their tax office. I have arranged for a copy of the employer's guide to be placed in the Library of the House.

Debtor Countries

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current total of outstanding debt owed to the United Kingdom by each of the groups of countries defined by the World bank as (i) Trinidad-eligible debtors, (ii) other low income debtors and (iii) middle income debtors; and what is the combined debt owed to the United Kingdom by all three groups of countries.

Mr. Maples: The World bank does not define a group of debtor countries eligible for the Trinidad terms. The World bank classifies those countries where per capita income in 1990 was no more than $610 as low-income countries. Middle-income countries are those where per capita income in 1990 was more than $610 but less than $7,620. The amount owed to the United Kingdom Government by the low-income debtors is about £4 billion. This comprises £3·75 billion owed in claims and oustanding interest on those claims owed to the Export Credits Guarantee Department and £¼ billion owed to the Overseas Development Administration. The amount owed to the United Kingdom Government by the middle-income debtors is also about £4 billion, comprising a little over £3½ billion in claims and outstanding interest on those claims owed to the ECGD, and about £350 million owed to the ODA.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what staffing implications were envisaged in 1989 by the board of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise on the implementation of the review of anti-smuggling controls; and what is the current assessment of the staffing implications.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The review of anti-smuggling controls initiated a move away from static controls to controls applied according to risk. No central estimate of the staffing effects of the review was made in 1989. Instead local senior managers were asked to reassess their staffing levels taking account of the principles of the review, the main theme being a move away from the 24 hour rostered attendance to flexible attendance by better-equipped, better-informed anti-smuggling teams—FASTs. FAST attendance depends very much upon an informed assessment of the risk at each location and on account of each movement.

The current assessment of the staffing implications is that between 370 and 396 posts can be saved in the four year period from 1991 to 1995. However, these savings do not represent a net loss to Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and must be viewed in the light of additional posts to be used on anti-smuggling work in connection with the channel tunnel and funds for the provision of extra equipment—£1 million in 1991-92 to 1992-93—extra training—£0·4 million in 1992-93—and extra intelligence gathering—£0·6 million from the seized assets fund in 1992-93. Her Majesty's Customs and Excise is also involved in numerous international initiatives and a further sum of about £125,000 will be provided in 1992-93 as part of the commitment to a European customs information system.

Civil Service Relocation

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what future relocations of Government Departments and agencies are planned *(a)* by which Departments, *(b)* by number of jobs involved and *(c)* to which locations.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The table lists, with likely timings, the plans for relocations or locations away from the south-east which have still to be implemented or completed which Departments and agencies have announced.

Department and dispersal location	*Number of posts*	*Likely timing*
Inland Revenue		
Middlesbrough	185	1991-92
Sunderland	190	1991-92
Barnsley	170	1992
Birkenhead	170	1992
Dundee	160	1992
Falkirk	160	1992
Hull	180	1992
Leicester	160	1992
St. Austell	160	1992
Swansea	165	1992
Wrexham	180	1992
Nottingham	1,800	1992-95
Washington	60	1992-93
	3,740	

Department and dispersal location	*Number of posts*	*Likely timing*
Social Security		
Leeds	662	1992-93
Belfast	500	1993
Birkenhead	500	1993
Dudley	500	1993
Falkirk	500	1993
Plymouth	500	1993
	3,162	
Defence		
Bristol	3,000	1995-96
Home Office		
Ruddington	120	1992
Birmingham	12	1992-93
Derby	1,700	1993-95
	1,832	
Customs and Excise		
Liverpool	1,290	1990-95
Manchester	390	1990-95
Newry	94	1992-93
	1,774	
Employment Group		
Runcorn	400	1990-93
Sheffield	848	1990-93
Aberdeen	85	1992-94
Bootle	56	1992-94
	1,389	
Health		
Leeds	1,200	1992-93
MAFF		
York	1,000	1994-96
Land Registry		
Birkenhead	110	1992-93
York	110	1992-94
	220	
Treasury		
Norwich	200	1992-95
TOTAL	17,517	

Taxation Changes

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average individual cumulative gain *(a)* in cash prices and *(b)* in 1991-92 prices to those earning (i) £5,000, (ii) £10,000, (iii) £15,000, (iv) £20,000, (v) £25,000, (vi) £30,000, (vii) £40,000, (viii) £50,000, (ix) £60,000, (x) £70,000 and (xi) £100,000, as a result of changes in (1) income tax and (2) income tax and national insurance, giving changes since 1979 and 1987, in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* Latest estimates of the reductions in income tax liability resulting from the changes in tax rates, allowances and thresholds are in the table. The 1978-79 and 1987-88 income tax regimes have been indexed to 1991-92 levels by reference to the statutory formula, and allowing for independent taxation.

	Average change in 1991-92 (£)			
	Compared with 1978-79 indexed regime		*Compared with 1987-88 indexed regime*	
Range of individuals income in 1991-92 (£)	*Income Tax*	*Income Tax and National Insurance*	*Income Tax*	*Income Tax and National Insurance*
Under 5,000	110	160	40	70
5,000–10,000	310	290	100	180
10,000–15,000	640	520	170	300
15,000–20,000	970	720	240	380
20,000–25,000	1,370	930	330	470
25,000–30,000	1,830	1,360	420	540
30,000–40,000	2,340	1,880	380	500
40,000–50,000	3,900	3,430	930	1,030
50,000–60,000	6,600	6,150	2,020	2,100
60,000–70,000	10,050	9,590	3,520	3,600
70,000–80,000	13,300	12,800	5,450	5,520
Over 80,000	45,600	45,100	18,800	18,800
Average	1,010	880	310	410

I regret that a reliable analysis of taxpayers with incomes over £100,000 is not available.

For the purpose of the calculations in the first two columns of the table, the indexed regime of 1978-79 has been applied directly to the income base of 1991-92. In practice, retention of the 1978-79 regime, indexed as appropriate, for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Charities (Europe)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration was given to the proposal for a statute for European associations in the preparation of the discussion paper "The Individual and the Community: The Role of the Voluntary Sector".

Mr. John Patten: In preparing this paper, we noted that such a proposal has been made by the European Commission; it is mentioned in part 8.3 on page 40.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official report*, column *93*, whom his Department intends to consult on the proposal for a European Community regulation on the statute for a European association; and when he intends to undertake the consultation.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: We will seek views from the main bodies representing the interests of the voluntary and charitable sectors and will take account of comments from any interested parties. Consultations will begin once the text of the statute has been formally communicated to us.

Hong Kong

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the governor of Hong Kong has yet submitted his first report on the discharge of his functions under the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Governor of Hong Kong submitted his report to me on 3 February 1992. A copy has been placed in the Library.

THE ARTS

Libraries

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many county councils have cut library opening times since 1979.

Mr. Renton: This information is not available. However, the number of libraries open in English counties for over 10 hours a week has increased in the last 10 years by 3·6 per cent. and those open for 10 to 44 hours a week have increased by 4·3 per cent. in some cases, opening hours have been changed to reflect changing needs and also to make better use of resources.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what he expects to be the net expenditure on legal aid and advice in the current financial year and the next two financial years, in cash terms and at 1991-92 prices.

The Attorney-General: Legal aid expenditure for 1991-92, excluding administration, is expected to be around £900 million net. The current provisions for 1992-93 and 1993-94 are £857 million and £885 million respectively, although, in view of the statutory demand-led nature of the fund, additional funds may be requested as necessary. These figures are expressed in cash terms as the legal aid fund is not calculated in constant price figures.

Family Law

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the Government's programme for the reform of family law.

The Attorney-General: During the passage of the Children Bill my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General announced the establishment of an interdepartmental working party to oversee a rolling programme of work directed at improving family law and business. Its terms of reference were particularly directed towards the implementation and operation of the Children Bill. That legislation is now in operation, and my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has decided that the working party's terms of reference should be amended to the following:

The Working Party shall oversee a programme of work directed at improving all aspects of family law and business. In particular, it shall:

- *(a)* oversee, co-ordinate and monitor progress of the review of the family justice system set out below;
- *(b)* report to and advise the Lord Chancellor, the Home Secretary, the Secretaries of State for Health and Social Security, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and other interested Ministers on that review; and
- *(c)* assess and monitor the resources implications.

Review of the family justice system

Responsible Departments shall consider and formulate advice on:

- *(a)* the reform of divorce law and practice, including any part which might be played by conciliation and mediation services and how they might be organised and funded:
- *(b)* the reform of the law governing civil remedies for domestic violence and rights to occupy the family home;
- *(c)* the functions and organisations of the support services in family proceedings;
- *(d)* the reform of adoption law;
- *(e)* the extension of the concurrent jurisdiction of the Magistrates' and county courts and the High Court under the Children Act 1989 to other family proceedings;
- *(f)* the rules governing access to and the reporting of family proceedings;
- *(g)* the rules governing financial and property division on family breakdown;
- *(h)* the law relating to the care and upbringing of children and in particular the future role of wardship, and any matters arising from the operation of the Children Act 1989;
- *(i)* such other reforms of family law as seem appropriate and in particular necessary to the creation of a unified jurisdiction; and;
- *(j)* such other changes in the rules of evidence and procedure as seem desirable to ensure uniform and appropriate means of dealing with family business in all levels of court.

TRANSPORT

East London River Crossing

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider moving the approach road to the east London river crossing from the A2 further to the east to avoid Oxleas wood.

Mr. Chope: The alignment of the road was thoroughly considered at very lengthy public inquiries in 1985-86 and before the then Secretaries of State took their decision in 1988. There are no grounds for re-considering that decision.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if a cut and cover road tunnel south from Shooters Hill to the A2 in Eltham would require land outside the existing orders.

Mr. Chope: No. But the new design would need to be published and could involve a further public inquiry, particularly if it required deletion of the slip roads at Shooters Hill interchange.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the traffic effects of dropping the southern slip roads where Shooters Hill crosses the proposed approach road to the east London river crossing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: This issue was thoroughly considered by the then Secretaries of State in 1988. They concluded that the benefits of a tunnel through part of Oxleas wood did not justify the additional cost and loss of traffic benefits from deletion of the slip roads. No new evidence has emerged which would justify any change to that decision.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the additional net cost of a cut and cover tunnel south from Shooters Hill to the A2 in Eltham if the southern slips were dropped.

Mr. Chope: The estimated additional cost of a cut and cover tunnel about 400 m long would be about £20 million at current prices.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many persons and companies in Northern Ireland who are registered for vehicle excise duty are *(a)* wholesalers and *(b)* retailers.

Mr. Chope: This information is not available. Responsibility for the payment of vehicle excise duty rests on the keeper of the vehicle. The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's register of vehicle keepers does not contain business or occupational details.

A262

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what are his Department's plans for the improvement of the A262 link between the A21 and Ashford; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish the most recent traffic statistics on the A262 between the A21 and Ashford stating when these were measured; and what plans he has for further data collection.

Mr. Chope: Possible improvements along the A262-A28 route between the A21 and Ashford are a matter for Kent county council as the local highway authority responsible for both of these roads.

Last April the consultants preparing a traffic model for the south-east region counted traffic at points on the A262 and A28, and following is the information:

A262 Goudhurst, 23 April 1991—16 hour day (6 am—10 pm)
Eastbound 3,234 vehicles and westbound 3,209 vehicles of which, in each case, some 1·5 per cent. were HGVs.

A28 Tenterden, 26 April 1991—16 hour day (6 am—10 pm)
Eastbound 3,720 vehicles, of which 2·9 per cent. were HGVs.
Westbound 3,663 vehicles, of which 2·6 per cent. were HGVs.

My Department also conducts an on-going national census of traffic covering all major road links on a six year cycle. The next counts for sections of the A262 and A28 are scheduled for 1992 for 1993 respectively.

Market Testing Programme

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list each private sector consultancy firm, which has been retained by each agency within his Department, and for his Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme and whether the appointment in each case was the result of competitive tendering.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) on Monday 2 March 1992, at columns *63-64*.

A1

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusion he has reached as a result of the interdepartmental study on the future of the A1.

Mr. Chope: In a statement issued on 2 March the Secretary of State announced the Government's conclusion that it would be desirable for the A1 to be fully dualled from Newcastle to Edinburgh. Future planning will take this into account.

Bournemouth Central Station

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for the restoration of Bournemouth central station.

Mr. Freeman: I am asking British Rail to review options for the future of Bournemouth station, including options for restoration and the scope for commercial development in partnership with the private sector. As far as funding is concerned, British Rail will have an opportunity to review requirements for the period to 1995-96 in the annual public expenditure round this year.

Railway Investment

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations he has received about the timing of the investment for British Rail's 465 Networkers; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he received the investment submission from British Rail for the 465 Networkers; when the Government made their response to British Rail; and when he expects British Rail to place the order.

Mr. Freeman: I have received a number of representations about BR's class 465 Networkers.

The then Secretary of State received on 10 August 1989 a submission seeking approval in principle for investment in 676 class 465 vehicles. On 31 August 1989 approval in principle was given. Firm authority was given for 400 of these vehicles. The first of these vehicles will be introduced into service with the May timetable.

On 23 January 1991 my right hon. and learned Friend received a submission seeking approval for investment in 86 class 466 vehicles—the 466 is a two-car version of the 465—and in 188 further 465s. My right hon. and learned Friend gave approval for the former on 9 May and BR has ordered these vehicles. My right hon. and learned Friend gave approval for the 188 vehicles on 19 June, but BR is not yet in a position to say when the order for these vehicles will be placed.

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has held with the chairman of British Rail about the placing of the order for the 465 Networkers; and what was the outcome.

Mr. Freeman: I meet the chairman of British Rail regularly to discuss current issues. BR is not yet in a position to say when the order for a further 188 Networker vehicles will be placed. Already some 486 Networker orders have been placed and are under construction at a total cost of £364 million.

Motorways

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of motorway there are in England.

Mr. Chope: There were 1,692 miles of motorway in England at 1 April 1991.

Liverpool Airport

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has had about the future of Liverpool airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: In the past few days we have received correspondence drawing attention to the effect of British Midland's recent decision to end its service between Liverpool and Heathrow. That decision was one for the commercial judgment of the private sector airline concerned. The operation and marketing of Liverpool airport, to encourage airlines to provide services appropriate to meet demand, is a matter for its management.

Company Cars

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest information he has as to *(a)* how many people presently have cars registered in a company's name and *(b)* how many are women and how many are men; and what is the regional distribution of these figures.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* The records kept at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency show that, at 31 December 1990, there were 2,579,000 licensed cars in the PLG tax class registered in a company name. The regional breakdown is as follows:

Number of licensed cars in PLG tax class registered in a company name

Region	*Thousand*
Northern	81
Yorkshire and Humberside	182
East Midlands	168
East Anglia	110
South East	1,012
South Western	174
West Midland	328
North West	280
Scotland	171
Wales	70
Not known	5
Total Great Britain	2,579

No information is available from this source about the sex of the driver.

Subsidies

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the total of capital investment in *(a)* London Underground, *(b)* London Buses, *(c)* Network SouthEast and *(d)* British Rail in each year from 1980-81 to 1994-95 (estimated), showing the financing sources for such subsidy in each year.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* Investment by London Underground is funded by a combination of Government grant and internal resources such as property receipts and contributions from third parties. Grant is not paid separately in respect of London Transport's subsidiaries. It is not possible to apportion particular sources of finance for British Rail and Network SouthEast between investment and other expenditure. Details of overall funding are given in the "Department of Transport Annual Report 1992".

Table 1 shows London Transport investment broken down by London Underground, London Buses and other together with the amounts of Government grant and other funding. Table 2 shows British Rail and Network SouthEast investment levels.

Table 1
London Transport investment and funding

£ million (1990-91 prices)

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	[1] *1984-85*
London Transport investment					
London Underground Limited	141	150	126	161	164
London Buses Limited	90	99	73	89	60
Other[2]	—	—	—	—	20
Funding					
Grant	209	222	194	241	147
Internal resources	13	21	1	5	98

[1] 15-month period.

[2] Includes investment by the DLR, LT Trading, LT Property and LT Central Services.

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Investment					
London Underground Limited	179	219	259	234	328
London Buses Limited	53	46	24	28	30
Other[1]	48	43	73	82	115
Funding					
Grant	262	293	234	192	255
Internal resources	17	15	123	162	218

[1] Includes investment by the DLR, LT Trading, LT Property and LT Central Services.

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
Investment					
London Underground Limited	459	[2]353	Total for London Transport £3·5 billion[3]		
London Buses Limited	28	[2]36			
Other[1]	147	170			
Funding					
Grant	451	[2]503	[4]1,082	[4]1,202	[4]999
Internal resources	183	56			

[1] Includes investment by the DLR, LT Trading, LT Property and LT Central Services.

[2] Forecast outturn.

[3] Estimated.

[4] EFLs announced in 1991 Autumn Statement.

British Rail and NSE investment
1990-91 prices (£ million)

	BR	*NSE*
1980	566	n/a
1981	[2]464	n/a
1982	381	179
1983	378	169
[1]1984-85	399	157
1985-86	542	151
1986-87	559	171
1987-88	672	285
1988-89	682	356
1989-90	776	387
1990-91	834	302
1991-92	[3]950	n/a
1992-93	[4]1,301	n/a
1993-94	n/a	n/a
1994-95	n/a	n/a

[1] 1984-85 was a 15 month period. The figure for investment is a 12 month equivalent.

[2] Figures for 1981 to 1990-91 are for *rail* investment.

[3] DTp estimate.

[4] Ceiling—source: Department of Transport Report 1992.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make arrangements to enable city technology colleges to participate in the schemes for articled and licensed teachers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Licensed teachers are employed in accordance with regulations made under section 218 of the Education Reform Act 1988. By virtue of section 218(12), these regulations do not apply to CTCs. I propose to bring forward legislation when the parliamentary timetable allows to enable CTCs to employ unqualified teachers under a licence leading to the award of qualified teacher status on the same terms and conditions as in maintained and grant-maintained schools.

There is no statutory impediment to CTCs' participating in the articled teacher scheme, which is a pilot programme for the development of school-based teacher training. My officials will be consulting CTCs on how best they can play their part in this and other forms of school-based training.

Sport

Mr. Denis Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his policy for the provision of facilities of excellence for British sports and on the financial arrangements for them.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 3 March 1992]:* Our sports policy statement "Sport and Active Recreation" published in December 1991 identified, among the Government's primary objectives for sport, the achievement of higher standards of performance amongst participants and encouragement to those with potential to excel.

The continued development of the sports councils' national centres of sporting excellence will provide an essential element of this strategy. Responsibility for the centres in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will lie with the home country sports councils, with the United Kingdom Sports Commission controlling the English centres and providing overall co-ordination. To complement these and existing world class local authority sports facilities, the Government's initial investment of £55 million in Manchester's bid to host the millennial Olympics will create major new facilities to encourage sporting excellence.

Human Genome

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom position on patenting of sequences of the human genome.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The United Kingdom Government recognise that work on human genome sequencing has great potential both for the advancement of the understanding of human biology at the most fundamental level and for the delivery of medical advances for the public good. They wish to promote a climate in which the scientific and industrial communities in the United Kingdom and internationally can play a full part in realising that potential, while recognising that there are genuine ethical concerns which must be respected.

It is accepted that research will be most rapidly and effectively progressed in a spirit of full international collaboration. The Government take the view that this would be greatly facilitated by an international agreement that no country should seek patents on genome sequences of unknown utility identified as a result of publicly-funded research. The United Kingdom will pursue an international agreement to that end.

In the absence of such agreement, however, a decision by the United Kingdom Medical Research Council not to seek patents when researchers funded by public bodies in other countries have or may do so could place the United Kingdom at a relative disadvantage. The Medical Research Council has, therefore, decided that it should file patent applications on certain sequences in order to protect the United Kingdom position, while allowing researchers early access to its sequence data. The council has made clear that if and when an international agreement not to patent is reached, it will waive its actual or potential rights in this area.

EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment Costs

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his latest estimate of the overall cost to the Exchequer of unemployment *(a)* in 1991 and *(b)* in 1992.

Mr. Jackson: Figures for calendar years are not available. Gross benefit payments to the unemployed in financial year 1990-91 were £5·04 billion. The cost of administering unemployment benefit was calculated at £182 million for the same period. Administration costs for other benefits paid to the unemployed cannot be separately identified and we do not calculate estimates of foregone tax revenues. The latest estimate of benefit payments to the unemployed for the financial year 1991-92 is £7·36 billion. Departmental plans for 1992-93 currently allow for expenditure in the region of £7·9 billion.

Employees (Statutory Protection)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the statutory provisions relating to *(a)* protection against unfair dismissal, *(b)* rights for those with family responsibilities and *(c)* a right to trade union representation.

Mr. Forth: The information is as follows:

(a) Part V of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 provides employees with protection from unfair dismissal, including dismissal on grounds of pregnancy or membership or non-membership of a trade union. They may have additional protection against dismissal under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Race Relations Act 1976.

(b) The employment protection legislation does not specifically cover family responsibilities as this is an area best left for agreement between companies and their employees to suit individual needs and circumstances. However, women who are pregnant and who satisfy the qualifying conditions are normally protected against unfair dismissal and have the right to return to work after confinement. They also have the right to reasonable paid time off for antenatal care regardless of length of service and hours of work. Employees may have additional rights under the Sex Discrimination Act depending on the circumstances.

(c) There is no statutory right to trade union representation.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the statutory provisions relating to the protection of *(a)* part-time, *(b)* temporary, *(c)* sub-contracted and *(d)* home workers.

Mr. Forth: All workers—that is, those who work under a contract of employment or service or who have a contract personally to execute any work or labour—are protected against discrimination on grounds of race, sex and being married, regardless of whether they are part-time, temporary, sub-contracted or home workers. They are also covered by the provisions of the Equal Pay Act and the Wages Act 1986.

Similarly, all employees—that is, those who work under a contract of employment or service—are protected against discrimination on grounds of trade union membership or non-membership and are entitled to certain payments under the insolvency provisions and to reasonable paid time off for antenatal care.

Employees who are trade union members are also protected against unjustifiable discipline by their trade union and other abuses of union power. Employees who work for at least 16 hours a week are also eligible for the employment protection rights listed in the table, in the same way as full-time employees, provided they satisfy any required qualifying conditions of service. If they work at least eight but fewer than 16 hours a week they can qualify after five years' service.

Written statement of main terms and conditions
Right to itemised pay statement
Right to guarantee payment
Medical suspension provisions
Time off for carrying out trade union duties and for trade union activities
Time off for public duties
Time off to look for work or make arrangements for training
Right to return to work after confinement
Right to notice
Right to written statement of reasons for dismissal
Right not to be unfairly dismissed
Right to redundancy payment

Departmental Measures, Bournemouth

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those measures taken by his Department since 1987 which have benefited employment, training, small businesses and tourism in Bournemouth.

Mr. Jackson: A wide range of measures which benefit employment, training, small businesses and tourism are provided by this Department in Bournemouth, as elsewhere.

The Department funds a wide range of training and enterprise programmes including youth training, employment training, training credits, high technology national training, career development loans, opening learning, the loan guarantee scheme and loan funds of the Prince's Youth Business Trust.

The establishment of the network of 82 training and enterprise councils in England and Wales, and 22 local enterprise companies in Scotland, to plan and deliver training locally, ensures that the needs of the labour market are considered in identifying and targeting training to meet skill needs. The TECs also encourage and support new and existing small businesses through locally tailored counselling and consultancy schemes and the enterprise allowance scheme.

The Government's commitment to the success of the tourist industry includes direct funding of tourist boards, support of the seaside resorts campaign and grants to other organisations such as English Heritage and the Countryside Commission. The relaxations in the liquor licensing laws, the introduction of brown and white signs for tourist attractions, facilities for the disabled, care of the environment and improvements in training are among other measures which are benefiting the industry.

Travel-to-work Areas

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will separate for statistical purposes the Barnstaple and Ilfracombe travel-to-work areas.

Mr. Jackson: A review of all travel-to-work areas will be undertaken when the relevant 1991 census of population data become available in the second half of 1993.

Health and Safety Commission

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which bodies are entitled to nominate candidates to the Health and Safety Commission.

Mr. Forth: No bodies are entitled to nominate candidates to the Commission. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, is required by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to consult such organisations representing employers, employees, local authorities and such other bodies, including professional bodies, as he considers appropriate before making appointments to the commission.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Trade, Hungary

Mr. Andrew MacKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the latest trade figures between the United Kingdom and Hungary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Information on United Kingdom visible trade is regularly published in "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", which is available in the Library of the House.

In 1991 the United Kingdom had a crude trade surplus with Hungary of £28·5 million.

British Technology Group

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the Government's plans for the sale of the British Technology Group.

Mr. Lilley: Following consideration of the final bids, the Government have decided to enter a period of exclusive negotiation with a consortium led by managment and employees and CIN Venture Managers. The terms of their bid maximise the proceeds consistent with the best prospect of the continuation of BTG's existing technology transfer activities. Parliament will be informed of the outcome of the negotiations in the usual way.

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list each private sector consultancy firm which has been retained by each agency within his Department, and for the Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme; and whether the appointment was the result of competitive tendering.

Mr. Leigh: No such consultancy appointments have been made.

London Docklands

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much his Department spent on the promotion of *(a)* London docklands and *(b)* London as a whole in each year from 1980-81 to 1991-92 (estimated).

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* The DTI's Invest in Britain Bureau and English unit actively promote inward investment to the United Kingdom and to the English regions respectively. In dealing with individual enquiries from potential inward investors, the IBB and the DTI south-east regional office can draw attention to particular sites or premises in London docklands or other London locations, as appropriate. The DTI keeps in close touch with the London Docklands development corporation and the economic development units of individual London boroughs. The Invest in Britain Bureau publication "Britain, the Urban Opportunity", carries information about London docklands and other London urban areas. It is not possible to estimate what proportion of DTI's total expenditure on inward investment could be attributed to promotion of London.

Weapons Exports

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions his Department's export control office has had with the German Zollkriminalinstitut in Cologne about the application of the new law, the Kriegswaffenkontrollgesetz, on sensitive export control and how the new arrangements will affect the operation of the single European market.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* The German Kriegswaffenkontrollgesetz, which controls the export of specifically military goods, was last amended in November 1990.

On 23 January this year the Bundestag adopted a new law on export controls which significantly extends the powers of the customs authorities.

The Department's Export Control Organisation has not had formal discussions with the German Zollkriminalinstitut on the application of the new German legislation on sensitive export controls. It is too early to tell how these new controls will affect the operation of the single European market: the EC is currently trying to reduce the number of border controls across the Community.

Additionality

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will indicate whether the Government intend to apply the full additionality criteria for EC funds or whether the money will be top-sliced from existing initiatives.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* I refer to the answers given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment to the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) on 2 March and 28 February respectively, *Official Report*, columns *18-19* and *642*.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list each private sector consultancy firm which has been retained by each agency within his Department, and for his Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme; and whether the appointment was the result of competitive tendering.

Mr. Curry: The Department approached several firms on an informal basis, in order to assess their approach to a step change in market testing.

Further to these discussions, the Department has decided to award a contract covering a preliminary exercise to assist with the selection of areas for more detailed examination.

In view of the small size of this contract, it was felt to be not cost effective to carry out a formal competitive tendering exercise.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those parts of his Department, including executive agencies, carrying out reviews over the last 12 months into the pay and grading of staff; and the firm of consultants engaged, where appropriate.

Mr. Curry: Pay and grading issues are kept under review within the Department and within its executive agencies. KPMG has done some work in relation to ADAS which is due to become an agency on 1 April 1992.

Meat Inspection

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total cost to the industry of inspection charges in Great Britain for *(a)* beef, *(b)* pork, *(c)* lamb and *(d)* poultry meat.

Mr. Maclean: The Government do not collect information on the levels of charges since these are the responsibility of individual local authorities. However, we estimate the total cost to the industry for 1990-91 at about £31 million. Of this amount approximately 73 per cent. relates to red meat and 27 per cent. to white meat. It is not possible to estimate, from the information available to us, the percentage of the red meat costs which relate to beef, pork and lamb.

Model Farm, St. Petersburg

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to commence construction of the model farm near St. Petersburg.

Mr. Curry: A team of British experts will shortly be visiting St. Petersburg to carry out a detailed pre-investment feasibility study on the model farm. Their advice will inform the timetable for further work.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list current and past rates of payment, at 1991 prices, per hectare for each of the environmentally sensitive areas which have been in existence for more than three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: For the current rates of payment, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him earlier today. The former rates of payments in the stage I areas under the schemes which terminated on 31 December 1991 were as follows:

	£
Broads	
Tier 1	125
Tier 2	200
Pennine Dales	
Tier 1	100
Somerset Levels and Moors	
Tier 1	82
Tier 2	120
South Downs	
Tier 1	35
Tier 2—Arable conversion	160
West Penwith	
Tier 1	60

The payments in the former and the revised stage I schemes are not strictly comparable since the revisions to the scheme introduced variations in the conditions and some totally new measures.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the payment per hectare in each environmentally sensitive area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The current payments per hectare in each environmentally sensitive area are as follows.

Areas designated in 1987 (stage I) and revised in 1992

	£
Broads	
Tier 1	125
Tier 2	220
Tier 3	250
Tier 4—Arable reversion	200
Tier 4—Grassland margins	280
Conservation Plan (up to a ceiling of £3,000 over 2 years)	75

	£
Pennine Dales	
Tier 1—Pasture	90
Tier 1—Hay meadows	125
Tier 2	210
Woodland supplement	25
Conservation Plan (up to a ceiling of £3,000 over 2 years)	100
Somerset Levels and Moors	
Tier 1	120
Tier 2	180
Tier 3	350
High water level supplement	70
Conservation Plan (up to a ceiling of £3,000 over 2 years)	75
South Downs	
Tier 1	40
Tier 2	40
Tier 3—Arable reversion to chalk downland	240
Tier 3—Arable reversion to grassland	200
Tier 3—Conservation headlands	60
Conservation Plan (up to a ceiling of £3,000 over 2 years)	75
West Penwith	
Tier 1	65
Conservation Plan (up to a ceiling of £4,000 over 2 years)	100

Areas designated in 1988 (stage II):

		£
Breckland		
Section 1	—	100
Section 2	—	125
Section 3	—Uncropped wildlife strips	300
	—Conservation headlands	100
North Peak		
Tier 1	—	10
Tier 2	—	20
Shropshire Borders		
Tier 1	—	30
Tier 2	—	80
Suffolk River Valleys		
Tier 1	—	70
Tier 2	—	180
Tier 3	—Arable reversion	200
Test Valley		
Tier 1	—	80

The payments in respect of stage I areas will apply to new agreements made in response to applications under the revised schemes introduced on 15 January 1992.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the new environmentally sensitive areas that he intends to designate and how many existing environmentally sensitive areas he intends to expand; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[pursuant to the reply, 11 November 1991, c. 420]:* I am today issuing for public consultation proposals on the boundaries, aims and operation of six new environmentally sensitive areas. They cover:

The Avon Valley (south of Salisbury)
Exmoor
Lake District
North Kent Marshes
South Wessex Downs (Wiltshire and Dorset)
South West Peak

The areas proposed will add some 417,000 hectares to the 387,000 hectares currently within ESAs in England. They vary in character from coastal marshland to mountain and moorland, and include some of Britain's most beautiful countryside and important wildlife habitats. I am making copies of the consultation documents available in the Library of the House.

ESAs help farmers to conserve and enhance special habitats, landscapes and features of historic interest. They have been widely acclaimed by both farmers and environmentalists. I am therefore delighted to be able to announce proposals for this major extension to the farmland covered by ESAs.

The six new schemes covered by the proposals will open for applications in the summer, after the results of the consultation have been analysed and the detailed arrangements finalised. A further six ESAs will be introduced next year.

Farm Shops

Mr. Hind: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his Department's policy towards farm shops attached to farms and smallholdings.

Mr. Curry: In line with our policy of encouraging appropriate forms of farm diversification my Department gives farmers investing in farm shops free advice and grants towards the costs of detailed feasibility studies, capital expenditure and marketing costs.

Coastal Protection, Bournemouth

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much grant aid for coastal protection and beach replenishment has been provided to Bournemouth since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Since 1979, the borough of Bournemouth has received £5·6 million in grant aid for coastal defence works. This sum includes in excess of £1·2 million paid for beach replenishment.

Government funding for flood and coastal defence work in England has risen substantially since 1986-87 and further increases have been agreed as part of the 1991 Public Expenditure Survey. Grant to the National Rivers Authority (flood and sea defence) will rise from £21·6 million in 1990-91 to £48·2 million in 1994-95. For local authority schemes (flood and sea defences and coast protection) the grant available will increase over the same period from £18·2 million to £22·7 million.

Food Labelling

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now take steps further to control the use of nutrition claims in food labelling and advertising, as recommended by the Food Advisory Committee.

Mr. Maclean: Following the continuing absence of proposals from the European Commission, the Government are to consult on further controls on the use of nutrition claims in food labelling and advertising. These controls are based on advice from the Food Advisory Committee.

Nutrition claims can provide a useful source of information for consumers seeking a healthy, balanced, diet but there is a continuing need for them to be fully protected from misleading claims and for all claims to be made on the same basis.

The Government have therefore issued, for consultation, draft regulations to implement the Food Advisory Committee's recommendations as part of its general policy to ensure that consumers are properly informed about the foods they buy and eat.

The draft regulations lay down conditions for making claims such as "low fat", "no added sugar", and "high fibre".

The intention is that these regulations will add the necessary pressure on the Commission to come forward with proposals soon.

I have arranged for a copy of the consultation letter and draft regulations to be placed in the Library of the House.

BSE

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the experimental host range of bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Maclean: It has been known for some time that, under experimental conditions, BSE can be transmitted to a range of species—mice, cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. In most cases, this has been accomplished only by direct inoculation of large doses of infectious material from cows affected with BSE, although mice have also succumbed after being fed with large quantities of infected cattle brain material.

As part of this programme of work designed to clarify the range of species susceptible to BSE, an experiment conducted by the Medical Research Council and MAFF has resulted in BSE being transmitted to a marmoset, following inoculation of cattle brain material derived from a BSE affected cow into its brain and body cavity.

Although it was already known that marmosets were susceptible, under similar artificial laboratory conditions, to other spongiform encephalopathies, the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee, chaired by Dr. David Tyrrell, was immediately asked to advise on the implications of this experiment. The committee concluded that the results of the experiment were not surprising and had no implications for the safeguards already in place for human and animal health. I am arranging for a copy of this advice to be placed in the Library of the House.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Agriculture Council held on 2 and 3 March.

Mr. Gummer: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting of the Council accompanied by my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) Parliamentary Secretary in my Department.

Discussion concentrated on the proposals for reform of the CAP. The presidency presented a new compromise document which was, however, seriously questioned by most delegations, among them the United Kingdom. After an initial table round the President concluded that a satisfactory basis for continuing negotiations at this meeting did not exist. Discussions will continue at official level and the President suggested the Council might come back to this dossier at its next meeting on 30-31 March.

In an informal joint meeting with trade ministers consideration was given to draft schedules on agricultural support and protection, drawn up by the Commission for submission in Geneva as a Community contribution to the current GATT negotiations. The Commission said that it would probably submit these schedules later this week, taking account of points made in discussion.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he proposes any changes relating to occupational pensions.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement that my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State made to the House on 27 February 1992 at columns 1131-38.

Departmental Staff

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those parts of his Department, including executive agencies, carrying out reviews over the last 12 months into the pay and grading of staff and the firm of consultants engaged, where appropriate.

Miss Widdecombe: The Benefits Agencies (BA), Contributions Agency (CA) and Information Technology Services Agency (ITSA) have been carrying out reviews into the pay and grading of staff. CA and ITSA received limited assistance from, respectively, Price Waterhouse and PA Consulting.

Social Fund

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the total amount of money paid out from the social fund by his Department's local offices in the London borough of Wandsworth; and how many people received payments.

Mr. Scott: Such information as is available is in the Library.

Pensioners' Costs

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update the figures on pensioners' expenditure in the regions given in his answer of 13 March 1991, *Official Report,* columns *536-37* to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan, (Mr. Salmond).

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* The information for 1989, the latest year available on this basis, is in the table:

1. Pensioners' average weekly annual expenditure 1989

Fuel, light and power	*£ per week*
Region	
North	8·12
Yorkshire and Humberside	8·20
East Midlands	8·50
East Anglia	8·10

Fuel, light and power	*£ per week*
Greater London	7·70
South East, excluding London	[1]8·60
South West	7·60
Wales	8·50
West Midlands	9·30
North West	[1]9·60
Scotland	9·30
Northern Ireland	[1]11·60
All United Kingdom	8·50
2. Pensioners' average weekly winter expenditure 1989	
North	[1]8·40
Yorkshire and Humberside	[1]9·40
East Midlands	[1]8·70
East Anglia	[1]8·40
Greater London	[1]8·50
South East, excluding London	[1]9·90
South West	[1]8·40
Wales	9·40
West Midlands	[1]10·30
North West	[1]10·10
Scotland	[1]9·30
Northern Ireland	[1]10·10
All United Kingdom	9·20

Notes:

1. The tables are based on data from the Family Expenditure Survey for 1989.
2. Estimates marked with [1] are derived from samples smaller than 100 units. They are, therefore, less reliable than the other data presented and should be treated with caution.
3. The figures are for pensioner households which are defined as those occupied by one pensioner tax unit only. This may be a single pensioner or a couple where the head of the tax unit is over pensionable age.
4. The regions shown are the standard breakdown. Any further disaggregation could not be supported by sample sizes.
5. Winter has been defined as the five months of the year when higher fuel bills might be paid (January to May).
6. Figures will be affected by the receipt of rebates relating to earlier periods.

Income Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many income support claimants had mortgage interest included in assessment of income support; what was the annual equivalent mortgage interest included in assessment of income support for each year since 1979 for assessments during the first 16 weeks of the claim, and others beyond that period; and what is his estimate of the current number of claimants affected, and the current total amount of mortgage interest included.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* The table gives estimates from 1979 to 1990, the latest year for which information is available:

Year	*Number of claimants receiving help with mortgage interest (000's)*	*Amount includes in assessments £ million*
1979	98	—
1980	134	—
1981	196	—
1982	235	—
1983	242	—
1984	277	219
1985	[1]—	[1]—
1986	356	351
1987	334	335

Year	*Number with half mortgage interest*	*Amount £*	*Number with full mortgage interest*	*Amount £*
1988	38	33	262	253
1989	30	34	251	319
1990	40	71	270	483

Source: Supplementary Benefit/Income Support Statistical Enquiries 1979-1990.

[1]: No enquiry was undertaken for 1985.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Roads Budget

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he plans to take to ensure that funds are allocated to the roads budget which will enable major reconstruction to take place.

Mr. Needham: Following the recent announcement of the Government expenditure plans, more than £140 million has been allocated in each of the next three years to maintain and improve the road system, with priority being given to maintenance work.

Air Quality, Belfast

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the air quality results for central Belfast, for January, June, October and December each year from 1985 to the present for carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and low level ozone and any other relevant measurements for which he has results.

Mr. Needham: Carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide and low-level ozone have not been monitored in Belfast to date, although carbon monoxide and ozone are to be included amongst the pollutants measured at a new city centre monitoring station which will come into operation shortly.

Sulphur dioxide is monitored at nine sites throughout Belfast, including the city centre, by the Warren Spring laboratory and Belfast city council. Smoke levels are also measured. The results from April to March are published annually. The figures for the months requested are set out in the table, and include provisional, unpublished data for June, October and December 1991.

Average Concentrations of Sulphur Dioxide (SO_2) and Smoke Recorded at College Street, Belfast Between 1986 and 1991

CONC (UG/M^3)	January	June	October	December
1985				
SO_2	108	44	63	60
Smoke	73	16	66	48
1986				
SO_2	69	37	44	57
Smoke	40	10	22	50
1987				
SO_2	96	49	77	117
Smoke	59	23	47	85
1988				
SO_2	91	37	NRR	NRR
Smoke	48	12	NRR	NRR
1989				
SO^2	N	23	42	122
Smoke	N	13	27	106
1990				
SO_2	58	23	37	99
Smoke	39	5	25	77
1991				
SO_2	68	[1]20	[1]32	[1]36
Smoke	37	[1]13	[1]13	[1]41

N = indicates sampling criteria not met—usually due to a shortage of daily results.

NRR = no results were received for that month.

[1] = provisional data—not yet published.

Source:— Warren Spring Laboratory, Summary Tables.

Training Schemes

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the latest information he has about the number of people who are participating in *(a)* the youth training programme, *(b)* the job training programme, *(c)* the enterprise allowance scheme and *(d)* job clubs.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Youth training programme—14,702 trainees at 31 January 1992.

Job training programme—3,559 trainees at 31 January 1992.

Enterprise allowance scheme—752 participants at 21 February 1992.

Job clubs—3,286 participants during the period 1 April 1991 to 31 January 1992.

ACE

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at the latest available date how many people were employed on action for community employment; how many of them were employed part-time or full-time; and how many were *(a)* male or *(b)* female.

Mr. Needham: At 21 February, 5,128 men and 4,522 Women were employed on ACE. Of these, 4,375 men and 1,744 women were in full-time employment and 753 men and 2,778 women were employed part time.

Sheltered Housing

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many sheltered dwellings have been built in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years; and if he will break down the figure by constituency.

Mr. Needham: The information for publicly-funded dwellings, all of which were built by registered housing associations, is set out in the table. There are no statistics held centrally on the number of sheltered dwellings built by the private sector.

Sheltered dwellings built

Constituency	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	[1]1991-92
Antrim East	67	35	—	—	—
Antrim North	—	49	—	—	31
Antrim South	—	—	23	—	—
Belfast East	—	51	—	30	25
Belfast North	40	—	45	—	31
Belfast South	37	—	—	—	—
Belfast West	—	31	40	—	72
Down North	31	35	—	92	—
Down South	41	43	—	—	25

Constituency	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	[1]1991-92
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	23	—	—	61	—
Foyle	59	39	—	51	62
Lagan Valley	—	39	23	—	—
Londonderry East	44	40	23	26	—
Mid Ulster	—	23	29	—	24
Newry and Armagh	—	—	—	—	—
Strangford	—	27	—	41	36
Upper Bann	34	40	105	31	38
Total	376	452	288	332	344

[1] Figures for 1991-92 are estimated.

Teachers

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many teachers have been unemployed in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Unemployed claimants who last worked in the teaching profession January 1987-1992

	Number
January 1987	1,693
January 1988	1,573
January 1989	1,521
January 1990	1,285
January 1991	1,147
January 1992	1,311

Belfast Airport

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *644*, on which dates the Conservative party hired the facilities at Belfast international airport; on which dates the Conservative party was issued with invoices for the hire rental; and if all rents have been paid by the Conservative party.

Mr. Needham: I am informed by the management of Northern Ireland Airports Ltd. that the Conservative party hired the facilities at Belfast international airport on 1 June 1991 and on 1 February 1992. The invoices for the hire rental were issued on 1 June 1991 and 1 February 1992 respectively and both invoices were paid promptly.

Squatters

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were occupying Housing Executive properties without a tenancy agreement in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I am advised by its chief executive that the number of Housing Executive properties occupied without a tenancy agreement at 31 March in the years 1988 to 1991 was as follows:

	Number
1988	932
1989	838
1990	736
1991	592

The number of such properties at 31 December 1991 was 589.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many squatters have been evicted by the Housing Executive in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I am advised by its chief executive that one squatter was evicted by the Housing Executive during each of the following years: 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90. No squatters were evicted during 1990-91, but two were evicted during 1991-92 (up to 31 December 1991).

Housing Council

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of the members of the Northern Ireland housing council; on how many occasions the council has met during the past three years; and how many of these meetings were attended by each member of the council.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Number of recorded meetings of the Northern Ireland Housing Council

District council	Members	1989	1990	1991
		8	11	10
			Attendance	
Antrim	S. Dunlop	2 (4)	—	—
	J. Allen	3 (4)	10	10
Ards	H. J. S. Gibson	1 (4)	—	—
	D. S. Smyth	3 (4)	8	8
Armagh	J. Speers	7	9	9
Ballymena	A. Spence	8	8	9
Ballymoney	W. J. Logan	8	11	10
Banbridge	S. Cowan	4 (4)	—	—
	J. Dobson	3 (4)	5	6
Belfast	S. Wilson	2	5	0
Carrickfergus	S. J. Stewart	[1]2 (4)	9	9
Castlereagh	W. Abraham	2 (4)	3 (6)	—

		1989	*1990*	*1991*
		8	*11*	*10*
District council	*Members*		*Attendance*	
	I. Robinson	—	3 (5)	4
	J. Clarke	0 (4)	—	—
Cookstown	A. Kane	4	5	6
Coleraine	P. Armitage	5	6	7
Craigavon	S. Cairns	5	10	4
Derry	S. T. Carlin	3 (4)	—	—
	G. Peoples	4 (4)	9	10
Down	W. Brown	4 (4)	—	—
	E. O'Neill	4 (4)	8	6
Dungannon	M. Morrow	2	6	5
Fermanagh	T. Maguire	0 (4)	—	—
	C. McClaughry	0 (1)	—	—
	W. C. Noble	3 (3)	10	10
Larne	T. Baxter (deceased)	0 (1)	—	—
	J. McKee	0 (2)	—	—
	R. McKee	[1]	11	9
Limavady	S. Gault	7	8	9
Lisburn	W. Belshaw	6	3	5
Magherafelt	M. McSorley	7	9	10
Moyle	A. P. McConaghy	4 (4)	—	—
	G. Kane	4 (4)	10	7
Newry/Mourne	J. McCart	4 (4)	—	—
	A. Ruddy	4 (4)	7	7
Newtownabbey	J. Smith (deceased)	5	7 ([1]9)	[1]0
	W. Snoddy	—	—	2 (4)
	A. Beattie	—	—	5 (5)
North Down	D Vitty	2 (4)	2 (5)	—
	G. Green	3 (4)	5 (5)	10
Omagh	C. McFarland	3 (4)	3 (5)	5 (6)
	B. McGrath	2 (4)	—	—
	L. McQuaid	—	2 (6)	0 (4)
Strabane	I. Barr	0 (3)	—	—
	E. Turner	4 (5)	11	8

Note: Figures in parenthesis show the possible number of meetings which the member could have attended during the period of appointment.

[1] indicates that the District Council did not appoint a representative for a period of time.

Environmental Impact Assessments

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to encourage the use of independent bodies to undertake environmental impact assessments.

Mr. Needham: None.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many environmental impact assessments have been *(a)* undertaken and *(b)* brought to a conclusion in Northern Ireland; how many in each case were carried out by (i) the developer (ii) an independent body and (iii) his Department; and how many of the conclusions reached by (1) the independent body and (2) his Department have been at variance with the assessments carried out by the developer.

Mr. Needham: Twenty environmental impact assessments (EIAs) have been undertaken, of which 13 have been brought to a conclusion.

In all cases the developer provided an environmental statement which was considered by the relevant Department. No independent body was involved. No case where an EIA was carried out has been refused.

Environmental Issues

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide an update for the table on page xv of the Environment Committee's first report of Session 1990-91 entitled, "Environmental Issues in Northern Ireland", providing a list of known legislative commitments for the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: Copies of the legislative programme prepared by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland during February 1992 have been placed in the Library.

Environmental Protection Agency

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to establish an environmental protection agency in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: When details of the proposed agency in England and Wales are available careful consideration will be given as to whether or not any proposals for change in Northern Ireland should also be made.

Job Creation

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show for each of the last six years and the current year the number of jobs created and the number of firms setting up in Northern Ireland, indicating how many in each year were the result of investment from outside Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The figures for jobs promoted by the industrial development agencies for the last six financial years are as follows:

	Total jobs promoted	Jobs promoted through inward investment
Industrial Development Board		
1985-86	2,910	224
1986-87	4,187	415
1987-88	5,300	867
1988-89	5,653	1,856
1989-90	5,131	1,977
1990-91	4,402	1,294
Local Enterprise Development Unit		
1985-86	3,888	n.a.
1986-87	4,244	n.a.
1987-88	4,047	n.a.
1988-89	4,581	n.a.
1989-90	5,510	n.a.
1990-91	6,004	n.a.

The number of firms setting up in Northern Ireland as indicated by VAT registrations over the past six calendar years are as follows:

	Number
1985	3,700
1986	3,300
1987	3,400
1988	3,600
1989	3,900
1990	3,600
1991	n.a.

n.a. = Not available.

The place of origin of a firm and the initial number of jobs created cannot be determined from VAT returns.

Dental Practitioners

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements are being made to provide regular continued training in resuscitation techniques for general dental practitioners as recommended in the Poswillo report; and what funding is being provided for such training.

Mr. Hanley: The Department of Health and Social Services will be entering into discussions shortly with the Northern Ireland Council for Postgraduate Medical Education on the nature, extent and cost of the training required for dentists and their teams as recommended in the Poswillo report. The resource implications of this training have not yet been quantified and no funds have been allocated.

Vehicle Imports

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in each of the last three financial years and the current year, how many new motor vehicles have been imported into Northern Ireland from the Irish Republic.

Mr. Needham: The information set out in the table relates to new vehicles registered for the first time on importation to Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland.

	Number
1988-89	305
1989-90	145
1990-91	120
[1]1991-92	183

[1] To end of January.

Planning Proposals

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining what redress is available to an objector whose duly submitted and duly acknowledged objection was not known to, or considered by, the relevant planning officers when making their decision on a planning application.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 March 1992]:* In such circumstances the objector could lodge a complaint with the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration for Northern Ireland who may carry out an investigation. The objector could also make application to the courts for leave to apply for a judicial review of the Department's decision.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the standards promised by the citizens charter and their relevance to the treatment of planning proposals and objections by the planning service, development offices and road services.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 March 1992]:* The citizens charter is about providing a high standard of public service. Accordingly, the Department of the Environment has adopted an objective of normally consulting district councils on planning applications within eight weeks.

In determining applications, the Department considers objections and has regard to the development plan and other material considerations.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement clarifying where responsibility lies for ensuring liaison or co-ordination between the different offices and services of the Department of the Environment when they are each involved in particular development proposals.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 March 1992]:* Responsibility for such matters rests with the Permanent Secretary of the Department.

Retirement Pensions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give at 1991-92 prices the gross cost of uprating the retirement pension by average earnings, whole economy, in each year since 1980-81.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* The estimated costs are as follows:

Financial year	*Gross cost (£ million)*
November 1980-81	3
November 1981-82	11
November 1982-83	14
November 1983-84	16
November 1984-85	30
November 1985-86	34

Financial year	*Gross cost (£ million)*
November 1986-87	53
November 1987-88	78
November 1988-89	95
November 1989-90	114
November 1990-91	123
November 1991-92	126

HEALTH

Hospital Costs, Merseyside

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost to the Mersey regional health authority for a patient spending a week in hospital.

Mr. Dorrell: Financial returns submitted to the Department by district health authorities in the Mersey region for 1990-91 indicate the average treatment cost for all specialties to be approximately £80 per bed day (i.e. in-patients and day care).

This figure is provisional. It covers all direct clinical and diagnostic costs but excludes expenditure on support and hotel services.

Dental Fillings

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will initiate an education campaign to warn patients of the potential health implications of leaching mercury from amalgam fillings in teeth;

(2) what advice he makes available for dentists and the general public as to the safe level of mercury which can be absorbed from leaching amalgam fillings;

(3) when a product licence was issued for mercury for use in the manufacture of dental amalgams;

(4) what is the quantity of mercury that has been planted in teeth in the United Kingdom for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Dorrell: Current advice from the committee of toxicity is that the use of dental amalgam is free from the risk of systematic toxicity and only a few cases of hypersensitivity occur. Dental mercury is not a medicinal product, and a product licence is not required. Information is not available on the quantity of mercury planted in teeth in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence he has indicating that mercury from dental amalgam fillings are capable of compromising the immune system, reducing total T-cells by a substantial percentage.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no such evidence.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give guidance to health authorities on the advertising of senior posts in order to promote equal opportunities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will recommend health trusts to advertise all vacant senior posts in order to promote equal opportunities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The NHS is committed to equal opportunities in employment. Individual appointments are a matter for the relevant employing authorities, who are aware that we expect that all NHS posts, including those at senior level, should normally be advertised and openly competitive.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many senior posts in the NHS between April and December 1991 were filled by means other than by open advertisement; how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were appointed to these posts; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

GP Training

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many course organisers for general practitioner trainees were employed in 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991 and for the most recent point in 1992; what was the cost of employing such course organisers; and to which part of the national health service budget these costs are charged.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The table gives the numbers of course organisers employed in 1990 and 1991. Figures for 1988, 1989 and 1992 are not available.

	Course organisers (England)
1 October 1990	326
1 October 1991	330

The twenty-second report of the Review Body on Doctors and Dentists Remuneration estimated that the cost of employing 368 course organisers in England and Wales was £1·56 million per annum. The cost of employing course organisers is at present part of the general medical services budget. In line with the recommendation of the review body, this sum will be transferred to a medical education budget in April this year.

Dentists

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from the General Dental Service Committee concerning the proposed payment system for dentists.

Mr. Dorrell: The proposed increase in target net income of 8·5 per cent. which was recommended by the Doctors and Dentists Review Body (DDRB) was accepted by the Government. To ensure that the level at which fees are pitched in the coming year will deliver this proposed increase in dentists' net income, the Health Departments consulted the General Dental Services Committee (GDSC). Following discussions between the GDSC and the Health Departments agreement was reached to hold a joint inquiry to review the level of payments to dentists in 1991-92, the results of which will be considered by the Health Departments and the GDSC in May when they reconsider the appropriate fee scale for 1992-93; simultaneously, they will begin a more fundamental review of the structure of dentists' remuneration.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists in the Durham area have indicated that they will no longer treat people aged 18 to 64 years who are not eligible for free service.

Mr. Dorrell: Last September we asked family health services authorities to conduct on our behalf a sample survey of 20 per cent. of dentists on their dental lists. All the dentists in Durham who took part in the survey indicated they would continue NHS treatment for adults, including those who pay charges.

Whitley Nursing Agreements

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many national health service trusts have agreed to opt out of the Whitley agreements in relation to nursing staff; and what is the total of nursing staff involved overall.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Departmental Staff

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for health if he will list those parts of his Department, including executive agencies, carrying out reviews over the last 12 months into the pay and grading of staff and the firm of consultants engaged, where appropriate.

Mr. Dorrell: A study into the pay and career structure in the Medicines Control Agency is currently being conducted by consultants Price Waterhouse.

Hip Operations

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients awaiting hip operations were on the waiting list of Leighton hospital, Crewe, in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Waiting time information on individual hospitals is not collected centrally.

Market Testing Programme

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list each private sector consultancy firm which has been retained by each agency within his Department, and for his Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme; and whether the appointment in each case was the result of competitive tendering.

Mr. Dorrell: One consultancy firm has been retained by the Department to advise on the market testing programme; it is KPMG Management Consulting which was appointed as a result of competitive tendering.

Neither of the agencies within the Department have retained any consultancy firms to advise on the programme.

Diabetics

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which health authorities provide Novapen needles free to diabetics.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Nurseries

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each local authority *(a)* the number of local authority-provided day nursery places and *(b)* the number of places in registered day nurseries and express these as a percentage of all children aged under five in the local authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested on the number of places in local authority and registered day nurseries is published in "Children Day Care Facilities, England". The latest publication is for March 1991 and is provisional, a copy of which is available in the Library. These numbers expressed as a rate per 1,000 children under five in the local authority are set out in the table.

Places in day nurseries at 31 March 1991 as a rate per 1,000 children under five

Local authority	*Places in local authority day nurseries rate per 1,000 population*	*Places in registered day nurseries rate per 1,000 population*
Cleveland	6·62	28·24
Cumbria	4·97	19·79
Durham	3·92	8·30
Northumberland	2·21	3·31
Gateshead	12·32	18·56
Newcastle upon Tyne	9·61	11·86
North Tyneside	18·02	1·72
South Tyneside	10·31	6·11
Sunderland	15·06	4·08
Humberside	0·00	55·58
North Yorkshire	0·00	31·88
Barnsley	0·00	4·87
Doncaster	2·45	9·24
Rotherham	0·00	0·68
Sheffield	10·88	11·38
Bradford	14·99	18·01
Calderdale	4·41	61·04
Kirklees	5·64	27·10
Leeds	26·60	16·80
Wakefield	0·94	15·76
Cheshire	7·23	34·85
Lancshire	16·94	31·31
Bolton	9·80	42·49
Bury (1990)	8·93	30·21
Manchester (1990)	37·54	13·83
Oldham	13·51	21·81
Rochdale	20·43	23·17
Salford	27·52	11·81
Stockport	2·14	15·56
Tameside	29·03	9·06
Trafford	18·37	48·81
Wigan	11·89	19·30
Knowsley	0·00	7·93
Liverpool	26·51	30·80
Sefton	15·35	24·83
St. Helens	3·41	12·28
Wirral	10·61	21·66
Hereford and Worcester	2·91	29·10
Shropshire	0·00	25·86
Staffordshire	5·97	37·92
Warwickshire	0·00	27·48
Birmingham	19·64	32·73
Coventry	17·52	25·95
Dudley	0·00	17·56
Sandwell	0·00	18·90
Solihull	0·00	34·14
Walsall	6·55	1·91
Wolverhampton	14·07	7·18
Derbyshire	8·02	13·03
Leicestershire	11·29	20·54
Lincolnshire	2·12	18·47
Northamptonshire	2·68	42·83
Nottinghamshire	7·57	16·63
Bedfordshire	7·28	28·99
Berkshire	0·00	33·50

Local authority	*Places in local authority day nurseries rate per 1,000 population*	*Places in registered day nurseries rate per 1,000 population*
Buckinghamshire	0·00	18·13
Cambridgeshire	3·69	19·42
Essex	2·76	21·13
Hertfordshire	0·00	0·18
Norfolk	0·00	25·63
Oxfordshire	0·95	22·88
Suffolk	0·41	12·88
Camden	41·48	95·39
Greenwich	25·82	11·31
Hackney	33·49	30·85
Hammersmith	31·14	37·43
Islington (1989)	54·40	40·00
Kensington	44·02	129·74
Lambeth	38·73	36·02
Lewisham	20·18	27·28
Southwark	36·76	32·95
Tower Hamlets	29·24	13·73
Wandsworth	37·55	106·49
Westminster	42·74	55·48
City of London	622·22	1,111·11
Barking	15·19	9·67
Barnet	14·63	1·57
Bexley	2·98	12·40
Brent	18·52	63·80
Bromley	0·00	21·27
Croydon	6·91	14·80
Ealing	17·06	26·14
Enfield	0·00	2·41
Haringey	19·34	39·89
Harrow	6·29	5·92
Havering	10·52	11·13
Hillingdon	12·04	30·17
Hounslow	11·47	27·56
Kingston upon Thames	9·27	32·45
Merton	8·63	7·50
Newham	13·16	5·79
Redbridge	0·00	19·20
Richmond upon Thames	12·05	25·83
Sutton	5·72	43·56
Waltham Forest	17·15	13·54
Hampshire	0·00	0·00
Isle of Wight	13·06	0·00
Kent	0·24	47·11
Surrey	1·07	14·87
East Sussex	0·00	41·04
West Sussex	0·00	26·17
Avon	9·40	29·25
Cornwall	0·00	11·17
Devon	0·00	20·46
Dorset	3·58	16·65
Gloucester	2·86	38·32
Isles of Scilly	0·00	0·00
Somerset (1990)	3·27	27·06
Wiltshire	0·00	7·51

Note: Where an authority has not made a return for 31 March 1991 the most recent years return has been quoted and the year of return shown in brackets.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will detail the number of child minders registered by local authorities and the number of places available with child minders, for each year since 1979 to date;

(2) if he will detail the number of places in local authority day nurseries for each year since 1979 to date;

(3) if he will detail the number of registered day nursery places for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is set out in the table:

Day care provision at 31 March in England

Year	*Number of registered child minders*	*Number of places with registered child minders*	*Number of places in LA day nurseries*	*Number of places in registered day nurseries*
1979	[1]—	[1]—	28,313	22,381
1980	[1]—	[1]—	28,437	22,017
1981	[1]—	[1]—	28,252	22,031
1982	44,145	98,495	28,383	21,131
1983	47,912	106,429	28,630	21,889
1984	53,041	116,331	28,872	23,124
1985	58,390	126,847	28,904	25,242
1986	64,160	137,732	28,920	27,923
1987	69,244	150,643	28,880	30,867
1988	74,588	163,700	28,951	36,252
1989	83,904	186,356	28,789	45,026
1990	93,074	205,567	27,978	57,669
1991	103,300	229,800	26,900	76,600

[1] Information about child minders for years 1979 to 1981 is not reliable.

Data for 1991 are provisional.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *108*, when he expects the electoral registration figures for each parliamentary constituency in England and Wales to become available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Statistics relating to the 1992 electoral registers are still being collected by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys from local electoral registration officers. An OPCS monitor containing all constituency electorate figures which have been received and verified will be published before the general election.

Compensation

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) in the last five years how many awards there have been for compensation from national health service hospitals and trusts because of negligence with radiotherapy exposure;

(2) which regional health authorities have set up pooling schemes to share the burden of large compensation awards between health districts in the region;

(3) if he will list regional health authorities in rank order according to *(a)* the number of negligence awards made against them and *(b)* the total amount of the negligence awards in the last year for which figures are available;

(4) in 1991, which district health authorities had awards against them totalling more than *(a)* £1 million and *(b)* £2 million for negligent death or damage to their patients;

(5) what was the total amount of compensation for negligence awards made against all district health authorities in each of the last five years, including awards made against national health service doctors insured by the medical defence organisations;

(6) how much extra money has been allocated to the regional health authorities to meet the cost of negligence awards after the introduction of crown indemnity on 1 January 1990.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 3 March 1992]:* Information is not currently held centrally about the numbers, the type of damage and the level of settlements arising in connection with medical negligence which would enable the Department to single out specialties or to rank regional health authorities in order of payments. The Department in consultation with NHS Management, is reviewing arrangements for the central collection and publication of improved figures from the NHS with regard to the number of claims for medical negligence, contingent liability and settlements.

Between the introduction of NHS indemnity on 1 January 1990 and March 1991 it is estimated that English health authorities spent about £60 million on costs associated with legal claims for negligence against doctors and dentists in NHS hospitals. This includes payments of damages to plaintiffs, legal and other fees, and in-house expenses. Information is not available prior to January 1990 when these liabilities were borne by the medical defence organisations.

The Government provided substantial extra resources to the NHS which should help health authorities to meet the costs of medical negligence. In addition the NHS has access to funds set up by the medical defence organisations as part of the agreements when these liabilities were passed to the NHS. Between January 1990 and March 1991 payments of some £9 million were authorised from these medical defence organisation funds. Most regional health authorities operate pooling or other arrangements to assist district health authorities with the cost of large settlements and are keeping these under review in the light of experience.

Hospital Discharges and Deaths

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital discharges or deaths have occurred in England, in the age groups up to four years and five to 14 years, in the international classification of diseases (ICD) categories, in each of the years 1986 to 1991, *(a)* acute glomerulonephritis, *(b)* 581 nephrotic syndrome, *(c)* 582 chronic glomerulonephritis, *(d)* 583 nephritis and nepropathy, *(e)* 584 acute renal failure, *(f)* 997.5 acute postoperative renal failure, *(g)* 585 chronic renal failure, *(h)* 779.80 chronic renal failure in newborn, *(i)* 586 renal failure (unspecified), *(j)* 788.9 uraemia, *(k)* 587 renal sclerosis, *(l)* 590 infections of kidney, *(m)* 591 hydronephrosis, *(n)* 753.2 congenital hydronephrosis, *(o)* 753.1 congenital cyst of kidney, *(p)* 593·6 postural proteinuria,
(q) 593.7 vesicoureteric reflux, *(r)* 595 cystitis, *(s)* 599.0 urinary tract infection, site not specified and *(t)* 599.7 haematuria.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 3 March 1992]:* The information available centrally is given in the table.

Estimated numbers of ordinary and day case admissions: Completed episodes by main diagnosis in NHS hospitals in England

ICD code		*1989-90*	
		0-4 years	*5-14 years*
580. Acute glomerulonephritis	Male	8	33
	Female	13	19
581. Nephrotic syndrome	Male	218	294
	Female	134	143
582. Chronic glomerulonephritis	Male	0	15
	Female	0	8
583. Nephritis and nephropathy, not specified as acute or chronic	Male	34	138
	Female	18	81
584. Acute renal failure	Male	19	13
	Female	13	6
585. Chronic renal failure	Male	83	143
	Female	20	109
586. Renal failure unspecified	Male	23	14
	Female	14	69
587. Renal sclerosis unspecified	Male	0	16
	Female	1	6
590. Infections of kidney	Male	30	63
	Female	41	149
591. Hydronephrosis	Male	122	83
	Female	48	27
593.6. Postural proteinuria	Male	1	0
	Female	0	0
593.7. Vesicoureteric reflux	Male	259	89
	Female	177	193
595. Cystitis	Male	5	13
	Female	5	36
599.0. Urinary tract infection, site not specified	Male	2,293	1,019
	Female	2,804	1,706
599.7. Haematuria	Male	109	455
	Female	59	118
753.1. Cystic kidney disease	Male	231	16
	Female	65	6
753.2. Obstructive defects of renal pelvis and ureter	Male	566	50
	Female	179	28
779.8. Other (other and ill-defined conditions originating in the perinatal period)	Male	882	0
	Female	636	0
788.9. Other (symptoms involving urinary system)	Male	13	17
	Female	10	12
997.5. Urinary complications	Male	30	21
	Female	2	1

Source: Hospital episodes statistics.

Administration Expenditure

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the amount of administration expenditure by his Department in each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 18 February 1992]:* Net current expenditure for the years 1986-87 to 1991-92, as published in the Departmental Report (Cm. 1913, table 3), is as follows. The figures for 1986-87 to 1988-89 are an estimated apportionment to the Department of Health in the period before the split of DHSS. Comparable figures for earlier years are not available.

Outturn	*£ millions*
1986-87	139
1987-88	144
1988-89	153
1989-90	166
1990-91	201
[1]1991-92	235

[1] Estimated outturn.

The increased expenditure in 1990 and 1991-92 is accounted for as follows:

	£ million *1990-91*
Changes in charging basis for Accommodation costs	6·3
Real rises in accommodation and related costs	7·0
Pay and price inflation	13·2
NHS review	5·6
Other	3·0
	35·1

	1991-92
Pay and price inflation	13·4
Accommodation and related costs	7·0
Relocation to Leeds	9·5
Other	4·2
	34·1

Dental Health Projects

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish in tabular form details of all dental health projects receiving funding from his Department; and if he will specify the nature and duration of each project, the name of the principal researchers and the institution at which the work is being carried out.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* The Department is currently funding the following dental health related research projects:

Project	*Duration*	*Research director*	*Institution*
1. Dental needs of an ageing population	1 December 1990 to 30 November 1993	Dr. A. W. G. Walls	Newcastle university
2. A clinical study to evaluate a simple radiographic quality assurance programme in general dental practice	1 June 1991 to 30 September 1992	Mrs. V. E. Rushton	Manchester university
3. The changing pattern of use and difficulties associated with the use of non-sterile gloves in general dental practice	17 April 1989 to 30 September 1992	Mr. F. J. T. Burke	Manchester university
4. A qualitative assessment of the laboratory stages of complete denture construction	1 September 1990 to 29 February 1992	Dr. Barsby Dr. Schwarz	London hospital medical college

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EC Developments

17. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had in the foreign affairs troika of the EC about EC developments and initiatives for the remainder of 1992.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Troika discussions cover political co-operation and other intergovernmental business, such as justice/home affairs. We have regular discussions with the Portuguese presidency and with the Dutch on these issues.

Human Rights

18. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures Her Majesty's Government take to promote respect for human rights abroad.

Mrs. Chalker: Her Majesty's Government make frequent representations on human rights both bilaterally and jointly with others. We play an active role in United Nations and European human rights forums, including the current session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Further information is given in the foreign policy document, "Human Rights in Foreign Policy", copies of which are available in the Libraries of the House.

Cyprus

19. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what effort he will make to assist the United Nations initiative in Cyprus.

24. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Cyprus.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We continue to give full and active support to the United Nations Secretary-General's efforts to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the intercommunal dispute.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had, and with whom, as to the opening up of Famagusta as an open town under United Nations auspices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Varosha will be a key element in any settlement of the intercommunal dispute in Cyprus. All parties to the dispute are well aware of our strong view that there should be no change in the status of Varosha nor any settlement of the area in contravention of United Nations Security Council resolution 550 of 11 May 1984.

Russia and Ukraine

20. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met his counterparts in Russia and Ukraine to discuss relations with western countries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met the Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Kozyrev, in New York on 31 January and in Moscow on 20 January. He last met Mr. Zlenko, the Ukrainian Foreign Minister, on 19 January in Kiev. A wide range of subjects, including relations with western countries, was covered at each of these meetings.

Eastern Europe (Embassies)

21. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many new embassies have been established in east European countries during the past 12 months; and in which countries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Four—Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine.

EC Presidency

22. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what particular initiatives and objectives are planned for the forthcoming United Kingdom presidency of the European Community.

31. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are Her Majesty's Government's objectives for the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Our first task is to run an efficient presidency.

Top policy priorities are completion of the single market; preparations for EC enlargement; support for democracy and reform in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe; and preparing the ground for implementation of the Maastricht treaty.

Burma

23. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Burma.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We deplore the continuing intransigence of the Burmese military authorities. Their human rights record, and their failure to fulfil their avowed commitment to the democratic process, makes them an international pariah. We urge them to respond to the growing criticism of their policies.

Libya

25. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek improved relations with Libya.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There can be no prospect of any improvement in relations with Libya until Libya complies with Security Council resolution 731 which endorsed the demands made by the United States, United Kingdom and France on 27 November.

East Timor

26. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his European counterparts on the question of human rights in East Timor.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are in regular contact with our European Community partners on this question, and with other western countries at the current session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. The EC issued a further statement on the East Timor question on 13 February.

Conflict Resolution

27. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have made any proposals for increasing the role of the United Nations in conflict resolution.

Mr. Garel-Jones: At the high level meeting of the United Nations Security Council on 31 January, we successfully proposed that the Secretary-General prepare a major report, by the first of July, in the United Nation's work in preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping. We shall contribute ideas to it.

Republic of Ireland

28. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise in international forums the Republic of Ireland's territorial claim over part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hurd: No. Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom is fully recognised in national and international law.

International Co-operation

29. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will meet the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Baker, to discuss mechanisms for co-operation between the developed countries in international matters.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is often in touch with Secretary Baker and hopes to meet him again at the CSCE review conference in Helsinki on 24 March.

Middle East

30. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Israeli ambassador to discuss the Israel-Palestine peace proposals.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met the ambassador briefly last week. We are in frequent contact with the Israeli Government at the highest level to discuss the peace process.

33. **Sir Dennis Walters:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on progress towards a middle east peace settlement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The peace process continued in a fourth round of bilateral negotiations in Washington last week. A regional settlement remains an important and realistic aim. It is encouraging that all parties remain determined to continue the process. I applaud Secretary Baker's continued commitment to a settlement. We will maintain our full support.

South Africa

32. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the South African ambassador to discuss prospects for a multiracial constitution.

Mrs. Chalker: When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met Foreign Minister Botha on 9 February, the South African ambassador was present. They discussed the constitutional negotiations that are taking place in South Africa.

EC Cohesion Fund

34. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the anticipated cost to the United Kingdom of the EC cohesion fund.

Mr. Garel-Jones: No decisions have yet been reached on the size of the EC cohesion fund, and the cost to the United Kingdom cannot be estimated at this stage. Details will be considered in the context of the forthcoming review of Community finances, based on Commission proposals published on 12 February.

Westminster Foundation for Democracy

35. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he can give further details of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The foundation was incorporated on 26 February. Its board of governors was appointed on 4 March, and will be holding its first meeting on 9 March.

Lockerbie Bombing

36. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the British interests section in the Italian embassy is represented at the trial of the suspects for the Lockerbie bombing in Tripoli.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are not aware of any trial that has taken place or which is taking place in Tripoli of those accused of the bombing of flight Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie.

Lebanon

37. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in Lebanon and the implementation of United Nations resolution 425.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The situation in south Lebanon appears to have stabilised in the last few days. We condemned the acts of violence which took place in south Lebanon and in northern Israel over the period 14 to 21 February. They served no purpose and led only to needless suffering. We supported the statement by the President of the United Nations Security Council on the 19 February which reaffirmed Security Council resolution 425. We want to see the removal of all foreign troops from Lebanon, the effective deployment of the Lebanese army throughout the country, and the cessation of attacks from Lebanon on Israeli targets.

Vietnamese Migrants

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest situation relating to Vietnamese migrants in Hong Kong.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The current position remains as set out in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs' reply of 18 February to the hon. Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton). Since the orderly repatriation programme was agreed last October, the camp population in Hong Kong has fallen from 64,314 on 5 October 1991 to 58,762 now. Only four Vietnamese migrants have arrived in Hong Kong so far this year. In total, more than 20,000 migrants have now returned to Vietnam from first asylum countries in the region; there has not been one substantiated case of persecution.

Visas

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the provisions of international agreements which restrict the kind of information regarding visa applications which may be entered by officials on behalf of one Government in passports issued by another Government.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are not aware of any such international agreements.

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the forthcoming CSCE Helsinki follow-up meeting and the summit meeting in July; and what are Her Majesty's Government's proposals for them.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Her Majesty's Government attach importance to, and will play a constructive part in, the CSCE follow-up meeting in Helsinki from March to July 1992. Her Majesty's Government will work to promote stability, human rights, democracy and economic transition in the participating states; we will also advocate increased emphasis on the implementation of CSCE commitments and the further development of CSCE institutions in order to help achieve these objectives.

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each private sector consultancy firm which has been retained by each agency within his Department, and for his Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme; and whether the appointment was the result of competitive tendering.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have retained the services of Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte to advise on market testing. They were chosen through competitive tender.

The chief executive of Wilton Park, the FCO's only executive agency, decided not to retain a private sector consultancy in response to the Government's White Paper "Competing for Quality" because of the small size of the agency.

The Overseas Development Administration has separately retained Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte, but without competition. The Natural Resources Institute, an executive agency of ODA, retained KPMG Peat Marwick without competition.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those parts of his Department, including executive agencies, carrying out reviews over the last 12 months into the pay and grading of staff; and the firm of consultants engaged, where appropriate.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Neither the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Overseas Development Administration nor their respective executive agencies have carried out a review of pay and grading over the last 12 months. Decisions on these matters will be taken in the light of Government policy on pay and grading.

Broadcasting

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will consider using BBC World Service Television for the purposes of the dissemination of Government information.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are not considering such a move, which would not be possible without compromising the editorial independence of the BBC.

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the purpose of the new service to be provided by Worldwide Television News for Her Majesty's Government; and who will have editorial control.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has retained the services of Worldwide Television News to provide short topical news items for transmission by satellite direct to TV stations abroad for their use in news bulletins. The service will be under the FCO's editorial control. It will form part of the FCO's overseas information effort aimed at explaining and winning support for the United Kingdom's policies.

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial support he has given to BBC World Service Television.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have given no financial support to BBC World Service Television, which is now broadcasting on a commercial basis throughout Europe, Asia and the middle east.

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial support he intends to give Worldwide Television News; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We do not intend to give Worldwide Television News any financial support. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has signed a contract with the company for a specific service, the provision of a TV news service for satellite transmission overseas. Worldwide Television News tendered successfully for the project in competition with others.

Kosovo

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will agree to meet Dr. Ibrahim Rugova of the Democratic League of Kosovo.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have kept in regular touch with Dr. Rugova both in Kosovo and on his visits to London. We shall continue to do so.

Albania

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the procedures by which an Albanian citizen resident in Albania can secure a visa for entry to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom has no resident mission in Albania and does not run an entry clearance operation there. Visa applicants resident in Albania or their sponsors may apply by post or in person to any of our visa-issuing posts of which there are several in neighbouring countries.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements exist for the protection of the interests of British citizens travelling in Albania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is no British representation in Albania. The resident missions of other European Community members can give help to British visitors in a serious emergency.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which British overseas diplomatic mission takes responsibility for Albania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None at present. A decision has yet to be announced on the form of our representation in Tirana. Until it is, the Foreign Commonwealth Office will continue to communicate directly with the Albanian Foreign Ministry.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees makes of the return of Tamil refugees from India; and what action Her Majesty's Government propose to take to ensure the safety of the refugees.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The UNHCR is not involved in the repatriation programme agreed between India and Sri Lanka, but the UNHCR is helping people displaced by fighting in northern Sri Lanka and is aware of the situation in the areas where refugees returning from India are being resettled. We are monitoring the situation, and have pledged £20 million for reconstruction and rehabilitation in the north and east when conditions permit.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the effects on child mortality of the ban on medicine and food items by the Government of Sri Lanka in northern Sri Lanka, including in the camp managed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Contrary to the reports of a ban, our information is that the Sri Lankan Government are arranging the provision of basic food and medical supplies to the north, including to UNHCR relief centres, via the UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will make representations to the Government of Sri Lanka for the removal of the economic blockade on the north-east and the banning of items including fuel and medicine.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have frequently expressed to the Sri Lankan Government our concern that it should ensure the welfare of all its citizens, and we welcome the efforts it has made to supply basic food and medicines to areas held by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. We could not expect the Sri Lankan Government to lift their ban on other items until the LTTE has renounced its terrorist campaign.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government will now make representations to the Government of Sri Lanka to accept an immediate ceasefire in the civil war and a return to negotiations with mediation by the United Nations Secretary-General.

Mr. Garel-Jones: No, we do not believe it would be right to press the Sri Lankan Government to declare an unconditional ceasefire with the LTTE, which broke off negotiations and initiated the present round of fighting in 1990. We have, however, urged the Sri Lankan Government to continue to pursue a political settlement, and would support any efforts they might make to seek the good offices of an external mediator.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions the Government have had with the Government of Sri Lanka on their reasons for refusing the offers of mediation from the Commonwealth and from other Governments to help to settle the conflict in the island.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We regularly discuss the prospects for a settlement of the conflict in Sri Lanka with the Sri Lankan authorities, both in London and in Colombo. The Sri Lankan Government have indicated that they doubt whether mediation would be successful while the LTTE continues to show no readiness to negotiate on its demands.

Western Sahara

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken to ensure the implementation of UN resolution 690/1991 on western Sahara.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Security Council resolution 690 (1991) approved the establishment of a United Nations mission for the referendum in the western Sahara (MINURSO). We have contributed towards the cost of MINURSO and provided 15 military observers. We continue to give the Secretary-General our full support in seeking an early settlement of the western Sahara dispute.

Commonwealth (Elections)

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice his Department has been asked to give to Commonwealth countries on the holding of elections in the past year.

Mrs. Chalker: We have agreed to provide the Lesotho Government with a chief election officer for their forthcoming elections, and have responded to requests from the Governments of Bangladesh, Zambia and Guyana for Commonwealth monitors and advisers.

DEFENCE

United States Army (Machrihanish)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for the last 12 months the types of aircraft that have operated from the United States army special forces airfield at Machrihanish.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following types of aircraft have used the airfield at RAF Machrihanish since February 1991:

Military Aircraft

- Nimrod
- Tornado GR1
- Tornado GR1a
- Hawk
- C-130
- Bulldog
- Jetstream
- Jaguar GR1
- Jaguar T2
- Harrier GR5
- Buccaneer
- HS125
- HS748
- Devon
- Dominie
- Shackleton
- Canberra
- Hunter
- Jet Provost
- Wessex
- Sea King
- Lynx
- Gazelle
- Puma
- MBH-5
- CH47
- Tornado F3
- Scout
- C-12
- C-141
- P-3
- VP-3A
- KC-135
- Harrier T4
- Alpha Jet
- C-21
- F-16
- A-10
- C-9
- C-2A
- Mirage F1
- An 26
- C-160
- ND-16
- CP-140
- Atlantique
- FK-27
- C-20
- CH-53

Civil Aircraft

- SH-360
- DHC-6
- C172
- PA28
- PA23
- PA42
- E121
- B105
- C525
- SAAB 340
- Luscombe
- BN-2
- Seneca
- C152
- PA38

PA31
Beech 35
Beech 200
Beech 90
ATP
C421

Low Flying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying complaints the regional community relations officer for the Borders region has had to deal with since taking up his appointment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: In response to the recommendations made in the Defence Committee's report on low flying, HC 120, the Government have, on a trial basis, appointed regional community relations officers for the Lake district and the Borders. These appointments serve areas remote from RAF stations and provide the local community with a focal point for their enquiries on low-flying matters.

The regional community relations officer for the Borders was appointed at the beginning of January 1992. By the end of February he had received 64 inquiries or complaints on matters relating to military low-flying training.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by month for the last 12 months *(a)* the number of German air force sorties, and *(b)* the aircraft type, that have operated on low-flying sorties from (i) RAF Leuchars and (ii) RAF Lossiemouth.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The information requested is not readily available and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost and effort.

Aurora

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance his Department has given to the United States armed forces operation Aurora; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The existence of any such operation would be a matter for the United States authorities.

Fallingbostel (Bullying)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will instigate a full inquiry into bullying at Fallingbostel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. Inquiries are instigated only when specific allegations are made.

Type 22 Frigates

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answers of 13 February, *Official Report*, column *632* and 20 February, *Official Report*, columns *291-92*, what impact the provision of extra accommodation for young officers has had on the ships' military, logistic or other capabilities; where the accommodation space has been found; by how much the normal ship's company will be reduced as a result, and in what branches; and if he will set out the arrangements by which ships' companies will maintain the operational effectiveness of these ships in between officer training periods.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The provision of extra accommodation for young officers—YOs—has no impact on the military, logistic and other capabilities of the type 22 Frigates designated for initial sea training—IST. The additional accommodation has been provided in the largest junior rates mess deck. Depending on the number of YOs to be taken on board for their period of IST, each ship's commanding officer will land up to 20 ratings, from a variety of branches, taking into account the ship's current drafting state and programme. On completion of IST, all ratings landed will be re-embarked. In the periods when the type 22 frigates are not required to carry YOs, they will maintain their operational effectiveness through regular operational sea training and exercises.

Nuclear Proliferation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list *(a)* all measures taken by his Department in the last 12 months to prevent nuclear proliferation, *(b)* the number of personnel in his Department working to prevent nuclear proliferation and *(c)* his Department's total expenditure on control of nuclear proliferation in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence, together with other Departments, has worked consistently during the last 12 months to prevent nuclear proliferation. Among measures taken, the Ministry has supported the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in its attemps to increase support for the non-proliferation treaty; participated in discussions in COCOM and other international non-proliferation groupings to prevent transfer of relevant technologies; provided a member of the commission and several inspectors for the United Nations special commission set up to oversee the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, together with support personnel and equipment for International Atomic Energy Agency inspections of Iraq's nuclear capability; agreed to provide hardware and consultancy advice to Russia to assist in former Soviet nuclear weapons reductions; and provided technical advice to the Department of Trade and Industry on export licensing.

The answers to the other parts of the question could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Local Overseas Allowance

Mr. McWilliam: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes there have been over the past 12 months in the local overseas allowance payable to *(a)* Royal Marine and *(b)* Army personnel currently serving in Norway; why these changes have been made with retrospective effect; under what authority these changes have been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Rates of local overseas allowance for service personnel stationed permanently in Norway were increased on 1 September 1991 following a full review. A reduction in the rate of local overseas allowance payable to some service personnel on temporary deployment to Norway was implemented without the normal period of notice. This reduction has now been rescinded.

Queen Alexandra's Royal Navy Nursing Service

Mr. McWilliam: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why he proposes *(a)* to increase the maximum number of Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service personnel which may be maintained during financial year 1991-92, as shown in House of Commons Paper 225, and *(b)* to increase the maximum number of such personnel which may be maintained during the financial year 1992-93, as shown in House of Commons paper 227.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence votes A represent the maximum numbers of personnel authorised by Parliament to be maintained in the individual armed services. During 1991 it was discovered that nearly 200 QARNNS medical assistants had been included in the RN figures in error. Added to this, intake to the QARNNS increased unexpectedly and exceeded the forecast figure which had been based on the previous poor intake. A supplementary vote for 1991-92 was therefore presented, increasing the QARNNS figure and reducing the RN figure. The 1992-93 votes included a further increase for the QARNNS in anticipation of the improvement in recruitment being maintained.

SCOTLAND

Nebulisers

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out the arrangements concerning charging for NHS nebulisers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Certain hand operated nebulisers may be prescribed by general practitioners, and where the patient is not exempt, a normal prescription charge is levied. Powered nebulisers are provided free for domiciliary patients through the hospital service if they are considered by a hospital consultant as being clinically necessary.

Prestwick Airport

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what *(a)* representations, *(b)* requests for assistance and *(c)* general inquiries he has received regarding the future ownership of Prestwick airport; what have been his responses; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 January 1992]:* My right hon. Friend has received a small number of representations from local interested parties regarding the future ownership of Prestwick airport. Details of any requests for assistance are commercially confidential. The future ownership of Prestwick airport is a matter for its owners, BAA plc.

Part-time Workers

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the proportion of male employees in Scotland who work part-time.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 27 January 1992]:* In September 1989, the latest date for which figures are available, 7·4 per cent. of all male employees in employment in Scotland worked part-time. This information comes from the 1989 Employment Department census of employment.

Development Areas

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the work force in each of the regions of Scotland live within the boundaries of development areas.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 6 February 1992]:* Information in the form requested is not available. However, information is available on the proportion of employees in employment in each of the regions of Scotland who are employed within the boundaries of development areas. This information, taken from the 1989 Employment Department census of employment, is given in the following table.

Proportion of employees in employment employed within the boundaries of development areas by region in September 1989

Region	*Percentage employed within development areas*
Borders	—
Central	—
Dumfries and Galloway	3·7
Fife	—
Grampian	—
Highland	—
Lothian	13·0
Strathclyde	92·2
Tayside	58·8
Islands	—
Scotland	47·1

Source: 1989 Employment Department of Census of Employment
Note: There are no development areas in Borders, Central, Fife, Grampian, Highlands and Islands.

Scottish Refugee Council

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will respond positively to the application by the Scottish Refugee Council for increased funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 31 January 1992]:* The Scottish Refugee Council's application has been carefully considered along with other competing applications. While we are unable to provide the full increase sought, the Scottish Office has today written to the Scottish Refugee Council offering to continue providing the salary costs of a part-time case worker up to a limit of £5,957 in 1992-93, an increase of 4·5 per cent. on the present year's grant.

Management Agreements

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of management agreements under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which have been entered into in Scotland in *(a)* national nature reserves and *(b)* sites of special scientific interest for each year since 1981, indicating in each case whether the proposed damage was done to (i) agriculture or (ii) forestry; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 31 January 1992]:* The information is as follows:

	National nature reserves		Sites of special scientific interest			
	Number of management agreements	Threat of damage	Number of management agreements	Threat of damage		
Year		Forestry		Agriculture	Forestry	Both
1982	1	1	2	1	0	0
1983	1	1	2	0	0	0
1984	0	0	10	6	2	0
1985	0	0	22	9	9	1
1986	0	0	31	14	8	2
1987	0	0	49	22	12	0
1988	0	0	39	17	14	1
1989	0	0	51	24	8	3
1990	0	0	45	12	9	0
1991	0	0	13	4	7	1
TOTAL	2	2	264	109	69	8

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the 10 sites of special scientific interest and *(b)* the 10 national nature reserves in Scotland which have the most expensive management agreements giving the name of the site, region in which it is located and the amount which has been or is due to be paid out and if the landowners are required to enhance the site as part of the conditions of payment; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 31 January 1992]:* Details of individual management agreements are confidential to the parties.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of management agreements that have been entered into under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in Scotland where payments have been given in the following ranges *(a)* up to £9,999, *(b)* £10,000 to £19,999, *(c)* £20,000 to £29,999, *(d)* £30,000 to £39,999, *(e)* £40,000 to £49,999, *(f)* £50,000 to £59,999 and *(g)* over £60,000.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 31 January 1992]:* Agreements may involve either annual or capital payments. An analysis of the information by both categories is set out in the following table.

Range of costs	Type of cost	
	Annual	Capital
No costs	73	79
Up to £9,999	176	130
£10,000 to £19,999	11	12
£20,000 to £29,999	4	11
£30,000 to £39,999	1	12
£40,000 to £49,999	1	6
£50,000 to £59,999	0	1
Over £60,000	0	15
	266	266

Mental Handicap

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements for transfer of dowry funds with resettled mental handicap patients to local authorities have been made in each health board; under what terms these payments are made; and if he will list by health board the sums transferred each year on this basis.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 7 February 1992]:* Arrangements for transferring funds between health boards and local authorities were first set out in 1985 in circular NHS(GEN)18. This enabled boards to provide support finance to social work departments to develop community-based services.

On 13 January this year a consultation paper was issued on cash and other transfers between health boards and local authorities. A circular will be issued after the consultation period ends on 28 February.

The information sought on the amount transferred by each health board in past years is not held centrally.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number, for each health board, of in-patient residents in health service facilities for patients with a mental handicap for each year since 1981; and what proportion of the reduction in numbers is due to discharge and what proportion due to death, for each health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 7 February 1992]:* The information is contained in the following tables.

Table 1: Residents in mental handicap hospitals as at 31 December each year

Health Board	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Argyll and Clyde	378	360	358	353	348	346	344	337	337	328
Ayrshire and Arran	74	73	75	68	74	67	65	61	59	62
Borders	85	81	77	65	61	59	59	58	55	54
Fife	455	472	468	463	436	417	381	355	333	312
Forth Valley	1,109	1,074	1.055	1,022	962	893	858	764	726	680
Grampian	696	692	692	682	641	628	574	540	506	458
Greater Glasgow	1,407	1,354	1,290	1,193	1,147	1,067	1,009	968	930	885
Highland	222	229	230	228	227	197	169	162	158	146
Lanarkshire	612	591	520	517	513	496	519	506	501	492
Lothian	856	847	756	705	679	661	634	606	575	569
Tayside	535	534	530	525	497	454	402	381	356	299
SCOTLAND	6,429	6,307	6,051	5,821	5,585	5,285	5,014	4,738	4,536	4,285

Table 2: Status by 1990 of Residents in Mental Handicap Hospitals in 1981

Health Board	*Percentage Died*	*Percentage Discharged*	*Percentage Still Resident*
Argyll and Clyde	13·0	54·2	32·8
Ayrshire and Arran	8·1	43·2	48·6
Borders	11·8	28·2	60·0
Fife	8·4	43·1	48·5
Forth Valley	14·8	30·0	55·3
Grampian	15·4	38·4	46·3
Greater Glasgow	17·9	28·5	53·6
Highland	9·5	43·2	47·3
Lanarkshire	15·4	26·3	58·3
Lothian	9·7	40·4	49·9
Tayside	12·3	42·2	45·4
SCOTLAND	13·8	35·6	50·6

In Scotland the 1990 residents were made up of 76 per cent. from 1981 and 24 per cent. from admission since 1981.

Patients with mental handicaps resident in establishments dealing primarily with other client groups are excluded from these figures. The numbers are likely to be small.

Diabeties (Syringes)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the total number of plastic syringes supplied on free prescription to sufferers from diabetes in the last available year for which statistics are available; and what was the total cost of these supplies;

(2) what is the estimated total cost of the needles required for insulin pen injectors if these were supplied free on prescription to all sufferers from diabetes who are currently supplied with plastic syringes.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* The total estimated number of plastic syringes and needles supplied to diabetics in Scotland in 1990 is 4·5 million at a total cost of £414,000. The needle is an integral part of the plastic syringe.

The Department of Health is presently negotiating with manufacturers the specification and cost of pen injecting systems and associated needles. It is therefore not possible to estimate the cost of needles for pen injectors.

Nursery Education

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his reply of 3 February to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong), *Official Report,* column 77, if he will inquire into the reasons for the Western Isles having no children between the ages of three and four years in nursery schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 3 March 1992]:* It is for education authorities themselves to decide the level and mix of provision they make for pre-school children in their area. Although the Western Isles has no children aged three and four attending nursery schools, in 1991, over 50 per cent. of children under four received day care of some form; the second best outcome in Scotland.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of whether the designation of sites of special scientific interest is the best option for the protection of extensive envirionmentally sensitive areas in Caithness and Sutherland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 3 March 1992]:* The system for notifying sites of special scientific interest is vital for the continuing protection of environmentally sensitive areas in Scotland. In response to concerns that other forms of protection might be more appropriate for large areas of land a provision was included in the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991 for the designation of Natural Heritage areas. Such designations will allow the adoption of land use policies and practices which recognise the interdependence of the economic, social and environmental well-being of communities.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland about alternative mechanisms for the protection of large environmentally sensitive areas in Caithness and Sutherland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 3 March 1992]:* None. The Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991 provides that my right hon. Friend may designate Natural Heritage areas on recommendations from Scottish Natural Heritage, the successor body to the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland, which assumes office on 1 April 1992.

In addition the proposed land use and development strategy for Caithness and Sutherland to which I referred in my reply to the hon. Member on 29 January 1992 at column *624* should, once formulated and agreed, strengthen the protection given to important areas of nature conservation interest by reducing the potential for conflict in these areas.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 5 March 1992

CIVIL SERVICE

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what plans he has to take forward equal opportunities for women in the civil service.

Mr. Renton: I have, today, launched a new programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity for women in the civil service. This builds on the very considerable progress achieved under the programme of action launched in 1984. Departments and agencies will use the new programme to develop action plans which will ensure that the civil service continues to be a leading equal opportunities employer.

THE ARTS

Public Sector Grants

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister for the Arts how much is received in public sector grants by *(a)* Dartington arts unit and *(b)* Exeter and Devon arts centre, in each of the past three years; what information he has on the proportion which public sector grants formed of the annual turnover in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 19 February 1992]*: The information available is as follows:

Dartington Arts Society

	1989 £	*1990* £	*1991* £
South West Arts	10,660	10,875	11,750

Note: Local authority figures not available.

Exeter and Devon Arts Centre

	1989 £	*1990* £	*1991* £
Grants associated with educational and recreational activities			
Exeter City Council	39,650	28,771	30,459
Devon County Council	—	10,072	11,464
South West Arts	11,300	16,385	14,490
	50,950	55,288	56,413
Turnover (income from activities and trading)	110,814	194,726	209,452
Proportion which public sector income represents of turnover (Per cent.)	46	28	27
In addition the Exeter and Devon Arts Centre receives the following grants towards operational expenditure			
Devon County Council	164,584	179,238	194,100
Exeter City Council	151,900	134,107	145,000
Total	316,484	313,345	339,100

All figures are expressed in real terms.

TRANSPORT

Departmental Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many residential properties owned by his Department are *(a)* empty, *(b)* for sale on the open market, *(c)* intended for sale on the open market and *(d)* for sale to housing associations, in terms of numbers and percentages of stock.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department's portfolio is constantly changing as a consequence of properties being acquired or demolished for road schemes, or being disposed of as surplus to requirements.

(a) Currently, the Department owns 2,577 properties, of which 460—17·9 per cent. of total stock—are empty, including those recently acquired, uninhabitable, being sold or awaiting demolition. The remaining 2,117 properties—82·1 per cent. of total stock—are equally divided between direct lettings by the Department and indirect letting on its behalf by housing associations and local authorities.

(b) Currently, 124 properties—4·8 per cent. of total stock—are for sale on the open market.

(c) A figure cannot be provided for the number of properties intended for sale on the open market as it is not known which will be surplus to the requirements of road schemes until an advanced stage when the line of the road is fixed.

(d) Housing associations have an opportunity to buy almost all of the department's surplus housing. A small number of properties are bought back by previous owners under the Crichel Down rules, otherwise property is offered next to the agent housing association. Associations are also free to bid on the open market for other surplus properties not under their management.

Buses

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with bus drivers concerning safety of drivers, passengers and pedestrians.

Mr. Freeman: The safety of bus drivers and passengers is considered regularly by the standing panel on assaults on bus staff—STAB—which includes representatives of the bus industry, the unions and Government Departments. STAB's remit includes all forms of crime on buses including vandalism and attacks on passengers.

At a local level the traffic commissioner has powers to attach conditions to an operator's licence if a local service has been operated in a manner dangerous to the public. The traffic commissioner may also suspend or revoke a PSV driver's licence if the driver has been convicted of dangerous driving.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new measures he will introduce to improve bus road safety; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Buses are the safest form of road passenger transport in this country. Regulations covering the safety of buses are kept under continuous review and can be amended as the need becomes apparent.

Ferry Services

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will issue guidance notes on the operational responsibilities of British ferry operators for ferry services marketed and advertised by them, but operated by a foreign company.

Mr. McLoughlin: The responsibility for safe operation of a ship is prescribed in section 31 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988. No guidance notes are planned.

Maritime Conventions

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on the ratification of maritime conventions Nos. *(a)* 163, *(b)* 164, *(c)* 165, *(d)* 166, *(e)* 173 and *(f)* 176.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government stated their views on ILO conventions Nos. 163, 164, 165 and 166 in Command 658 dated April 1989 and indicated that they do not propose to ratify conventions 163, 165 and 166. Now that the syllabi for the necessary training courses in medical skills promulgated by the International Maritime Organisation, the International Labour Organisation and the World Health Organisation have been reduced to performance criteria on which colleges and other bodies can base their instruction, the Department will shortly be going to a second round of consultation on how the United Kingdom should meet its obligations under article 9.2 of convention No. 164—health protection and medical care (seafarers)—and so proceed to ratification.

The latest convention to be adopted by the ILO and therefore available for ratification is No. 172.

River Thames (Cargo Handling)

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on maintaining competition in containerised cargo handling facilities on the River Thames, east of Tower bridge.

Mr. McLoughlin: Any potential concerns about competition in the provision of such facilities would be a matter for consideration by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Princess Maria Esmeralda

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the reply to the request for an investigation into the sailing of the Princess Maria Esmeralda on Sunday 21 July 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: I will summarise that reply. This Belgian flag ship was sailing from a Belgian port under the sole jurisdiction of the Belgian authorities. The Department has now notified them of the reported incident. However, departmental marine surveyors have inspected the vessel and advise that the upper stern door can be left open without compromising the ship's safety. They also advise that the lower door is recessed into the stern and can appear from a distance to be open while actually closed and weathertight.

Port of Tilbury

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the credit rating of Maritime Transport Services Ltd. which is bidding for the port of Tilbury; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is for the Port of London authority to consider all relevant factors in assessing the bids for the port of Tilbury and in making its recommendation to my right hon. and learned Friend concerning the sale of the port.

Bus Industry

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many employees there were in the bus industry in 1985-86 and 1990-91.

Mr. McLoughlin: The numbers of staff employed in the bus industry in Great Britain in 1985-86 and 1990-91 were:

1985-86	174,200—annual average.
1990-91	155,500—end of year.

The figures include all platform, maintenance and administrative staff employed by the bus industry. They also include working proprietors and the full-time equivalent of part-time public service vehicle staff.

PRIME MINISTER

Housing Benefit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Prime Minister if he will introduce changes to housing benefit and mortgage interest benefit to permit people paying part-rent part-mortgage to qualify for housing benefit and income support assistance.

The Prime Minister: The current regulations already make provision for such arrangements.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

ENVIRONMENT

Thorne and Hatfield Moors

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has received from English Nature concerning the conservation of the remaining vegetated areas of Thorne and Hatfield moors, including the effect of the continued extraction of peat from the other areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) on 27 February 1992, *Official Report*, column *561*. English Nature will be producing management plans for the vegetated areas of these sites. High water tables will be maintained by a programme of controlled blocking of drains. Detailed monitoring of the effects will take place against recent baseline studies. English Nature will also be producing after-use plans for the areas where peat extraction is to continue.

Sleeping Rough

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the most up-to-date figures recorded by his Department for the numbers of people sleeping rough in the Greater London area.

Mr. Yeo: The number of persons found sleeping rough at pre-identified sites in Greater London on census night—21 to 22 April 1991—was published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in the 1991 census preliminary report for England and Wales "Supplementary Monitor on People sleeping rough". A copy is in the Library.

Hedgehogs and Toads

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many hedgehog ladders and toad tunnels have been constructed or funded by his Department since 1979.

Mr. Baldry: No information is available on the number of hedgehog ladders constructed since 1979. Five toad tunnel systems, incorporating 11 tunnels, and financed wholly or partly by central or local government, have been constructed since 1979.

City Challenge

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will favourably consider the application for funding for the Blackie Great Georges project, Liverpool 1, under the city challenge scheme later in the current month.

Mr. Key: Under the city challenge management arrangements, it will be for Liverpool's city challenge executive committee in the first instance to decide whether to include particular projects within the five-year programme. Any project with a grant requirement of £500,000 or more will additionally require detailed appraisal by my Department, and will be considered on its merits on receipt.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount has been given by his Department for city challenge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 3 March 1992]:* A sum of £82·5 million per year for up to five years from 1992-93 has been allocated from the Department's inner-city and housing programmes to fund the 11 first-round "pacemaker" city challenge action plans. Up to £150 million per year is being made available for city challenge for up to five years from 1993-94 for those successful in the second round.

PCBs

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will place in the Library a copy of his development action plan for the phasing out of PCBs by 1999;

(2) what action he has taken to implement the decision of the third North sea conference of March 1990 to phase out and destroy all PCBs by 1999, in 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what is planned for each year to 1999;

(3) how many full and part-time posts are contributing to the phasing out of PCBs by 1999; and if he will give the job specification and location of each post;

(4) if he will give an estimate of the number of tonnes of PCBs in the United Kingdom still awaiting disposal and details of targets set for the disposal of PCBs in the United Kingdom;

(5) if he will give details of all existing incinerators, and those in respect of which planning applications *(a)* have been approved and *(b)* are outstanding, licensed to accept PCBs;

(6) what estimate he has made in respect of the presence of PCBs in United Kingdom waters.

Mr. Baldry: It is intended to produce a plan in accordance with the decision of the third North sea conference. A copy will be placed in the Library when available. Work is currently directed to refining the assessment of the types and quantities of PCBs known to exist and the available incineration capacity. New treatment techniques and alternative disposal options to incineration for particular PCB arisings are being appraised.

A revision of waste management paper No. 6 containing technical guidance on the treatment and disposals of PCB wastes is in preparation for publication in March 1993.

Planning for phase-out involves a co-operative effort between my Department and other Government Departments. I cannot therefore be precise about numbers and locations of individual posts.

The remaining PCBs in the United Kingdom are mainly associated with electrical equipment, much of which will be disposed of with its PCB content. Accurate figures are not available, but it is estimated that about 20,000 tonnes of contaminated plant requires disposal, of which about half are PCBs.

There are two merchant incinerators available for the disposal of special wastes including solid and liquid PCBs; the Rechem plant at Pontypool and a plant at Ellesmere Port operated by Cleanaway. Plant capacity for PCB destruction cannot be stated in absolute terms since it is dependent upon the chlorine content and the physical form of the waste. It is not known if any proposed plant at the planning application stage is to be used for PCBs.

Levels of PCBs in United Kingdom coastal waters are normally so low as to be beyond the limits of detection. However, since PCBs are known to accumulate in living tissue, government monitoring programmes concentrate on levels of PCBs in fish. Results of these programmes are regularly published by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in the acquatic environment monitoring reports. Control measures taken by the Government have been effective in reducing peak levels of PCBs to considerably below those that were found in the 1970s. The levels are below those that would cause harm to human consumers and there is no reason to believe that they threaten fish health.

Leeds Development Corporation

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what official statistics are kept on employment in the area covered by the Leeds development corporation.

Mr. Key: This is primarily a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. I understand that employment statistics for development corporation areas are not compiled. Official statistics for employees in employment are made available for local authority wards and aggregations of them. The area covered by Leeds development corporation does not coincide with ward boundaries.

British Waterways Board

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about financing for the British Waterways Board.

Mr. Baldry: I am pleased to announce that we have increased the external finance limit for the British Waterways Board to £51·7 million for 1991-92. This is enabling the board to spend an additional sum of up to £3 million on canal maintenance. The increase is being financed through expenditure savings identified elsewhere within the Department, and will not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

EC Eco-labelling Scheme

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made towards implementing the EC eco-labelling scheme.

Mr. Baldry: The United Kingdom is playing a leading role in preparing for the launch of the European scheme. We are developing criteria on a wider range of products than any other country and we are making a significant contribution to putting in place the necessary European administrative arrangements for the operation of the scheme.

Nationally, we are required by the eco-labelling regulation to designate a competent body for the scheme. We have decided that a dedicated non-departmental public body would be the most suitable organisation to take on this role in the United Kingdom. In reaching this decision, we took account of the National Advisory Group on Eco-Labelling's advice that the body should be official, independent and at arm's length from ministerial control. This should demonstrate the authority and impartiality of the body and promote the credibility of the scheme. We will introduce legislation to establish this body when parliamentary time permits. Until then, it will operate in an advisory capacity.

I am pleased to announce that Dr. Elizabeth Nelson has agreed to chair the United Kingdom eco-labelling body. Dr Nelson is presently chairman of Addison Group Consultancy plc and the Taylor Nelson Group Ltd., but has indicated that she intends to step down later in the year. She has extensive business experience, and particular expertise in the fields of marketing and market research, which she will be able to contribute to the development of the eco-labelling scheme in the United Kingdom and across the European Community. We will be announcing the names of the other members of the board of the eco-labelling body in due course.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Power Stations

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to complete the sale of Northern Ireland Electricity power stations.

Mr. Brooke: I have now reached contractual agreement for the sale of Ballylumford power station to British Gas, the sale of Kilroot and Belfast West power stations to a consortium of Applied Energy Services and Tractebel and the sale of Coolkeeragh power station to a management-employee team—MEBO.

The contracts provide for total sale proceeds of £353 million subject to the normal audit of completion accounts; £132·4 million for Ballylumford, £214 million for Belfast West and Kilroot and £6·5 million for Coolkeeragh. In the later case, a five-year profit-sharing deal offers the possibility of up to a further £2 million. The terms of the sales and the relevant documents have been notified to the European Commission.

The companies which are being sold will be created out of the single entity of Northern Ireland Electricity at 1 April 1992 and have no separate trading records. Because of this, provisions are being included to allow for further adjustments to the sale price, if necessary, for a 15-month period until after the first year's trading has been completed and audited. These provisions mostly relate to assurances given by Government as to station liabilities and information made available and are subject to rigorous de minimus levels and caps of £26 million for British Gas, £53·5 million for AES/Tractebel and £0·5 million for the management buy-out.

Completion of each of the sales is subject to a number of conditions mainly in relation to satisfying terms for financing. The sales to MEBO and AES/Tractebel are project financed and will not be completed until the money is in place. While I am hopeful that this can be achieved by 31 March, I cannot guarantee that this will be so. An important provision in the contracts allows a period before completion during which the new owners can familiarise themselves with the operation of the stations.

The sale of Ballylumford brings with it plans for the construction by British Gas of a gas pipeline to Northern Ireland and the conversion of that station to gas firing and I am pleased to announce that the European Commission has approved a grant of up to 90 million ecu towards these costs. Terms have been agreed, but British Gas has still to carry out a detailed undersea survey and complete negotiations with Bord Gáis Éireann in respect of the shared onshore pipeline in Scotland. The agreement allows for a reassessment of the gas pipeline proposals following completion of these. The pipeline has been sized so that it it can accommodate additional gas requirements for either future power generation or the development of a downstream market in Northern Ireland and I welcome the opportunities which these will present.

I am convinced that the sale of power stations on the terms which I have agreed represents the best outcome for not only the taxpayer but energy users in Northern Ireland. A privatised industry represents the best means of securing maximum efficiency and will be more responsive to the needs of consumers. The provision of gas will give us not only access to a clean and cost effective fuel for electricity generation but the promise of an additional alternative fuel for industrial, commercial and domestic consumers in Northern Ireland in the years ahead.

National Union of Students (Grant)

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been given in grants to the National Union of Students in higher education colleges in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: No Government grants are paid to the National Union of Students. The students' unions of the Queen's University of Belfast, the university of Ulster and St. Mary's college of education are affiliated to the National Union of Students. Payment to the National Union of Students by the students' unions of the two universities were as follows:

	Queen's University £	*University of Ulster* £
1986-87	24,600	19,494
1987-88	27,554	21,178
1988-89	28,576	15,740
1989-90	36,450	27,872
1990-91	42,265	36,723

Information on the amounts paid by the students' union of St. Mary's college is not readily available. Stranmillis college students' union is not affiliated.

University Research

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are being taken to secure and develop research activity within Northern Ireland universities for the future.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government recognise the value of the research done at Northern Ireland's two universities, particularly its importance to the strengthening of the local economy and are already providing public funding in excess of £30 million a year to support such research.

The Department of Education for Northern Ireland is currently considering, in consultation with the universities, what arrangements for the funding of basic research should succeed the present system, under which the department receives advice from the Universities Funding Council, when the latter ceases to exist in 1993.

It is hoped that the new arrangements will continue to provide the universities with positive incentives not only to carry out research of international quality but to meet the needs of industry and society in Northern Ireland.

Victims of Violence

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will introduce a new scheme to provide compensation to innocent victims of violence where the level of compensation falls outside existing provision.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. The existing criminal injuries compensation scheme in Northern Ireland provides fair and reasonable compensation to the innocent victims of violence.

Dentistry

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining what plans there are to implement the recommendations of the Poswillo report on the use of general anaesthesia, sedation and resuscitation in dentistry in Northern Ireland; and what funds will be allocated to support their implementation.

Mr. Hanley: The level of general anaesthesia in Northern Ireland is four times that in England and as a result the cost of implementing the Poswillo report in the Province will be relatively high. It has not been possible to earmark resources specifically for this purpose in 1992-93.

The health and social services boards, however, will be asked to implement the recommendations of the report, as resources permit, giving priority to the hospital and community dental services. General dental practitioners will be invited to refer patients to the community dental service where appropriate, until resources become available for the requisite investment in the general dental service.

Education Maintenance Allowances

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many education maintenance allowances were awarded by each education and library board in Northern Ireland for each academic year since 1986-87; and what was the total value of such awards by board in each year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

Number of awards

	Academic year				
Education and library board	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Belfast	230	109	67	43	38
North Eastern	179	93	65	31	25
South Eastern	130	82	51	38	34
Southern	389	303	192	102	112
Western	575	398	171	91	144
Total number of awards	1,503	985	546	305	353

Value of awards

Education and library board	*Financial year* *1986-87* £	*1987-88* £	*1988-89* £	*1989-90* £	*1990-91* £
Belfast	30,084	23,475	18,629	8,582	9,024
North Eastern	40,416	32,465	15,669	11,278	6,887
South Eastern	30,922	28,622	13,133	12,880	6,901
Southern	87,298	63,518	47,041	29,169	19,448
Western	127,681	107,871	45,916	24,123	15,160
Total value of awards	316,401	255,951	140,388	86,032	57,420

Financial information is not available on an academic year basis.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of all changes to the value of education maintenance allowances and/or in the means test scales for education maintenance allowances since 1980 specifying the respective values and scales in each instance.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

Academic year	*Maximum allowance (£)*	*Means-test limits (£)* *Lower*	*Upper*
Age 16			
1980-81	380	1,670	2,980
1981-82	425	1,910	3,410
1982-83	445	2,080	3,715
1983-84 to 1989-90	390	2,485	3,925
1990-91	520	2,800	5,200
1991-92	551	3,080	5,720
Age 17			
1980-81	430	1,670	3,140
1981-82	480	1,910	3,590
1982-83	500	2,080	3,915
1983-84 to 1989-90	475	2,485	4,165
1990-91	520	2,800	5,200
1991-92	551	3,080	5,720
Age 18			
1980-81	510	1,670	3,470
1981-82	570	1,910	3,970
1982-83	595	2,080	4,325
1983-84 to 1989-90	494	2,485	4,645
1990-91	520	2,800	5,200
1991-92	551	3,080	5,720

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement detailing the progress of the review of the education maintenance allowance scheme by the Department of Education indicating the date of its initiation, consultation with education and library boards, unions or other interested bodies, the terms of the review and consultations and options identified and appraised.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department of Education for Northern Ireland initiated the review in 1988. It was completed in 1990. Government departments and education and library boards were consulted in the course of the review, which also took into account representations received from other organisations and public representatives.

The review was charged with examining the requirements for the scheme and the options available for upgrading. In consultation, the options identified and appraised, ranged from discontinuation of the scheme to consideration of various levels of increases in allowances, in income bands, or both, and the redefinition of eligibility.

Changes resulting from the review were implemented from 1 September 1990. The changes made the scheme more straightforward—with one scale of allowances and shorter and fewer income bands. At the same time, all means-test limits were raised by 12 per cent. with an additional increase of 10 per cent. in 1991.

Trading Standards Branch

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the performance of the trading standards branch in Northern Ireland outlining the plans he has for expanding the service, enhancing its profile or increasing its responsibility or powers.

Mr. Needham: The trading standards branch of the Department of Economic Development performs a valuable service in promoting and maintaining standards of fair trading in Northern Ireland to the benefit of both consumers and reputable traders. Twenty-three trading standards officers and six enforcement officers are employed in the branch and a further three trading standards officers are undergoing training.

Increased enforcement responsibilities will result from the implementation of European Community directives and national initiatives over the next three years. The need for additional resources will be kept under review.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the budget for the trading standards branch in the current year and each of the past three years specifying its distribution among offices and their respective staffing levels.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is set out in the table:

Offices	*1988-89* *Budget* £	*Staff*	*1989-90* *Budget* £	*Staff*	*1990-91* *Budget* £	*Staff*	*1991-92* *Budget* £	*Staff*
Headquarters	[1]348,114	19	[1]390,356	20	[1]461,457	17	[1]449,475	14
Belfast Area 1	60,367	4	77,572	5	70,379	5	92,457	5
Belfast Area 2	53,802	4	58,853	4	56,914	6	95,250	6
Specialist Metrology	91,112	5	81,783	5	91,410	7	115,185	7

Offices	1988-89		1989-90		1990-91		1991-92	
	Budget £	Staff	Budget £	Staff	Budget £	Staff	Budget £	Staff
Specialist Fair Trading	42,220	3	58,097	3	66,595	4	85,964	4
Armagh	44,814	3	44,600	3	43,105	3	63,469	4
Ballymena	44,717	3	45,496	3	44,637	2	54,477	3
Coleraine	24,948	2	27,291	2	28,526	2	33,486	2
Enniskillen	24,865	2	26,674	2	29,751	2	34,502	2
Londonderry	50,626	3	50,589	3	61,940	3	60,866	3
Newry	25,418	2	26,462	2	28,747	2	33,993	2
Total	811,003	50	887,773	52	983,462	52	1,119,124	52

[1] Includes all centrally borne branch costs.

Inventors

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the support provided for inventors in Northern Ireland who wish to develop their invention with a view to production in Northern Ireland, and on whether he has any plans to review the effectiveness of such support.

Mr. Needham: The Local Enterprise Development Unit acts as the initial source of advice and assistance to inventors seeking to develop their inventions either on their own or with suitable commercial partners.

Inventors whose projects have technology as a key element will in future, be referred to the new industrial research and technology unit—IRTU—which was formally launched on 3 March 1992. The new organisation will concentrate the Government's research and development functions into a single unit and will provide single door access for individuals and companies to financial support and professional expertise for a wide range of innovatory projects. Advice is also available from the Industrial Science Centre on patents and support is given for initial patent searches.

ENERGY

Departmental Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many residential properties owned by his Department are *(a)* empty, *(b)* for sale on the open market, *(c)* intended for sale on the open market and *(d)* for sale to housing associations, in terms of numbers and percentage of stock.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department does not own any residential properties.

Offshore Licensing

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has for a further round of offshore licensing for the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Moynihan: Following the very successful 12th and frontier rounds announced two years ago, I am today announcing the 14th round of offshore licensing. Acreage in the round will be announced in three stages.

Acreage announced today comprises all remaining unlicensed acreage in the main mature areas of the northern, central and southern North sea which can be released. Any finds in these areas will back up existing production plans.

A second announcement, at the end of July, will cover acreage which is more speculative, either because the economic uncertainties are greater or because the areas concerned may pose greater operating problems. This category principally contains acreage on the margins of the main mature areas and acreage outside the main areas but in and around other areas which are currently licensed.

The third announcement, at the end of November, will cover true frontier acreage, where it will take long periods to prove up any finds and establish the economics for an infrastructure.

Taken together the three categories of acreage provide the basis of a continuing strategy for replacing United Kingdom continental shelf reserves, with the aim of ensuring that the United Kingdom continental shelf remains a major oil province for at least another 25 years.

As in previous rounds, it will be necessary in the case of many blocks to indicate any special features which ought to be taken into account by the operator in respect of activity under the licence. These features will reflect the concerns of defence, fishing, environmental, navigational and other interests, and will be made available by my Department as they are agreed with other Government Departments. Applicants will for the first time be required to submit a statement detailing their policy towards the environment.

I will tomorrow publish in the London, Edinburgh and Belfast *Gazettes* a formal announcement giving the detailed financial terms for the first category of acreage offered, the format of applications, the information required and the basis on which awards will be made. Applications for the first and second categories of acreage will be returnable by midday 16 December 1992. Applications for the third category of acreage will be returnable on 9 March 1993. I shall place in the Libraries of both Houses copies of this formal announcement.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Car Tax

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many unregistered persons making or importing chargeable vehicles into Northern Ireland from the Irish Republic have paid car tax in each of the last three financial years and the current year; and what, in each year, has been *(a)* the number of chargeable vehicles imported in each year and *(b)* what sums of tax were collected in each year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information on importations by unregistered persons is not readily available. It could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many chargeable vehicles imported into Northern Ireland, in each of the last three years and the current financial year, from *(a)* the Irish Republic and *(b)* elsewhere, car tax was paid; and what in each year and case were the sums paid in total.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The number of chargeable vehicles imported into Northern Ireland in the last three years is as follows:

	From Irish Republic	*From elsewhere*
1988-89	3,215	712
1989-90	2,437	970
1990-91	2,002	1,195
1991-92[1]	3,230	630

[1] To end February.

The information on revenue could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the average annual rate of growth of gross domestic product *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in Scotland (i) excluding North sea oil and gas and (ii) including North sea oil and gas, over the periods 1964 to 1970, 1970 to 1980, 1974 to 1979, 1979 to 1991 or the most recent available figures, 1980 to 1990 and 1987 to 1991.

Mr. Maples: The latest information for the United Kingdom is as follows:

Annual average growth rates in Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

	Total GDP	*GDP excluding oil and gas extraction*
1964-70	2·7	2·7
1970-80	1·8	1·4
1974-79	2·0	1·3
1979-89	2·2	2·2
1979-91	1·7	1·7
1980-90	2·5	2·5
1987-91	1·2	1·6

Available estimates for Scotland are not fully comparable with those for the United Kingdom. Such data as are available are published in table 3·5 of the "Scottish Economic Bulletin", June 1991 edition, which is in the House of Commons Library.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what growth in the number of passengers and in the number of vehicles, vessels and aircraft the board of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise estimates from *(a)* other European Community countries and *(b)* countries outside the European Community in the period up to 1993-94.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The board of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise does not produce authoritative statistics for passenger and transport movements. For its own planning purposes the Department estimates that the number of passengers from both European Community countries and from countries outside the European Community will increase by about 1·5 per cent. in 1992-93 and 4·1 per cent. in 1993-94.

The number of transport units, including containers, is expected to increase by 1·6 per cent. in 1992-93 and 6·5 per cent. in 1993-94. The percentage increases are estimated to be broadly similar for EC and non-EC movements in each category.

Investment and Research

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the OECD figures for Government investment per worker in France, the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maples: In 1989 OECD figures show that general government investment per civilian employee was £868 in France, £436 in the United States of America and £342 in the United Kingdom.

BT Share Offer

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the administrative costs of the British Telecom share offer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The costs to the Government in 1991-92 of the BT share offer are estimated to be as follows:

United Kingdom offers	*£ million*
Selling and other commissions	32·5
Marketing	17·2
Share Information Office	14·6
Prospectus production and distribution	6·6
Receiving and Agent Bank operations	23·8
Advisers' fees and expenses	6·4
Total (United Kingdom offers)	101·1
Overseas offers	3·9
Total (United Kingdom and Overseas offers)	105·0

These costs represent about 1·9 per cent. of the total proceeds due from the sale of shares to the Government, which are estimated at £5,403 million. The costs exclude stamp duty and VAT on services provided to the Government, which are not net costs to the Exchequer.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many residential properties owned by the Treasury are *(a)* empty, *(b)* for sale on the open market, *(c)* intended for sale on the open market and *(d)* for sale to housing associations, in terms of numbers and percentage of stock.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Treasury does not own any property.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many residential properties owned by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise are *(a)* empty, *(b)* for sale on the open market, *(c)* intended for sale on the open market and *(d)* for sale to housing associations, in terms of numbers and percentage of stock.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise does not currently own any residential properties.

Income Tax

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of adults not in full-time education pay income tax at the rate of 40 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Latest estimates for 1991-92 are that 1·6 million individuals—some 3½ per cent. of adults not in full-time education—are liable to income tax at the higher rate.

I regret that no information on the educational status of these individuals is available.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate, on the same basis as the ready reckoner published in the autumn statement, what is the effect on a one-earner, two-child family of spending in 1992-93 the same sum on *(a)* a 1p cut in the basic rate of income tax, *(b)* raising income tax thresholds above their indexed levels and *(c)* raising child benefits, assuming (i) no change in income support and family credit rates and (ii) corresponding changes in income support and family credit rates.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 24 February 1992]:* The cost in 1992-93 of *(a)* a 1p cut in the basic rate of income tax, is estimated to be £1,950 million, which would be worth roughly £2·50 a week to a married man on average male earnings, compared with statutory indexation.

(b) That amount would pay for an increase in income tax personal allowances and thresholds of 7¾ per cent. which would be worth almost £2 a week to a basic rate taxpayer, compared with statutory indexation.

(c) On the assumption that each child benefit rate was increased by the same cash amount, £1,950 million would pay for an increase of

(i) £4·50 per week per child if there were no corresponding changes to income-related benefit rates; or

(ii) £3·05 per week per child if adjustments were made to income-related benefits to ensure all families received the same increase.

Friendly Societies Bill

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make available notes on clauses for the Friendly Societies Bill prior to Second Reading.

Mr. Maples: Yes. Copies of notes on clauses are today being placed in the Vote Office and in the Libraries of the House for the convenience of Members.

Income Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish a table showing for 1990-91 and his estimate for the current financial year the number of males and females under pensionable age *(a)* with total incomes of more than £5,000 and less than £10,000 a year, the number assessed for tax and the amount of tax paid and *(b)* the number who earned more than £5,000 and less than £10,000 and the amount of national insurance contributions paid;

(2) if he will publish a table showing for 1990-91 and his estimate for the current financial year *(a)* the estimated number of males and females under pensionable age with total incomes of less than £5,000 a year, the number assessed for tax, the number who paid tax and the amount of tax paid and *(b)* the number of males and females who earned less than £5,000 a year, the number who paid national insurance contributions and the amount of such contributions.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 19 February 1992]:* Estimates of total income for income tax purposes for taxpayers are available from projections of the 1989-90 survey of personal incomes. These are the basis of the following estimates of the number of taxpayers in the specified ranges and the corresponding tax liabilities.

1990-91 levels of income

Total income £ per year	*Number liable to income tax (million)*	*Tax liability £ million*
Males aged under 65		
1–5,000	0·7	200
5,000–10,000	3·4	2,900
Females aged under 65		
1–5,000	1·7	400
5,000–10,000	3·8	3,400

1991-92 levels of income

Total income £ per year	*Number liable to income tax (million)*	*Tax liability £ million*
Males aged under 65		
1 5,000	0·6	100
5,000–10,000	3·1	2,500
Females aged under 65		
1–5,000	1·3	300
5,000–10,000	3·8	3,200

The following tables are based on new earnings survey estimates of weekly earnings of employees and the corresponding employees's NIC liabilities.

1990-91 levels of earnings

Annual equivalent of weekly earnings £	*Number of individuals (million)*	*Number liable to National Insurance (million)*	*National Insurance liability £ million*
Males under pensionable age			
1,-5,000	1·2	0·4	100
5,000-10,000	2·4	2·4	1,300
Females under pensionable age			
1,-5,000	4·1	1·9	300
5,000-10,000	3·7	3·7	1,700

1991-92 levels of earnings

Annual equivalent of weekly earnings £	*Number of individuals (million)*	*Number liable to National Insurance (million)*	*National Insurance liability £ million*
Males under pensionable age			
1,-5,000	1·1	0·3	100
5,000-10,000	1·9	1·9	1,000
Females under pensionable age			
1,-5,000	3·8	1·5	200
5,000-10,000	3·4	3·4	1,500

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Albania

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the amount of bilateral aid given by his Department to *(a)* the Albanian Government and *(b)* aid agencies and charities working in Albania since May 1991.

Mrs. Chalker: The information is as follows:

	£
(a) Nil	
(b) British Red Cross	200,000
Feed The Children	180,000
Oxfam	35,000

A further £135,000 will be allocated shortly, bringing the total to £550,000. Feed the Children has also been given a quantity of Ministry of Defence medical supplies which were surplus to requirements in Germany.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Task Forces

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list all those task forces currently in operation, giving dates for when they started, and projected dates for their wind-up and allocated funding for each year of their operation.

Mr. Leigh: Inner-city task forces currently in operation are: Middlesbrough, Moss Side and Hulme (Manchester), Bristol, West London, North Peckham (opened in 1986); Foleshill and Hillfields (Coventry), Nottingham (1987); East Birmingham (1988); Granby/Toxteth (Liverpool), Bradford, Deptford (1989); Derby, Wirral (1990); Hull, Hackney, South Tyneside (1991).

The task force initiative is a rolling programme. Decisions on which task forces are to close this year, and where new ones are to open, will take place in parallel with decisions on city challenge.

Allocated funding for each task force currently open is given in the table.

Summary of Task Force Funding 1986-92

Task Force	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Middlesbrough	710,315	1,104,937	867,204	711,314	1,181,240	1,125,379
Moss Side	187,690	528,770	873,575	2,323,469	2,024,551	1,093,333
Bristol	772,380	1,984,639	581,374	620.461	2,017,379	654,777
West London	187,300	869,231	959,947	462,926	1,296,688	1,486,922
North Peckham	470,620	981,696	1,275,092	883,365	1,249,183	1,825,618
Coventry	—	253,264	1,430,094	1,469,219	932,518	1,229,062
Nottingham	—	512,290	1,494,045	797,001	1,012,710	993,550
East Birmingham	—	—	330,335	1,366,680	1,025,743	951,237
Granby/Toxteth	—	—	—	576,335	1,441,605	1,518,053
Bradford	—	—	—	440,419	1,932,369	846,798
Deptford	—	—	—	205,708	1,663,991	989,005
Derby	—	—	—	—	218,830	961,811
Wirral	—	—	—	—	549,961	584,886
Hackney	—	—	—	—	—	25,950
Hull	—	—	—	—	—	115,670
South Tyneside	—	—	—	—	—	22,618

Note: The 1991-92 figures are up to January 1992.

Shipbuilding

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement about the work of the shipbuilding task force within his Department.

Mr. Leigh: The objective of the shipbuilding task force remains as described in my reply to the hon. Lady on 20 March 1991, *Official Report,* columns *161-62.*

Departmental Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many residential properties owned by his Department are *(a)* empty, *(b)* for sale on the open market, *(c)* intended for sale on the open market and *(d)* for sale to housing associations, in terms of numbers and percentage of stock.

Mr. Leigh: My Department does not own any properties suitable for residential accommodation.

New Houses (Warranty)

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received regarding the National House Building Council 10-year warranty for new houses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: A Monopolies and Mergers Commission —MMC—report on structural warranties for new homes was published in March last year. This recommended changes to the rules of the National House Building Council—NHBC—warranty scheme, to allow builders belonging to the scheme to place some of their new homes with a comparable alternative scheme. On publication my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry invited representations from interested parties on a number of alternative remedies. In response he received more than 100 letters from builders, trade associations and professional bodies, consumer organisations and members of the public, some supporting and some opposing changes to the NHBC scheme.

The MMC report recognised that the NHBC had over a number of years made an impressive contribution to the improvement of housing standards and provision of safeguards for purchasers of new homes. However, it also found that competition had started to bring substantial benefits. Discussions with the NHBC and other interested parties have been continuing with a view to finding a solution which brings the benefits of increased competition without prejudicing consumer interests.

Regional Assistance (North-east England)

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much regional assistance was provided under each scheme for the north-east of England in 1979, 1987 and the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: The table lists the amount of money spent on regional assistance in the north-east of England in the financial years 1979-80, 1987-88 and 1990-91, the latest year for which figures are available. Expenditure by calendar year is not readily available for some of the schemes.

£ million

	1979-80	*1987-88*	*1990-91*
Regional Selective Assistance	10·8	24·6	27·7
Regional Development Grants[1]	122·4	57·4	34·6
Regional Enterprise Grants[2]	—	—	2·4
English Estates[3]	12·5	21·5	18·3

[1] Includes expenditure under both the original scheme which closed to new applications in November 1984 and the revised scheme which replaced it in 1984 and in turn was closed to new applications in March 1988.

[2] Started in April 1988.

[3] Expenditure on factory building in the assisted areas of the north-east of England.

Beer and Cider (Foam)

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to introduce section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985 relating to beer or cider and foam; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: Following my Department's consultation with interested parties, I have today made a commencement order which provides that section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985 will come into force on 1 April 1994.

The lengthy implementation period will give publicans plenty of time to prepare and ensure that compliance costs are kept to a minimum. This law does not outlaw froth, but I strongly believe that consumers should get what they pay for, if a pint is ordered a pint of liquid beer is what they should get.

I have just decided that brim-measure glasses should not be prohibited. Licensees will therefore still be able to use these glasses as long as they serve a full liquid pint of beer or cider.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Departmental Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many residential properties owned by his Department are *(a)* empty, *(b)* for sale on the open market, *(c)* intended for sale on the open market and *(d)* for sale to housing associations, in terms of numbers and percentage of stock.

Mr. Eggar: This Department owns no residential property.

Pupil Placements

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many pupils in each local education authority are educated in maintained special schools outside their own local education authority area.

Mr. Fallon: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 28 February, *Official Report,* columns *619 to 21.*

Council for National Academic Awards

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) when he intends to close down the Council for National Academic Awards; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he has taken to ensure that all those students registered with the Council for National Academic Awards will be transferred to other degree awarding bodies by the date of closure of the Council for National Academic Awards without any change in conditions or fees payable by the student;

(3) how he will ensure that a national network of peer review is maintained after the abolition of the Council for National Academic Awards.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 16 December 1991, *Official Report,* column *31,* that the dissolution of the Council for National Academic Awards was likely to be at the end of March 1993. That remains the position. He also referred to the importance of arrangements being made for students to be able to continue on the course of study for which they enrolled, in the institution at which they enrolled and with the expectation of receiving a degree or other award at the end of that course of similar standing to the CNAA degree or award for which they initially registered. We remain confident that new validation agreements will be in place by the beginning of the 1992-93 academic year. On 15 January the Department wrote to all higher education institutions making it clear that students who had already paid a validation fee to the CNAA should not be charged a further fee by a new validating institution.

The new quality assurance organisation being established collectively by the higher education institutions will be responsible for scrutinising institutions' quality control systems and validation agreements, and will take over some other activities of the CNAA. The way in which validation is carried out will be a matter for individual institutions, taking account of views expressed by the new organisation. As my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement on 16 December indicated, the Open university is intending to offer a validation service broadly on existing CNAA lines.

Education Statistics, Northumberland

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the per capita spending for primary and secondary school pupils in Northumberland,

and the average per capita spending for all pupils, in 1979, 1987, and the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: The latest year for which actual spending information is available is 1989-90. Average school-based expenditure figures per nursery, primary and secondary pupil in Northumberland and for England as a whole are shown in the table.

The real-terms increases in per pupil spending between 1979-80 and 1989-90 were 41 per cent. in Northumberland and 44 per cent. for England. Most Government support for local authorities is by way of unhypothecated revenue support grant. It is then for each local authority to determine how to allocate its spending between schools and other services.

Net institutional expenditure[1] per pupil

Year	*Northumberland* Cash £	*Northumberland* 1989-90 prices[2] £	*England average* Cash £	*England average* 1989-90 prices[2] £
1979-80	515	1,030	515	1,030
1987-88	1,210	1,380	1,240	1,420
1989-90	1,450	1,450	1,485	1,485

[1] Net institutional expenditure covers the direct costs in schools of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the cost of school meals, home to school transport, LEA central administration, and financing costs of capital expenditure.

[2] Figures for 1979-80 and 1987-88 have been repriced to 1989-90 prices using the GDP (Market Prices) Deflator index.

Note: The figures are derived from LEAs' returns of their spending to the Department of the Environment and of their pupil numbers to the Department of Education and Science. Figures include nursery schools, information for which is not identified separately from that for primary schools.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will list the number of primary and secondary teachers in Northumberland in 1979, 1987 and for the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the pupil-to-teacher ratio in primary and secondary schools in Northumberland, and the average ratio for all pupils in 1979, 1987 and for the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: Information on the pupil-teacher ratios and the number of full-time equivalent teachers in maintained primary and secondary schools in Northumberland local education authority for the years 1979, 1987 and 1991 are given in the table.

Northumberland local education authority

Year	[1]*Full-time equivalent teachers* *Primary*	[1]*Full-time equivalent teachers* *Secondary*	[2]*"Within school" pupil-teacher ratios* *Primary*	[2]*"Within school" pupil-teacher ratios* *Secondary*	[3]*Overall pupil-teacher ratios*
1979	926	1,770	23·4	17·5	18·3
1987	832	1,765	23·1	16·3	17·8
1991	830	1,684	23·5	16·7	17·4

[1] Qualified teachers in schools only.

[2] The "within schools" PTRs are calculated using full-time equivalent numbers of qualified teachers in schools and full-time equivalent pupil numbers.

[3] The overall PTRs are calculated using full-time equivalent pupil numbers and the full-time equivalent of all teachers employed by the LEA in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools. This includes qualified teachers (including those not in schools and teachers providing short-term cover) as well as unqualified teachers such as student teachers, instructors and licensed teachers.

Grant-Maintained Schools

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the schools in Kent whose applications for grant-maintained status *(a)* he has approved, *(b)* he has rejected and *(c)* he is still considering.

Mr. Eggar: A total of 41 schools in Kent have published proposals for grant-maintained status to date. These are set out in the categories requested:

Grant-maintained schools in Kent

Approved

Wilmington Grammar School for Girls
The Maplesden Noakes School
The Cornwallis School
Wilmington Grammar School for Boys
St. George's CE School
Southlands School
Dartford Grammar School
Thamesview School
Homewood School
Wrotham School
Aylesford School
Dartford Grammar School for Girls
Simon Langton Boys Grammar
Oldborough Manor High School
Fulston Manor School
Senacre Technology School
Cranbrook School
The Sheppy School
The Skinners School
Angley School
Rainham Mark Grammar School
The Cantebury High School
Oakwood Park Grammar School
The Robert Napier School
Snodland Primary School

Rejected

Castlemount School
Swanscombe High School
Appledore Primary School
Edenbridge Middle School

Being considered

Cliffe Woods Middle School
Cliffe Woods Primary School
Hoo St. Werburgh Middle School
Meopham School
The Malling School
Sandown Court School
Sevenoaks High School for Girls
Archbishop's School
Borough Green County Primary School
Sir Roger Manwood's School
Chatham Grammar School for Girls

Sex Education

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the accuracy of the information imparted in sex education in schools for teenage girls.

Mr. Atkins: The implementation of those aspects of sex education which are included in national curriculum science are being monitored by Her Majesty's inspectorate and by local education authorities. The National Curriculum Council is also carrying out a detailed evaluation of how the core subjects are being delivered in the classroom. Beyond the statutory requirements of national curriculum science, schools' governing bodies are responsible for deciding whether any further sex education should be included in their schools' curriculum and, if they decide that additional sex education should be provided, for determining policy on its content and organisation.

School Transport

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangments are made for the provision of school transport to those children entitled to free transport in *(a)* grant-maintained schools and *(b)* city technology colleges.

Mr. Eggar: Local education authorities have a statutory duty to provide free transport for school pupils for whom they consider it necessary, including pupils who attend grant-maintained schools and city technology colleges. Information on local education authorities school transport arrangements is not collected centrally.

School Meals

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangments are made for the provision of school meals to those children entitled to free meals in *(a)* grant-maintained schools and *(b)* city technology colleges.

Mr. Eggar: Grant-maintained schools must provide a free school meal to any pupil who would be entitled to one in a local education authority-maintained school. Their annual maintenance grant makes provision for this.

City technology colleges are independent institutions and it is for them to make arrangements to provide meals free of charge to those children entitled to free school meals. City technology colleges grant from the Department make provision for this.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General how many complaints he has received about the charging for legal aid forms by magistrates courts; and if he will ensure that the legal aid application forms continue to be provided free of charge.

Mr. John Patten: I have been asked to reply. I have received only very occasional complaints. However, the question of charging is currently being considered by an interdepartmental working group reviewing the operation of the legal aid scheme in the magistrates courts.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Departmental Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many residential properties owned by his Department are *(a)* empty, *(b)* for sale on the open market, *(c)* intended for sale on the open market and *(d)* for sale to housing associations, in terms of numbers and percentage of stock.

Mrs. Rumbold: The latest available estimate of the information requested is:

(a) 345 (12·5 per cent.) properties are empty, of which 210 (7·7 per cent.) are retained for redevelopment, security reasons, essential reallocation or demolition, and are therefore not available for disposal;

(b) 120 (4·3 per cent.) properties are on the open market, of which 85 are the subject of an agreed sale and are awaiting completion;

(c) 15 (0·5 per cent.) properties are to be placed on the market for sale; and

(d) there are no special arrangements for sales to housing associations, but any properties on the market are available for purchase by housing associations if they consider them suitable.

Karamjit Singh Chahal

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will release from prison Karamjit Singh Chahal so that he may re-join his family in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Member to my written answer to him of 12 December 1991, *Official Report,* column *510.* The decision to detain Mr. Chahal is regularly reviewed, but at the present time I see no grounds for his release.

Amnesty International (Charities Bill)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from Amnesty International about the provisions of the Charities Bill.

Mr. John Patten: My officials have had one meeting with representatives of Amnesty International. We have also received six letters from right hon. and hon. Members forwarding letters from their constituents. These representations all concern the system of exemption orders for public charitable collections created by clause 72 of the Bill.

Nationality Applications

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time taken by the immigration and nationality department to determine an application for British nationality.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The average time taken for applications for British citizenship granted in February 1992 was 25 months.

Rave Parties

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many warehouse or rave parties are known by the police to have taken place in Gloucestershire in 1990 and 1991; and how many arrests were made in connection with these parties.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There were no warehouse or rave parties in Gloucestershire in 1990. In 1991 there were 16 such parties, resulting in 173 arrests.

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment is made of the impact on legal aid expenditure of proposals to close magistrates courts.

Mr. John Patten: Magistrates courts committees should take into account all relevant factors when deciding whether or not to close a courthouse including the possible impact upon legal aid expenditure. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave on 10 February, columns *344-45*, to the hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate).

Emergency Warning System

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive a report on a national emergency warning system.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend expects to receive a report from officials shortly.

Violence Against Women

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken during the current session to strengthen the powers of the courts to punish offenders who have committed violent crimes against women.

Mr. John Patten: There are high maximum penalties for the most serious violent crimes against women, as against any victim: life imprisonment is mandatory for murder and is the maximum penalty for manslaughter, rape and the most serious woundings. The courts' powers will be enhanced when the Criminal Justice Act 1991 comes into force in October. The Act enables courts to impose longer custodial sentences than justified by the seriousness of the offence upon violent or sexual offenders in order to protect the public from serious harm from them. The Act also gives courts power to order longer and more intensive supervision for sex offenders following their release from custody.

Drugs

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Home Department what was the total number of registered drug addicts in each of the last 12 years.

Mr. John Patten: The number of new addicts notified by doctors to the Home Office in each of the last 12 years is given in table 2 of the Home Office statistical bulletins "Statistics of the misuse of drugs: addicts notified to the Home Office, United Kingdom" for 1989 and 1990, copies of which are in the Library. The number of addicts renotified, which is available only for 1987 onwards, is given in table 1 of the 1990 publication.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offenders were prosecuted for offences relating to drugs in each of the last 12 years.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is contained in table 3.1 of the Home Office statistical bulletins "Statistics of the misuse of drugs: seizures and offenders dealt with, United Kingdom" for 1989 and 1990, copies of which are in the Library.

Bail Information

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up a bail information project in Gloucester.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that Gloucestershire probation service is conducting a feasibility study at Cheltenham and Gloucester magistrates courts and, depending on its outcome, may submit a bid for resources in due course.

Inquests

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will undertake a review into the inquest system.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend has no plans for such a review.

Wolds Remand Centre

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department estimates should be spent on a prisoner's diet per day at the Wolds remand centre.

Mrs. Rumbold: No such estimate was made in the course of inviting tenders for the management of Wolds prison. The Department's interest will be in ensuring that the contractors comply with the dietary standards set out in the operational specifications for the prison, a copy of which was placed in the Library on 2 May 1991.

Overturned Convictions

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people each year since 1985 have had convictions overturned because forensic evidence presented at trial has subsequently been reconsidered or challenged successfully.

Mr. John Patten: I regret that the information requested is not recorded centrally.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people each year since 1985 have had convictions for murder overturned.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 23 January 1992, column *317*.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his oral answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *821*, when he expects to announce proposals for ensuring secure accommodation for juvenile offenders remanded on bail.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has established a national steering group, with representatives from central Government, the local authority associations, the police, the probation service, the Crown prosecution service and voluntary organisations to plan the provision of secure accommodation to replace prison custody for remanded juveniles. We are anxious that the work should be concluded as quickly as possible.

Departmental Staff

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those parts of his Department, including executive agencies, carrying out reviews over the last 12 months into the pay and grading of staff and the firm of consultants engaged, where appropriate.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Forensic Science Service agency, assisted by PA Consulting Group, is carrying out a pay and grading review of scientific grades within the agency.

Operation Spaner

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was *(a)* the cost of the pre-trial hearings at Lambeth and Camberwell magistrates courts in 1990 in relation to Operation Spaner, *(b)* the cost of the Old Bailey trial proceedings in relation to Operation Spaner in December 1990 and *(c)* the cost of the Court of Appeal hearing and subsequent ruling in February 1992 in relation to Operation Spaner.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

The costs of the pre-committal and committal hearing at Lambeth and Camberwell magistrates courts were approximately £64,500 including the court costs, prosecution costs and the cost to the legal aid fund.

The cost of the trial at the central criminal court including the court costs, the prosecution costs and the legal aid costs was approximately £357,000.

The costs of the appeal are not yet fully available as the legal aid costs and the prosecution costs have yet to be determined.

EMPLOYMENT

Departmental Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many residential properties owned by his Department are *(a)* empty, *(b)* for sale on the open market, *(c)* intended for sale on the open market and *(d)* for sale to housing associations, in terms of numbers and percentage of stock.

Mr. Jackson: The numbers and percentages of residential properties for the Department are *(a)* 4, 100 per cent. *(b)* 4, 100 per cent. *(c)* nil *(d)* nil.

Unemployment

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the rise in unemployment in *(a)* London and *(b)* nationally over the 18 months.

Mr. Jackson: On the seasonally adjusted basis, unemployment rose by 189,200—92 per cent.—in London and 972,000—60 per cent.—in the United Kingdom between July 1990 and January 1992.

Medicopharma UK (Redundancy Payments)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when former employees of Medicopharma UK can expect to receive their company redundancy payments; if he will require their former employer to compensate them for the delay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Employees who are dismissed for redundancy and who satisfy the qualifying conditions are entitled to a lump sum payment from their employer. Questions arising as to the right of employees to a payment, or as to the amount of a payment, are matters for an industrial tribunal to determine on the application of the employees concerned.

Sheltered Workshops

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on provision for sheltered workshops and the sheltered placement scheme in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Howard: We are committed to providing sheltered employment for peole with severe disabilities. In the current financial year we are providing funds for an average of approximately 5,000 people in sheltered workshops and around 7,000 people under the sheltered placement scheme. In this financial year, in order to help meet the costs incurred by sponsors, we have already increased the annual grant ceiling per place for voluntary bodies by £280 to £3,800 and that for local authorities by £240 to £3,000. I am now further increasing these grant ceilings for this financial year by £100 to £3,900 and £3,100 respectively. The total increase this year over last are 10·8 per cent. and 12·3 per cent respectively.

In 1992-93 I am providing £3·15 million more than this year's provision for current expenditure for sheltered workshops and the sheltered placement scheme. These additional funds will again be used to help meet the costs of voluntary bodies and local authorities by increasing the grant ceilings by a further £240 and £170 respectively to bring them to £4,140 for voluntary bodies and £3,270 for local authorities. This represents incrases of 6·2 per cent and 5·5 per cent respectively.

In addition, I shall be making available just over £10 million in 1992-93 for capital expenditure which represents an increase of just over £4·1 million on this year. This money will be available to help meet the cost of essential refurbishment and development where that is clearly consistent with our long-term objectives for sheltered employment.

In order to ensure that we make the best use of available rsources, I have had to decide that the planned number of places nationally provided by these forms of sheltered provision taken together will remain the same in 1992-93 as 1991-92. However, previous patterns of turnover on the sheltered placement scheme indicate that some 1,000 existing places are likely to become vacant to allow new entrants to join the programme.

I will be considering future sheltered employment provision in the light of the review of the current funding arrangements for sheltered employment which is now in hand. I will also take into account the findings of research we have commissioned on aspects of the sheltered employment programme. The consultative document "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities" recommended that there should be a shift in the balance from workshop provision to sheltered placements. That view was widely supported in the course of consultations and it remains our intention. Sheltered placements promote integration and offer opportunities in a wider range of occupations and locations. Specific decisions on rebalancing will take account of the outcome of the funding review and the research. The numbers in workshops and placements may be subject to change in the light of these decisions.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much regional assistance was provided under each scheme for the north-east of England in 1979, 1987 and the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The amount of regional assistance provided to the north-east of England is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

However, this Department has a wide range of employment, training and enterprise schemes which are available in the north-east, as elsewhere. These measures include Restart courses and the job interview guarantee scheme delivered by the Employment Service to help the long-term unemployed in their search for jobs and employment training and enterprise allowance scheme delivered through the training and enterprise councils, to help unemployed people learn new skills or to start up in business.

SCOTLAND

Recreation Projects

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a list of recreation projects built in the city of Glasgow in the last five years which have had support from governmental or European Community funds; and if he will indicate the total project costs and Government or European contribution levels.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Not all the information requested is held centrally. The available figures and a list of the projects supported by governmental or EC funds are set out in the table below. The total capital building costs for urban aid projects was £4·417 million. The Government's grant contribution was 75 per cent. of this figure.

Recreational projects built in the city of Glasgow with governmental or European Community funds 1985-1991

	Grant awarded £	*Total cost of project* £
Scottish Sports Council Grants		
Kelvin Hall, Conversion	500,000	3,600,000
Greenfields, Sand Carpet Pitch	40,425	50,425
Greenfields, Sand/Slit Pitch	7,500	10,000
Scottish Amateur Wrestling Association, Equipment	8,066	10,000
Kelvin Hall, Timing Equipment	60,000	60,000
Springburn, Demonstration Indoor Sports Centre	150,000	815,052
Springburn, Management Information Centre	18,000	18,000
Scottish Karate Board of Control, Scoreboards	2,600	2,600
Jordanhill, Sports Science Support Service	5,000	5,000
Scottish Amateur Ballroom Dancing Association, Equipment	3,840	3,840
St. Marks Badminton Club	700	1,400
Rutherglen Cruising Club	2,000	5,000
Kelvin Hall, Athletics Track	103,000	515,000
Helenvale, Hockey	75,000	585,500
Angel Lights, Skatepark	2,000	4,000
Willowbank Bowling Club	1,000	2,000
Kelvin Hall, Karate Mats	3,500	3,500
Kelvin Hall, Promotional Video	11,000	15,350
Kelvin Hall, Sports Medicine	8,470	8,470
Glasgow Green, Croquet	3,986	9,800
Glasgow Lions American Football Club, Equipment	1,000	6,000
Clydesdale Cricket Club, Equipment	1,000	3,980
Kelvin Hall, Climbing Wall	18,034	30,872
EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND ASSISTED PROJECTS		
Strathclyde Integrated Development Operational Programme		
McLellan Galleries	1,491,120	4,560,000
Museum of Education	249,600	492,0[illegible]
Glasgow Concert Hall	8,224,050	25,150,000
Glasgow Film Theatre	25,000	100,000
Art Lover's House	50,000	100,000
Scottish Youth Theatre	50,000	100,000
Glasgow Green Improvements	200,000	400,000
Glasgow Cathedral Precinct, Environmental Improvements	114,689	229,378
Glasgow National Programme of Community Interest		
Kelvin Hall	3,496,350	6,357,000
People's Palace	319,000	580,000
Pollok Park	187,000	340,000
Information Centre	137,500	250,000
Glasgow Cathedral Precinct	275,000	500,000

Recreational projects built in the City of Glasgow for which funding information is not held centrally

Scottish Development Agency/Scottish Enterprise/Glasgow Development Agency

Garnethill Activity Park, Environmental Works
Barlia Pitches, General Funding Support/Environmental Works
Garthamlock Central Park, Environmental Works
Cambusland Football Pitches, Environmental Works
Glasgow Cathedral Precinct, Townscape Improvements
McLellan Galleries, Building Facelift
Museum of Transport, Floodlighting
Kelvingrove Art Galleries and Museum, Building Facelift

Urban Programme Grants

Balornock East Youth Centre
Barlanark Theatre Workshop and Adaptations
Barlia All-Weather Pitch
Bridgeton Youth Club
Burnhill Recreation Proposals
Business and the Arts Govan
Castlemilk Flume
Commercial Court Play Area
Community Arts/Culture—"Animature"
Community Inflatables
Drumchapel Detached Youth Project
Drumchapel Sports Centre Improvements
Drumchapel Youth Centre—Access to Disabled Young People
Easthall Play and Recreation Area Easterhouse
Enterprise Theatre—Govan
Floodlighting—St. Riochs School Playing Fields
Games Court Calvay Crescent
Garthamlock Visual Statement (Resource)
Installation of a Boom—Drumchapel Swimming Pool
James Lindsay Memorial Park
Lauriston Youth Centre
Milton Creative Playpark
Muirglen Playpark
Oatlands Leisure Gardens—Disabled Gardening Project
Peterson Park Tenants Hall—Youth Centre
Play Area Lochend Easterhouse
Pollockshields Library—Project Room
Possilpark Youth Action Project
Reidvale Adventure Playground (Joint with GDC)
Royston Community Building
Springburn Museum and Exhibition Centre
St. Mungo's Riding Centre for the Disabled
Upgrade Gairbraid
Westwood South Studio
Woodside Youth Point
Yoker Teenage Library
Youth Action—Govan

Departmental Staff

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those parts of his Department, including executive agencies, carrying out reviews over the last 12 months into the pay and grading of staff, and the firm of consultants engaged, where appropriate.

Mr. Lang: In accordance with Government policy, my Department keeps pay and grading structures under review. Internal review teams check on grading as part of annual reviews across my Department, but over the last 12 months no reviews of pay have been carried out in my Department, including in executive agencies, by either internal or external review teams.

Market Testing Programme

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list each private sector consultancy firm which has been retained by each agency within his Department, and for his Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme; and whether the appointment in each case was the result of competitive tendering.

Mr. Lang: Following competitive tendering, Coopers and Lybrand, Deloitte has been retained to advise the Scottish Office and its executive agencies on the market testing programme.

Building Security

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial assistance is available to groups of owner-occupiers who, acting together, are seeking to improve security of their homes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There is no specific assistance for this purpose. However, local authorities may at their discretion give improvement grant for some security measures, generally as part of a comprehensive rehabilitation of houses.

Roads Report

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will publish the roads report; and if he will make a statement about progress on trunk road schemes during 1991-92 and those it is proposed to start in the next three years.

Mr. Lang: I am today publishing the report, "Roads, Traffic and Safety 1992", copies of which have been placed in the Library together with an associated summary.

In the last fortnight, there have been three major Scottish publications dealing with road accidents, roads in the countryside, and the operational management of the road network. A consultation document will also be published tomorrow on the options for improving travel links around the Forth estuary. The report I am publishing today puts all these initiatives in the context of our overall strategic plans for the 1990s which have been developed following the completion of a major review of Scotland's key roads. The report details our medium-term strategy for the further improvement and better management of the network. It considers what further developments might be expected in the longer term. It sets out our road safety achievements and future objectives, and considers the special needs of local roads in urban areas.

I am also listing those major schemes planned to start in the three years ahead following the increase in resources I announced at the end of last year under public expenditure plans for road construction. The range and importance of the schemes selected demonstrates our commitment to the strategic goals which are set out in the report for the improvement of the trunk road network.

Schemes with an estimated cost of over £3 million started since 1 April 1991 or for which contracts are expected to be placed before 31 March 1992:

M8 St James Interchange
M74 Maryville-West Fullarton Road
A74(M) Nether Abington-Elvanfoot
A96 Bucksburn Diversion
A9 Greenloaning-Blackford
A929 Tarbrax-Forfar

These schemes have a total value in excess of £100 million.

Schemes with an estimated cost of over £3 million expected to start between 1 April 1992 and 31 March 1995:

1992-93
A94 Brechin Bypass (dualling)
A74(M) Lockerbie Bypass (Muirhouse-Water of Milk)
A74(M) Water of Milk-Ecclefechan
A74(M) Eaglesfield-Kirkpatrick Fleming
(or alternative A74([illegible] scheme)
A830 Morar Bypass (Locha[illegible] Doilead-Kinsadel)
A87 Skye Bridge Approach Roads
M8 Newbridge to Edinburgh City Bypass
1993-94 and 1994-95
A77 Ayr Road Route
A74(M) Paddy's Rickle-Greenhillstairs
A96 Kintore Bypass
A96 Keith Bypass
A77 Glasgow to Ayr dualling (Fenwick—B764)
A1 Tranent-Haddington
A8/M8 North Lanarkshire access improvements

These schemes have a total value in excess of £330 million. Our plans are, of course, subject to the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures and the necessary preparatory work.

The work in progress and planned will fulfil our commitment to dual the A9 between Stirling and Perth. Our commitment to dual the Perth to Aberdeen route will also be fulfilled. The Perth-Aberdeen route will be renumbered the A90, thus creating the arterial M90/A90 route from Edinburgh to Aberdeen.

The schemes being announced for the A74 upgrading mean that over 60 per cent. of the new motorway to replace the A74 in Scotland is already either open, under construction or firmly programmed to start.

The Glasgow-Ayr motorway/near motorway route will be taken forward with the construction of the new trunk road section outwith Glasgow, to meet Strathclyde regional council's new M77 road, together with the first of the two new dualling schemes on the remainder of the route.

The plans include provision of the two remaining sections of the A8 upgrading. The M8 Newbridge-Edinburgh scheme is subject to the results of the public local inquiry recently completed; the M8 north Lanarkshire scheme timetable is ambitious, but, with the continued co-operation of all concerned, I am sure it can be achieved.

Following our announcement on the A1, financial provision has been made to commence the dualling of the route.

In addition to the major schemes starts, funding for other schemes, road safety schemes and route action plans is being substantially increased. We will continue the very good progress which has already been made on the A96 Aberdeen-Inverness; A7 Edinburgh-M6; and A1 Edinburgh-Newcastle action plans. The A90 Perth-Dundee road will be upgraded to near motorway standard. New route action plans will be developed for the A76 between Dumfries and Kilmarnock and the A830 west of Lochailort. Further improvements to the A9 north of Perth will be carried out, including the provision of improved overtaking opportunities, also as part of a route action plan.

Secondary Schools Report

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received the report of the committee established under the chairmanship of Professor John Howie to review curriculum and examinations in the fifth and sixth years of Scottish secondary schools.

Mr. Lang: I am glad to announce the publication today of the report of the committee which we appointed to review the curriculum and examinations in the fifth and sixth years of secondary education. As education Minister I initiated this study in 1990 and I am most grateful to Professor Howie and to his colleagues for a thorough and comprehensive review of this important area of school education and for their thoughtful and challenging recommendations.

There is no doubt that we must aim to have in Scotland a system of secondary education which draws the best from our traditions, and which compares well with the best that is available in Europe and beyond. We must ensure that there are appropriate qualifications in place to match the needs of the increasing number of pupils who are staying on after the fourth year—already 70 per cent.—to find a rewarding and relevant education.

At the same time, changes of the dimension now recommended by the Howie committee need careful deliberation and wide consultation within the education system before they are introduced.

I have decided therefore to publish this major report now and to invite all interested parties to comment on it in the period running to the end of this year. To assist this process we are arranging for the report summary to be printed separately and to be made available free of charge from the Scottish Office Education Department.

Professor Howie and his committee have produced a report of quality and authority. It deserves to be considered with care and without undue haste. I hope no one will rush to judgment, but rather that we will all study his proposals thoroughly and reflect on the way forward.

Careers Service

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has now completed his consideration of the publication of careers service inspection reports in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The careers service has a key role to play in helping young people make the transition from school to employment and training. The Government wish to see a greater role for employers in the management of the service and have encouraged the formation of partnerships towards this end. It is also important and in accordance with the Government's citizens charter that the service should be accountable for its performance to parents, employers and the public. It is right therefore that the reports of the careers service inspectorate in Scotland should be published and, accordingly, publication will apply to reports of inspections begun on and after 1 April this year.

Illegitimate Births

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of illegitimate births to teenage girls in each year since 1980 in each registry area giving the age in years of the teenage mothers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* Since the tabulated information will be lengthy, I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Tayside Health Board

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will place in the Library a copy of the business plan of the central pharmaceutical unit of Tayside health board;

(2) if he will place in the Library a copy of the contract with Tayside health board for the provision of the manufacture of "specialties", as outlined in SOHHD/DGM (1991) 29.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 4 March 1992]:* I do not intend placing a copy in the Library of the contract with Tayside health board for the manufacture of "special" medicines or the business plan of the central pharmaceutical unit of Tayside health board. These documents are "commercially confidential".

EC Drinking Water Directive

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) of 21 January, *Official Report*, columns *164-74*, what is his estimate of the total population of the supply zones listed, where water quality does not fully comply with the requirements of the EC drinking water directive.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My answer of 21 January 1992 to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey listed those zones currently subject to improvement undertakings given by water authorities because one or more of the standards set in the water quality regulations has been infringed at some time. The total population of the zones listed is about 2·5 million. Well over half that population receives water which has breached only one of the 57 standards and in many cases breaches were minor or occasional. Water authorities' annual reports for July to December 1990 showed that in that period many of the zones listed had no failures of the standards concerned.

The population of zones listed as not meeting the standard for iron is almost 0·5 million. In most of these cases the water put into supply fully meets the standard but old iron water mains may cause occasional failures at consumers' taps. Zones for which the undertaking relates only to the standard for trihalomethanes, a United Kingdom standard not set in the EC directive, account for a population of about another 0·5 million.

WALES

Recession

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the effects of the recession upon the Welsh economy.

Mr. David Hunt: Wales cannot be isolated from the recession affecting the United Kingdom economy and that of many other industrialised countries. Although the business community is going through a difficult period and unemployment is rising, the effect on Wales has been less severe than elsewhere. Since unemployment began to rise in March 1990, the difference between the Welsh and United Kingdom seasonally adjusted work force rates has reduced from 0·9 percentage points to 0·3 percentage points.

Unemployment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he is taking to tackle *(a)* short-term and *(b)* long-term unemployment in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government now offer a more comprehensive range of programmes than ever to help all unemployed people back to work. In July last year we announced a substantial package of measures to complement the existing programmes provided by the Employment Service and the training and enterprise councils. It includes expert advice and help in looking for a job, and for the long-term unemployed extra training provision and the new work experience programme, employment action.

In addition my Department, the Welsh Development Agency and other Government agencies also operate a wide range of other measures aimed at stimulating economic development in Wales. The Welsh Office and all the other relevant bodies will continue to look for, and respond swiftly to, development opportunities that arise which have the potential to reduce unemployment.

Apprenticeships

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to increase the number of apprenticeships in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government are already providing considerable support for employer-based apprenticeships through the youth training programme. However, it is primarily a matter for employers to determine how best to manage their training requirements in line with business needs.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has for the future structure of the fishing industry in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: My continuing aims are to provide conditions for a viable fishing industry in Wales, including the sea fisheries sector, aquaculture and freshwater fisheries, and to promote the conservation and sound management of fish stocks. These policies will continue to be implemented through a range of statutory and administrative measures, including schemes of financial assistance.

Cash Limits

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what changes he proposes to make to his Department's cash limits for 1991-92.

Mr. David Hunt: The cash limit for Welsh Office/local authorities capital—LACAP—will be reduced by £16,323,000 from £397,362,000 to £381,039,000 and the cash limit for Welsh Office/Housing for Wales will be increased by £17,323,000 from £111,224,000 to £128,547,000.

These changes largely reflect a transfer of resources—£17,323,000—from local authorities to Housing for Wales which will enable housing associations to provide additional housing units.

The reduction in WO/LACAP in respect of this transfer has been partly offset by an increase of £1 million as a result of a transfer of provision from the Lord Chancellor's Department. A corresponding reduction is being made in the cash limit for class X, vote 1. This transfer will facilitate the provision of courtroom facilities at Swansea.

Local Government

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library copies of the responses he has received to his consultation papers on the structure and internal management of local government in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I am today placing in the Library of the House copies of the responses to each consultation paper from the Welsh local authority associations, individual authorities and from representative bodies. Responses from members of the public are available for consultation in the Welsh Office library, Cathays Park, Cardiff.

Youth Training

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the range of unit price training week costs in Wales for youth training indicating what are the higher and lower cost levels.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is confidential.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the operating surplus of each TEC in Wales for the current financial year; and of each surplus, how much has been committed to date.

Mr. David Hunt: Information on the operating surpluses made in the current financial year will be published in due course by each TEC in its end of year accounts. Discussions with TECs on their plans for 1992-93 are in progress, and include consideration of how TECs will use their operating surpluses.

Departmental Staff

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those parts of his Department, including executive agencies, carrying out reviews over the last 12 months into the pay and grading staff and the firm of consultants engaged, where appropriate.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committees

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what is the total annual cost of the staff of Select Committees.

Mr. Beith: The current annual remuneration of permanent staff of the Committee Office of the Clerk's Department amounts to £2,327,980. Some staff in other offices of the Department provide services to Select Committes in addition to their other duties, but it is not possible separately to quantify this element of their work in staff cost terms.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Departmental Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many residential properties owned by the Duchy are *(a)* empty, *(b)* for sale on the open market, *(c)* intended for sale on the open market and *(d)* for sale to housing associations, in terms of numbers and percentage of stock.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Duchy of Lancaster owns a number of residential properties which are used solely for agricultural purposes—such as farmhouses or farm workers' cottages—or for housing staff, or which are held on long ground leases. These properties are excluded from the figures given:

Of the balance of 240 residential properties,

(a) nine are empty, or 3·75 per cent. of the total owned, all of which are in the course of being re-let—some after modernisation works have been completed;
(b) one property, or 0·8 per cent. of the total, is vacant awaiting sale;
(c) one, or 0·8 per cent. of the total, is intended for sale on the open market; and
(d) none is for sale to housing associations.

HEALTH

Occupational Health Staff

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current number of occupational health staff in each health authority in England; and if he will publish a breakdown showing *(a)* the number of nurses with OHNC qualifications, *(b)* nurses undertaking OHNC qualifications, *(c)* nurses without OHNC qualifications, *(d)* full-time occupational health consultants, *(e)* full-time occupational health physicians and *(f)* GP sessions within occupational health departments.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The numbers—whole-time equivalents—of hospital occupational health staff, including consultants, employed by regional, district and special health authorities in England at 30 September 1990, the latest date for which information is available, are given in the table:

Authority	*Administration and Clerical*	*Hospital Medical*		*Nursing*	*Total*
		Consultants	*Others*		
Northern	8·2	1·0	1·7	31·3	42·2
Yorkshire	11·9	1·0	3·0	46·7	62·6
Trent	32·2	4·0	3·3	52·8	92·3
East Anglian	11·2	0·0	1·7	20·6	33·5
North West Thames	11·8	1·0	2·3	49·3	64·3
North East Thames	21·8	4·0	3·2	55·6	84·5
South East Thames	16·7	4·0	5·8	45·9	72·4
South West Thames	13·5	2·0	0·3	44·4	60·1
Wessex	12·0	1·0	2·0	35·0	50·0
Oxford	14·5	0·0	0·5	29·2	44·2
South Western	14·2	1·0	2·5	37·0	54·7
West Midlands	22·4	0·0	5·9	64·6	92·9
Mersey	12·3	1·0	2·7	35·5	51·5
North Western	15·3	3·0	4·5	66·8	89·6
SHAs	0·5	0·0	0·4	5·5	6·4
England	218·4	23·0	39·8	620·1	901·2

Data are not available on "occupational health physicians".

Data relating to OHNC qualifications, GPs and community health service staff in occupational health are not available centrally.

Radiation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to evaluate the work of the Medical Research Council radiation biology unit on establishing links between low dose radiation and cell abnormality; and what additional guidance he proposes to give to hospitals engaging in radiotherapy treatment and to the National Radiological Protection Board.

Mr. Dorrell: The study by Kadim et al published in *Nature* on 20 February 1992, a copy of which is available in the Library, is one of numerous studies being conducted in this area. I am advised that whilst the reported findings of this relatively limited study pose interesting questions, relating to the response of cells to alpha particle irradiation, they should not be judged in isolation. The authors themselves have stated that this is only a "first and unexpected" step in a chain of research. The National Radiological Protection Board is aware of this study and is conducting related research. The results of the study have been drawn to the attention of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment which is being kept fully informed of all research in this area. No additional guidance to radiotherapy units is currently needed.

Hip Replacements

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines he has issued about the use of plastic in hip joint replacement operations; and how many operations are still carried out using metal in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has not issued any guidelines on the use of plastic in hip joint replacement operations.

All hip joint operations carried out in the United Kingdom use one or more metal components as part of the joint replacement device. Metal components may be used in combination with other metals, plastics and ceramics, depending upon the design of the particular hip system selected by the clinician.

The number of hip replacement operations in England for 1990-91 was 44,477. Information relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, for Scotland and for Northern Ireland.

Dentists

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will meet the Staffordshire local dental committee to discuss their concerns about dentists henceforth offering private treatment only to patients.

Mr. Dorrell: I have asked officials to discuss dental provision with the Staffordshire local dental committee.

HIV

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women who have been diagnosed as having the HIV virus in the Greater London area as of 18 February.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Data on residence are not available on the HIV-1 infection reports received at the Public Health Laboratory Service AIDS centre of the communicable disease surveillance centre (CDSC). The region where the test took place may not be a good indicator of the region of residence of the individual tested.

Within the four Thames regions 10,282 reports of HIV-1 infected people have been received at CDSC—9,277 men, 949 women and 56 where the sex was not stated on the rep[illegible]hese data are cumulative from when testing began in late 1984 to the end of December 1991, and is for adults only.

Ambulances

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average age of the ambulance vehicles of the London ambulance service; and how many vehicles are *(a)* between three and five years old and *(b)* five years or more.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Jim Harris, the chairman of the London Ambulance Service, for details.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance his Department has issued on the expected working life of ambulance vehicles; and what information his Department has on the actual average working life of ambulance vehicles.

Mr. Dorrell: Information on vehicle life is not collected centrally.

Current guidance relates to capital provision for routine replacement programmes, based on glass-reinforced plastic-bodied ambulances. Under normal standards of high maintenance, such provision should be based on an assumed vehicle life of seven years or 140,000 miles. The guidance is not necessarily appropriate to all coach-built vehicles or to other types of ambulance vehicle, and health authorities are free to modify the guidelines to take account of local conditions and other relevant factors, such as maintenance costs and frequency of use.

Hospitals (Crime)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many incidents of reported crime against patients and staff have taken place in national health service hospitals in the past 12 months.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not collected centrally. General managers are responsible for arrangements for security of patients and staff at NHS hospitals.

Mental Illness

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many crisis intervention centres for the mentally ill are available at present; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not collected centrally.

Inquests

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many inquests were held into deaths at the workplace in the last five years.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is not held in the form requested. The number of inquests held as a result of deaths from accidents at the workplace and registered in each of the latest five years is shown in the table.

Year	*Number of inquests*
1986	338
1987	299
1988	280
1989	339
1990	355

Youth Treatment Service

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a policy and management specification for the youth treatment service; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Details of the new structure of the youth treatment service were given in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) on 21 November 1991 at columns *311-12*. This will come into effect on 1 April 1992.

A copy of the policy and management specification for the youth treatment service is today being placed in the Library.

1991 Census

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how work is progressing on analysing the 1991 census; and when results from the computer-processed data will be published.

Mr. Dorrell: Work on the clerical processing has progressed well and many tasks have been completed before their target dates. However, there has been some delay in the computer processing, caused by the need to amend the original system to cope with a particular form of ambiguity in the way some census forms had been completed. A routine data quality audit showed that some

400,000 people, who were apparently not students, had completed the question on term time address as though they were students. The correction of this misclassification is in hand, but it is causing some delay to the publication of census results.

The monitors for each county and Scottish region containing key results for each local authority area are now expected to be published between April and September 1992. Part 1 of the full reports for each county and Scottish region—containing results from all the census questions for which 100 per cent. of answers are processed —are expected to be published between June and December 1992, and part 1 of the national reports for England and Wales and for Scotland by February 1993. These dates are dependent on smooth running of the processing systems. There will also be delay to part 2 of the county, regional and national reports and the topic volumes.

A provisional revised timetable for the county and regional monitors and part 1 of the county, regional reports, and for the associated statistical products is given in issue 19 of the "Census Newsletter", a copy of which is in the Library. A revised timetable for the remaining statistics will be issued as soon as possible.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many residential properties owned by his Department are *(a)* empty, *(b)* for sale on the open market, *(c)* intended for sale on the open market and *(d)* for sale to housing associations, in terms of numbers and percentage of stock.

Mr. Dorrell: A survey in 1990 indicated that about 14,000 NHS residential units—15 per cent. of the stock —were unoccupied. Of these 11,500 units were "bedsits" and about 1,000 were shared flats. The reasons for unoccupancy range from the need for accommodation to be available for new staff, to accommodation being empty whilst being refurbished or awaiting demolition or sale.

Health authorities and NHS trusts are responsible for the management of NHS residential accommodation and the sale of property which becomes surplus. The disposal of surplus property is within guidelines issued by the Department. Details of sales are not held centrally.

Children Act 1989

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps the Government are taking to assist voluntary organisations in connection with implementation of the Children Act 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We made available £250,000 in 1991-92 specifically for training in the Children Act for the voluntary sector.

Copies of the nine volumes of the Children Act guidance and regulations and the other Children Act publications were issued free of charge to the voluntary sector.

Children Act training materials commissioned by the Department were also supplied to voluntary organisations.

Our centrally funded child abuse training initiative grant, almost £1 million this financial year, has helped a range of organisations to assess the impact of the Children Act and to bring some of their own material up to date in the light of it.

Voluntary organisations also have an important part to play in local authorities' review of day care services in their area. The Department is currently funding in its under-fives initiative for development officers, based in different parts of the country, who have a remit to improve relationships between the relevant local authority and the voluntary sector. These posts will help the success of the review process.

Under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, local authorities have a new duty to provide a range of services for children in need to promote their upbringing within their families. They will need to collaborate with the voluntary sector in the provision of such services. To help with this, the Department it to provide funding to voluntary organisations for three years, starting in 1992-93, under the family support initiative—total funding, £500,000 per annum.

The Government also provide support to a wide range of voluntary organisations in the child care field under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968.

Liverpool Family Service Unit

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from the Liverpool family service unit concerning its possible closure; and what reply has been sent.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 20 February, at column *272*.

Northern Regional Health Authority

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the level of spending by the Northern regional health authority in 1979, 1987 and the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested, which is derived from the annual accounts of the health authorities comprising the Northern region for the financial years 1979-80, 1987-88 and 1990-91—the latest available—is shown in the table.

The figures—when expressed at 1991-92 prices—represent real terms increases of 26·8 per cent. for revenue expenditure and 35·3 per cent. for capital expenditure between 1979-80 and 1990-91.

Northern region—Total expenditure on hospital and community health services (HCHS)

	Revenue		*Capital*	
	£000 (cash)	*£000 (at 1991-92 prices)*	*£000 (cash)*	*£000 (at 1991-92 prices)*
1979-80	337,996	785,842	27,590	64,146
1987-88	726,424	962,367	52,432	69,462
1990-91	931,400	996,598	81,122	86,800

Source:

Annual accounts of the Northern regional health authority (RHA) and the district (formerly area) health authorities comprising the Northern region.

Notes:

1. Expenditure on the HCHS covers services directly managed and/or accounted for by the health authorities (at the relevant time) including hospital, community health, patient transport (i.e. ambulance), blood transfusion and other services.

2. The figures for 1990-91 are as yet subject to audit. All figures have been expressed at 1991-92 prices by the use of gross domestic product deflators.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors and nurses were employed by the Northern regional health authority in 1979, 1987 and the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is given in the table.

Year at 30 September	*Medical and Dental*[1]	*Nursing and Midwifery*[2]
1979	2,530	[3]23,940
1987	2,810	27,540
1990	2,990	[4]27,310

Note: The slight fall in the figures of nursing and midwifery staff in post between 1987 and 1990 relates to three separate factors: the transfer of senior nurses in management jobs from the senior nurse pay structure to the senior management pay structure; the inclusion of Project 2000 nursing students in staff-in-post returns; and the cessation of enrolled nurse training.

Source: Department of Health medical and non-medical censuses.

[1] Includes permanent paid, honorary and locum staff.

[2] Includes agency staff.

[3] Not adjusted for reduction in nurses' working hours during 1980-81 (from 40 to 37·5 hours per week).

[4] Figures are rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalents.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of people on and the duration of waiting lists in the Northern regional health authority in 1979, 1987 and the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is given in the table. Provisional figures show that since 1987 the number of patients waiting over two years has fallen by more than 83 per cent. and the number waiting over one year by 36 per cent. The region expects to have no patient waiting over two years by 31 March.

Waiting lists

	[1]1979	*1987*	*[2]1991*
In-patients			
Number waiting over one year	9,526	6,853	4,213
Number waiting over two years	—	2,525	488
Total number waiting	47,642	37,420	39,749
Day cases			
Number waiting over one year	—	1,290	990
Number waiting over two years	—	1,004	100
Total number waiting	—	10,059	16,904
Total all cases	n.a.	47,479	56,653

[1] Day case waiting lists and over two years waiters were first collected in 1987.

[2] Provisional figures for December 1991.

Infertility Treatment

Mr. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the national health service budget has been dedicated to infertility treatment in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are waiting for infertility treatment by region, for each of the last five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information about waiting lists for the treatment of specific conditions is not held centrally.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give by region details of the regional facilities providing infertility treatment;

(2) how many people in the west midlands region received infertility treatment in *(a)* the national health service and *(b)* privately in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available centrally.

Private Health Insurance

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state *(a)* for each year since 1978 and *(b)* for each region (i) the number and (ii) the percentage of the population covered by private health insurance.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 28 February at columns *659-60*. The information is not collected regionally.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many awards of attendance allowance were backdated in each of the years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 under regulation 9 of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations, where a claim for income support has been treated as a claim for attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people living in the London borough of Wandsworth have received the cold weather heating payments during the last four months.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the Library.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many residential properties owned by his Department are *(a)* empty, *(b)* for sale on the open market, *(c)* intended for sale on the open market and *(d)* for sale to housing associations, in terms of numbers and percentage of stock.

Mr. Jack: Of the 45 properties on the Department's estate, only the 20 resettlement units could be described as residential property. Of these, one—5 per cent.—is empty and is for sale on the open market. By April 1992 a further four—20 per cent.—will be released for sale; one to a housing association and three on the open market.

Claimant Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the number of persons in receipt of supplementary benefit or income support in each year since 1979, both in total and by type of claimant, including *(a)* the unemployed, *(b)* lone parents, *(c)* the sick and disabled, *(d)* pensioners, and *(e)* other groups, stating in each case the percentage increase each year.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is shown in the table.

Year	*Number of supplementary benefit/income support recipients*	*Percentage change*	*Unemployed*	*Unemployed percentage change*	*Lone parents*	*Lone parents percentage change*	*Sick and disabled*	*Sick and disabled percentage change*	*Pensioners*	*Pensioners percentage change*	*Others*	*Others percentage change*
1979	2,855,000	—	566,000	—	306,000	—	207,000	—	1,723,000	—	52,000	—
1980	3,118,000	9·25	854,000	50·88	316,000	3·27	205,000	−1·00	1,694,000	−1·68	49,000	−5·77
1981	3,723,000	19·40	1,318,000	54·33	369,000	16·77	221,000	7·80	1,738,000	2·60	77,000	57·14
1982	4,267,000	14·61	1,722,000	30·65	415,000	12·47	240,000	8·60	1,781,000	2·47	109,000	41·56
1983	4,349,000	1·92	1,826,000	6·04	449,000	8·19	241,000	0·42	1,651,000	−7·30	182,000	66·97
1984	4,609,000	5·98	1,953,000	6·96	492,000	9·58	273,000	13·28	1,683,000	1·94	208,000	14·29
1986	4,938,000	7·14	2,121,000	8·60	575,000	16·87	301,000	10·26	1,717,000	2·02	224,000	7·69
1987	4,896,000	−0·85	1,957,000	−7·73	629,000	9·39	352,000	16·94	1,727,000	0·58	231,000	3·12
1988	4,352,000	−11·13	1,511,000	−22·79	694,000	10·33	247,000	−29·83	1,719,000	−0·46	180,000	−22·08
1989	4,161,000	−4·34	1,216,000	−19·52	756,000	8·93	290,000	17·41	1,607,000	−6·52	293,000	62·78
1990	4,180,000	0·43	1,063,000	−12·58	793,000	4·89	330,000	13·79	1,675,000	4·23	319,000	8·87

Sources: Supplementary Benefit/Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiries 1979-1990.

Notes:

1. All figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.
2. There was no annual statistical inquiry in 1985; the one due in December of that year was deferred until February 1986.

Pensioners

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners there are over the age of 75 years divided into males and females; and what is *(a)* their average income from all sources and *(b)* the income distribution of such pensioners, in Great Britain.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 24 February 1992]:* In mid-1990 the estimated number, in thousands, of people aged 75 or over in Great Britain was men, 1,331, and women, 2,568.

The average net weekly income in 1988 from all sources for non-married men and women aged 75 years or over and married couples where either one or both of the partners are 75 or over was:

	£
Non-married men	86·10
Non-married women	70·50
Married couples	132·80

The weekly net incomes of these people are distributed in the following way:

Figures are in thousands of individuals or couples.

Weekly net incomes	*Non-married men*	*Non-married women*	*Married couples*
up to £60	140	800	0
£60 up to £80	180	780	140
£80 up to £100	70	130	330
£100 up to £120	40	130	150
£120 and over	50	110	300
Total	480	1,950	920

Notes:

1. Population data is from the 1990 OPCS mid-year estimates.
2. Income data is from the 1988 family expenditure survey (FES).
3. It is not possible accurately to apportion some income sources between husband and wife—for example, income support/supplementary benefit—from the FES. It is therefore not possible to provide sensible estimates of the separate total incomes of all men and women by sex.

Income Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of couples with children and lone parent households, respectively, who for the period April 1992 to March 1993 will come on to family credit and who, but for the change in definition of full-time work from 24 to 16 hours for income support recipients, would have been eligible for income support; if he will give an estimate of how much his Department will save as a result; and if he will estimate the number of childless households no longer eligible for such help because they will no longer be eligible for income support.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* About 45,000 families with children currently claiming income support and working between 16 and 24 hours a week up to 7 April 1992 will be eligible to claim family credit, if they so choose, because of the change in the hours rule from 24 to 16 hours a week. Of these, 30,000 families—including 25,000 lone parents—are expected to be better off on family credit, and some 15,000 families with children are likely to have their family credit topped up with income support to maintain the level of their income. In addition, about 15,000 people without children, who are working 16 to 24 hours a week at the point of change will be able to remain on income support as at present.

It is not possible to estimate how many new potential claimants would have been entitled to income support during 1992-93 if the remunerative work rule had remained at 24 hours a week, because the effect of behavioural changes cannot be predicted. However, it is expected that the substantial majority of families with children will be better off on family credit because of the more generous rules for treating earnings and, from 7 April, the introduction of a disregard of the first £15 a week of any maintenance received in family credit, housing benefit and community charge benefit.

We also expect that up to 35,000 families with children—30,000 of them lone parents—who are already working between 16 and 24 hours a week but earning too much to get income support will qualify for family credit. In the longer term, we expect that the lower hours threshold will encourage many others to take up work of at least 16 hours or increase their hours so as to qualify for family credit.

As a result of these changes more benefit rather than less will be paid. Together with the increasing numbers claiming family credit, the changes will lead to an increase in family credit expenditure, from an expected outturn of £617 million in 1991-92 to an estimated £850 million in 1992-93.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give, by social security region and by standard economic planning region, for the latest year available, including executive agency staff the number of civil servants, whole-time equivalent broken down by grade levels one to four, five, six, seven, SEO, HEO, EO, AO and AA, indicating the salary bands and indicating the percentage at each grade who are women, giving the percentage at each grade who are part time and the percentage of part-timers who are women.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 27 February 1992]*: The information available for the Department of Social Security, including its agencies, as at 31 January 1992 is shown in the table.

To give the breakdown by social security region and standard economic planning region could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. A copy of the "Civil Service Pay and Conditions of Service Code" which gives salary bands is available in the Library.

Grade[1]	*Total full time equivalents*	*Per cent. who are women*	*Per cent. who are part-time*	*Per cent. part-timers who are women*
1—4	26·5	28	2	100
5	53	30	2	0
6	88	18	3	100
7	520	17	1	83
SEO	1,458·5	20	0·5	87
HEO[2]	4,983	37	2	97
EO	21,346	57	7	97
AO	35,436	75	9	98
AA	11,857·5	74	6	96

[1] For each grade we have included equivalent professional grades.

[2] Includes HEO(D) and administrative trainee.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Turkeys

13. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the health of turkeys.

Mr. Maclean: The national turkey flock is in robust health, like my hon. Friend.

Food Prices

14. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how food prices have moved over the past year.

Mr. Curry: The annual rate of food price inflation fell from 5·9 per cent. in January 1991 to 4·5 per cent. in January 1992.

Food Products

15. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of those food products grown in temperate climates which are consumed in the United Kingdom are produced in the United Kingdom; and what was the proportion in 1979.

Mr. Curry: It is estimated that self-sufficiency in food products which can be produced in the United Kingdom was 74 per cent. in 1991, compared with 68 per cent. in 1979.

Farm Incomes

16. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effect a 2 per cent. increase in interest rates would have on farm incomes.

Mr. Gummer: No such assessment has been made, but it would inevitably have a negative effect on farm incomes. This would be extremely bad news for farmers as it would for everyone else. That is why the Government will bring down interest rates as quickly as it can.

19. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the level of farm incomes in real terms in the last two years for which figures are available.

Mr. Gummer: The index for total income from farming, which gives the returns to farmers, partners, directors and their spouses, and family members working on the farm, was 102·1 in real terms for 1990 and is forecast to be 90·8 in 1991. Both figures relate to a base of 100 in 1985.

24. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the level of farm incomes in the south-west; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The results of the farm business survey for the sample of 176 farms in the region have recently been published by the agricultural economics unit of Exeter university in "Farm Incomes in South-West England 1990-91". These show that on average the level of net farm income for all types of farm in the south-west fell by about one third between 1989-90 and 1990-91. Since that time, increases in cattle prices, the higher rates of hill livestock compensatory allowances and sheep subsidies in 1991 and increases in cereal yields and prices are expected to bring improvements for most farm types.

Set-aside Scheme

17. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last discussed the future of the set-aside scheme outlined in the MacSharry proposals with other EC Agriculture Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I last discussed the Commission proposals for reform of the common agricultural policy, including set-aside, with my EC colleagues on 2 and 3 March.

Common Agricultural Policy

18. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the progress being made in discussions for reform of the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart).

25. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received regarding the reform of the common agricultural policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have received representations on this subject from a wide range of organisations covering not only all sectors of the food and agriculture industries but environmental, consumer and other interests. I and my officials regularly meet representatives of these organisations.

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the latest efforts being made to reform the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams).

Fishery Decommissioning

20. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next intends to meet representatives of the fishing industry to discuss decommissioning.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell).

Confectionery

21. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to make an official visit to York to discuss confectionery issues.

Mr. Curry: I am always open to invitations to visit this industry which makes a strong contribution to United Kingdom exports.

Dioxin, Bolsover

22. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is now able to identify the cause of the dioxin in the Bolsover area; and what steps he intends to take.

Mr. Maclean: The available evidence does not allow for conclusions to be drawn on the cause of the dioxin contamination.

As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment has already made clear, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has investigated the emissions from the chemical incinerator at the coalite works near Bolsover. The concentrations measured in the emissions form only a part of the dioxins which have been found in the milk on the affected farms.

Citizens Charter

26. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about his Ministry's contribution to the citizens charter.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells).

Farm Animals (Welfare)

27. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken to obtain equal standards of farm animal welfare throughout the EC.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns).

Fishing Industry

28. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from fishermen in the north-west of England in the last month about the prospects for the fishing industry.

Mr. Curry: Fishermen, including fishermen in the north-west of England, make representations on a wide range of subjects every month.

Horses

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further measures he is taking to consider the reclassification of the horse as an agricultural animal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The horse is an agricultural animal when it is engaged in agricultural activities. The Department takes the lead role on EC legislation covering animal health questions concerning horses, zootechnics and competitions. It is for other Departments to take the lead on matters that relate to their responsibilities.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many residential properties owned by the Ministry are *(a)* empty, *(b)* for sale on the open market, *(c)* intended for sale on the open market and *(d)* for sale to housing associations, in terms of numbers and percentage of stock.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is set out:

(a) 11 representing 7·6 per cent.
(b) 3 representing 2·0 per cent.
(c) 4 representing 2·7 per cent.
(d) Nil.

EC Surplus Foodstuffs

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list EC surplus foodstuffs held in storage in the United Kingdom and the tonnage of such surplus as at 31 January.

Mr. Curry: Tables showing current levels of surplus produce in store within the EC and the United Kingdom are deposited in the Library of the House at monthly intervals. The latest tables were deposited on 13 February.

Farmers (Public Relations)

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he intends to take to assist farmers to improve relations with the public and to reduce problems arising from trespass and vandalism.

Mr. Gummer: My Department have today agreed with Groundwork to provide pump priming funding for a project to be known as Farmlink. This project aims to help children to understand and respect the countryside and farming and to create beneficial links between farmers and local urban communities. The scheme will result in the creation of approximately 180 links between individual farms and schools over three years in seven Groundwork trust areas. These are expected to be St. Helens, East Durham, Rossendale, Wakefield, Erewash, West Cumbria and Kerrier. The total cost of the project will be £170,000 spread over the three-year period.

Food Safety

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has in the food safety area.

Mr. Maclean: On behalf of the Agriculture and Health Ministers I have today issued for consultation to interested organisations a draft food safety and consumer protection programme setting out the Government's plans in this area in 1992. It applies the principles of information, consultation and accountability set out in the citizens charter published last year. I am sure the publication of this programme will be welcomed and I look forward to the response to it. I am placing a copy of the document in the Library of the House.

Badgers

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on mortality rates amongst badgers caused by *(a)* licensed killing and *(b)* motor vehicles in each of the past three years.

Mr. Maclean: In the past three years only two badgers have been killed under licence under the Badgers Act 1973, both in order to protect poultry. Out of a population of 250,000 adult badgers, we estimate that at least 20,000 are killed each year on our roads.

Milk

Mr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure adequate supplies of home-produced milk for processing.

Mr. Curry: The changes to milk marketing in the United Kingdom must give higher priority to the production of value added dairy products.

DEFENCE

Reserve Forces

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he plans any changes in the role of the reserve forces in the future.

Mr. Tom King: I have recently received proposals arising from a major study on the future mix of regular and reserve forces in the longer term and I am publishing today a consultative open government document "The Future of Britain's Reserve Forces" which seeks views on the key proposals arising from this study. I am placing copies of this document in the Vote Office and in the Library of the House.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his policy of purchasing any dwelling in the vicinity of a military airfield found to be subjected to noise levels greater than 125 dB (A) from military aircraft also applies to civil airfields where military jet aircraft regularly carry out practice approach and overshoot movements.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. Military jet aircraft carry out practice manoeuvres at civil airfields on very few occasions. Evidence of noise surveys carried out at 42 military airfields covering a range of manoeuvres by a variety of aircraft types indicates no likelihood of maximum noise levels of 125 dB (A) being reached in the proximity of dwellings contiguous to civil airfields.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the results of the measurements made of noise levels of F15, F16 and F111 aircraft during Exercise Luce Belle in June 1990.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The results of the measurements of the noise levels of F15 and F16 aircraft participating in Exercise Luce Belle were published in the National Physical Laboratory report RSA (Ext.) 16, dated February 1991. The F111 aircraft did not participate in the exercise.

Fast Jet Activity

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the purpose of the fast jet activity which has been taking place between West Freugh airfield and the Carsphairn-New Galloway area since 18 November; how many and what types of aircraft are taking part; what is the minimum permitted height during these operations; and what increase there has been in the level of such activity.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Since 18 November 1991 the following groups of fast jet aircraft have operated from West Freugh and flown in the Carsphairn-New Galloway area:

Date	*Aircraft*	*Purpose of activity*
18–22 November 1991	6 RAF Harriers 6 RAF Tornados	Routine training
3–7 February 1992	5 RN Sea Harriers	Routine training
10–21 February 1992	2 RAF Tornados 3 RAF Harriers 1 RAF Jaguar	Trials

All aircraft were authorised to fly to a minimum permitted height of 250 ft. The three sets of activity were not related.

Low Flying

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the statistics obtained during the survey of low flying by RAF strike command in early 1989.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A representative sample of the statistics obtained from the survey of low flying begun by RAF strike command in 1989 will be provided to the Select Committee on Defence later this year.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will prohibit the use of fixed low-flying routes in the United Kingdom by front-line strike/attack/reconnaissance units.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to providing continuation training at 100 ft for RAF Tornado crews while deployed to the Gulf region.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Detailed arrangements for future deployments of RAF aircraft to the Gulf for training exercises will be the subject of discussions with the host nations concerned.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the Royal Air Force's Harrier GR7s commenced night low-level training; and what decisions have been taken on the location of such training.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Harrier GR7 squadrons have not yet commenced night low-level training. This training will be distributed throughout the United Kingdom night low flying system and we expect to carry out some training overseas.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures are being taken to monitor the selection of fixed low-level routes over the United Kingdom by front-line strike/attack/reconnaissance units.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Air crew use standard routes as little as possible. Where this is unavoidable, routes are varied as much as possible and standard routes are in any case replaced at regular intervals.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what facilities are made available in Turkey for RAF Jaguar crews deployed to Incirlik to maintain their qualifications to fly at 100 ft above ground level.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: None.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the maximum permitted speeds between initial point and simulated target, or during mock interceptions, while flying in the United Kingdom at 100 ft above ground level, for *(a)* Tornado aircraft, *(b)* Jaguar aircraft, *(c)* Harrier aircraft, *(d)* Hawk aircraft, *(e)* F4 aircraft and *(f)* Buccaneer aircraft; on what date these speed limits were introduced; which information channels or documents are used to communicate these speed limits to Royal Air Force pilots; and what advice has been given to the low flying complaints office concerning the communication of information on the new limits to the public.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: For the aircraft listed, the maximum permitted speeds between initial point and simulated target, or during mock interceptions, while flying in the United Kingdom at not less than 100 ft above ground level are as follows:

	Kts
(a) Tornado	500
(b) Jaguar	520
(c) Harrier GR5/7	420
(d) Hawk	480

There is no routine requirement for the F4 and Buccaneer aircraft to fly below 250 feet in the United Kingdom low-flying system.

Speed restrictions for most of those aircraft concerned were introduced in January 1991 and are stated in the United Kingdom Military Low Flying Handbook. The advice given to the low flying complaints office on the communication of information related to low flying in the United Kingdom is a matter for my Department.

Exercise Red Flag

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to which location the eight RAF Tornados which took part in Exercise Red Flag 92-2 flew following completion of that exercise; and what training tasks were allocated to the aircraft following participation in Red Flag.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: On completion of Exercise Red Flag 92-2 eight RAF Tornados were recovered to Goose Bay, Canada. Following a period of maintenance the aircraft will undertake tactical training from 2 to 7 April prior to deployment to Alaska for Exercise Distant Frontier 92.

Air Misses

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the air miss between a military aircraft and a civilian Cessna aircraft near Lockerbie on 8 November 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No such air miss has been reported.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the air miss incident between two RAF Tornados and a Spanish airliner off Gibraltar on 29 January.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Two RAF Tornado F3 aircraft participating in a naval air defence exercise in a notified exercise area, some 45 nautical miles south of Malaga, were directed by the Royal Navy vessel controlling them to identify an unknown aircraft transiting the exercise area. The RAF aircraft carried out a standard approach to identify the aircraft and, having established that it was a civil airliner, returned to their exercise task. The approach and visual identification were conducted in accordance with normal procedures in international airspace and within the notified exercise area. No air miss report has been received from the Spanish authorities.

Hydrazine Incident, Yeovilton

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the hydrazine incident involving a Dutch air force F16 aircraft at Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton on 2 October 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The incident on 2 October 1991 occurred after a Dutch F16 aircraft operating in the vicinity of Yeovilton suffered a generator failure and was diverted to the airfield for a precautionary landing. The aircraft's emergency power unit had been engaged and in line with standard procedure a safety check was conducted to ensure that there had been no hydrazine fuel leak. On this occasion the unit had functioned correctly and there was no leak.

RAF Machrihanish

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the number of unidentified supersonic radar contacts detected in the vicinity of RAF Machrihanish since January.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There have been no unidentified supersonic radar contacts detected in the vicinity of RAF Machrihanish since January.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the recent hypersonic flights from RAF Machrihanish; whether consent for such flights by United States aircraft is required from his Department; and what assessment he has made of the effects that might be experienced by people on the ground as a result of flights at Mach 3.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There have been no such flights from RAF Machrihanish.

Loch Trool

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the nature, purpose and title of the military exercise centred on Loch Trool, Galloway, in the week commencing 16 February; how many troops and aircraft took part; how many low-level sorties were carried out; and what information about the exercise was given to local Members of Parliament and the press.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Exercise Hardcore took place from 10 to 21 February and was a small-scale squadron training exercise involving attacks against targets on the ground together with intercepts by air defence aircraft. The exercise involved up to 120 men and 16 aircraft. Some 140 low-level sorties were flown during the exercise; some of these involved operational low flying which was notified to Members of Parliament in the normal way.

Luce Bay Weapons Range

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when evening opening hours of the Luce Bay weapons range were last extended; and for what purpose.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This is a matter for the chief executive of the Defence Research Agency and I have asked him to write to the hon. Member.

RAF Training (Alaska)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all RAF training deployments to Alaska since 1988, stating, for each deployment, *(a)* the number and type of aircraft, *(b)* the location of the deployment, *(c)* the title of the exercise, *(d)* the types of training carried out during the deployment, *(e)* the number of sorties flown and *(f)* the additional cost of providing the training in Alaska rather than Europe or Labrador.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Four Tornado GR1 deployed to Eielson air force base for Exercise Distant Frontier in June 1990. The aircraft carried out tactical flying training and weapon practice. Forty-one sorties were flown. The information requested on additional costs is not readily indentifiable.

Tornado Crew Training

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the requirement for RAF air defence Tornado crews to be trained at Goose Bay, Canada; and what is the additional cost of providing the training at that location.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A number of air defence crews will deploy from time to time to Goose Bay to carry out tactical training in association with RAF and other allied aircraft undertaking low-flying training at the base. The additional cost of providing air defence training for crews at Goose Bay cannot readily be identified.

Exercise Luce Belle

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence from which airfield the US Air Force F-15 aircraft operated when participating in the Exercise Luce Belle noise measurement trial in June 1990.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The F-15 aircraft which took part in Exercise Luce Belle were based with the United States Air Force 36 tactical fighter wing, Bitburg, West Germany. Available records do not indicate the use of a United Kingdom airfield for refuelling.

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those parts of his Department, including executive agencies, carrying out reviews over the last 12 months into the pay and grading of staff; and the firm of consultants engaged, where appropriate.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A review of the pay and grading of civilian staff at the atomic weapons establishment has been undertaken by the management contractor—Hunting-Brae Ltd.—as part of the current AWE management contract. In general, pay and grading structures throughout the Department, including the Department's agencies, are kept under review in accordance with Government policy.

Defence Procurement Budget

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the defence procurement budget was spent during 1990-91 in Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, respectively.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I would expect the information the hon. Gentleman requests to be published in the 1992 "Statement on the Defence Estimates".

Departmental Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many residential properties owned by his Department are *(a)* empty, *(b)* for sale on the open market, *(c)* intended for sale on the open market and *(d)* for sale to housing associations, in terms of numbers and percentage of stock.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 31 December 1991, the latest date for which figures are available, 9,817 properties, representing 13·4 per cent. of the service married quarter stock, and 139 properties, representing 18·4 per cent. of the

MOD civilian housing stock, were vacant. Many of these properties were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work [illegible] modernisation, some were already allotted to service families who were due to move in shortly and more than 600 were being considered for disposal.

A futher 2,774 properties, not included in the above and not all vacant, were in the process of sale. Of these, 296—11 per cent.—were for sale on the open market, 295—11 per cent.—were intended for sale on the open market, 1,002—36 per cent.—were for sale to housing associations or local authorities, 423—15 per cent.—were being sold through the services' discount scheme and 758—27 per cent.—were being offered for sale to tenants.

United Nations (Military Staff Committee)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the actions which have resulted from the meetings of the United Nations Military Staff Committee since 1981, what changes to his policies have resulted from these meetings; and what proposals he has to change the work of the United Nations Military Staff Committee.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Nations military staff committee played a useful role in the Gulf crisis as a forum for informal exchanges on naval deployments to the region. We do not rule out the possibility of using it in other ways to reinforce the valuable and close co-operation that has evolved between the five permanent members of the Security Council. But we do not believe there is a case for the formal activation of the committee under article 47 of the United Nations charter.

Diversification

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many seminars held in Britain on the diversification of defence industries his officials have attended in each quarter of the last two years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: One in the third quarter of 1990 on defence industry conversion in the former USSR.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what advice or information his officials have provided to the defence industry about diversification in the last two years.

Mr. Carlisle: None, because decisions affecting the future of a company, including its product lines, are best left to the commercial judgment of its management.

Ex-RAF Pilots

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to increase the number of ex-RAF pilots joining the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the RAF Volunteer Reserve.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no proposals to increase the number of ex-RAF pilots joining the Royal Auxiliary Air Force or the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

Operation Granby

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is now in a position to state the additional maintenance costs that were incurred for British military equipment used during Operation Granby.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The additional defence costs of Operation Granby, include an estimated sum of around £550 million for additional maintenance.

Metallurgy

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what records were kept by his Department of the two telephone conversations that took place between Walter Somers Ltd. and his Department's metallurgical expert on 16 and 22 June 1988.

Mr. Carlisle: The metallurgical expert made notes of his telephone conversations.

Housing Task Force

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration was given to setting up a housing task force prior to August 1991.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence referred in the White Paper "Britain's Army for the 90s" to his intention to set up a task group to bring service housing up to date with developments in the community. The housing task force was established shortly thereafter.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the terms of reference of the housing task force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The terms of reference of the task force were to review the arrangements for service housing, building on work already undertaken by the Department and to identify any other practical initiatives which should be taken, with a view to ultimately developing a comprehensive scheme for service housing. To this end, the task force was to:

(a) assess the extra steps which should be taken to help those leaving the services over the next three to four years.

(b) address ways of building quickly on initiatives that had already been devised to encourage home ownership by the services.

(c) examine other options to put service men and women on the housing ladder as a normal part of their career pattern.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he informed *(a)* the Association of District Councils, *(b)* the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and *(c)* the Association of County Councils of the contents of his briefing on the work of the housing task force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend, the Earl of Arran hopes shortly to meet representatives of local authority associations in England, Wales and Scotland together with my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning to discuss the Government announcements on housing the armed forces.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to be able to conclude his considerations of the housing task force recommendation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) on 24 February, *Official Report*, column *395*.

Budgets

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current budgets of all the higher level budget holders with the exception of GOC Northern Ireland, DG General Intelligence (Eurasia), DG Management and Support of Intelligence, DG of Strategic and Technical Intelligence and DG Intelligence (Rest of World).

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is as follows:

	£ million
Commander, Training and Reserve Forces Royal Marines	50·743
Major General Royal Marines, Headquarters Commando Forces	82·459
Assistant Under Secretary of State (Naval Personnel)	2·099
Director General of Naval Personal Services	3·758
Naval Secretary	3·952
Medical Director General (Navy)	38·816
Director General of Naval Manpower and Training	41·492
Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff	15·567
Director General Aircraft (Navy)	44·385
Director General Ship Refitting	483·695
Director General of Supplies and Transport (Naval)	975·083
Director General Fleet Support Policy and Services	346·812
Hydrographer of the Navy	7·976
Assistant Under Secretary of State (Fleet Support)	−33·828
Flag Officer Portsmouth	115·773
Flag Office Scotland and Northern Ireland	42·448
Flag Officer Plymouth	89·378
Naval Base Commander Portland	12·989
Naval Base Commander Clyde	65·690
Captain, Training Naval Home Command	137·765
Chief Staff Officer Reserves	29·491
Flag Officer Naval Aviation	204·162
Chief of Staff, Headquarters Commander in Chief Fleet	78·609
Flag Officer Surface Fleet	265·323
Flag Officer Submarines	133·326
Commodore Minor War Vessels	23·308
Commander United Kingdom Field Army	1,131·256
Inspector General Doctrine and Training	471·935
Assistant Chief of Staff, General Staff Division 1, Headquarters British Army of the Rhine	117·100
Deputy Chief of Staff, Headquarters British Army of the Rhine, General Staff Division 3	1,023·800
Assistant Chief of Staff, General Staff Division 4, Headquarters British Army of the Rhine	551·900
Director General Army Manning and Recruiting	94·788
Director General of Personal Services (Army)	23·579
Director General Logistic Policy (Army)	488·146
Director General of Transport and Movements	105·413
Director General of Ordnance Services	259·476
Director General of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering	81·433
Director General Territorial Army and Organisation	98·418
Director General Military Survey	40·317
Director General Command, Control, Communication and Information Systems (Army)	14·298
Director General of Support Management	1,045·495
Director General of Support Services	199·614
Director General (Policy and Planning)—National Air Traffic Services	37·535
Air Secretary	142·987
Air Officer Commanding 1 Group	532·234
Air Officer Commanding 11 Group	359·725
Air Officer Commanding 18 Group	210·097
Air Officer Administration Headquarters Strike Command	56·148
Air Officer Training, Headquarters Royal Air Force Support Command	299·624
Air Officer Maintenance, Headquarters Royal Air Force Support Command	311·308
Air Officer Administration, Headquarters Royal Air Force Support Command	171·011
Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Programmes and Personnel)	42·385
Deputy Under Secretary of State (Policy)	10·568
Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Systems)	122·853
Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Commitments)	402·029
Deputy Under Secretary of State (Civilian Management)	547·840
Deputy Under Secretary of State (Finance)	321·749
Deputy Under Secretary of State (Personnel and Logistics)	168·834
Deputy Under Secretary of State (Resources and Programmes)	7·264
Assistant Chief Scientific Adviser (Capabilities)	4·428
Assistant Chief Scientific Adviser (Research)	8·810
Assistant Chief Scientific Adviser (Projects)	0·907
Assistant Chief Scientific Adviser (Nuclear)	0·560
Director of Strategic Defence Initiative Participation Office	0·743
Director Operations Meteorological Office	40·222
Director Commercial Services Meteorological Office	2·182
Director Finance and Administration Meteorological Office	18·407
Director Research Meteorological Office	5·189
Controller of the Navy	112·973
Master General of the Ordnance	89·006
Controller Aircraft	622·627
Deputy Under Secretary of State (Defence Procurement)	155·411
Head of Defence Export Services	7·317
Managing Director Military and Aerospace Divisions Defence Research Agency	348·647
Managing Director Electronics Division Defence Research Agency	123·211
Managing Director Maritime Division Defence Research Agency	157·633

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the planned budgets for all higher level budget holders in *(a)* 1992-93, *(b)* 1993-94 and *(c)* 1994-95, with the exception of GOC Northern Ireland, DG General Intelligence (Eurasia), DG Management and Support of Intelligence, DG of Strategic and Technical Intelligence and DG Intelligence (Rest of World).

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This information is derived from the long-term costing. It is not our practice to provide such details.

Married Quarters

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many married quarters are currently vacant but not awaiting major works in each region, as at 3 December.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 31 December 1991, a total of 8,333 service married quarters were vacant but not awaiting major works.

The regional breakdown is as follows:

Region	*Total vacant excluding those awaiting major works*
Northern	42
Yorkshire	680
East Midlands	482
East Anglia	511
South East	3,288
South West	1,480
West Midlands	300

Region	*Total vacant excluding those awaiting major works*
North West	134
Wales	216
Scotland	811
Northern Ireland	389
Total	8,333

Many of these properties were undergoing major works or modernisation, some were already allotted to service families who were due to move in shortly, and others were being considered for disposal. In addition, 1,560 properties were in the process of being sold.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his letter of 5 February, if he will provide the regional breakdown of the numbers of vacant married quarters in each year since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The regional breakdown of the number of vacant married quarters in each year since 1979 is as follows. The reporting dates over the years vary due to changes in the accounting procedures.

	15 January 1979	*15 January 1980*	*15 April 1981*	*15 April 1982*	*15 April 1983*	*15 April 1984*	*15 January 1985*	*31 March 1986*	*31 March 1987*	*31 March 1988*	*31 March 1989*	*31 March 1990*	*31 March 1991*
Northern	202	193	164	153	160	154	186	122	133	146	136	79	68
Yorkshire	1,681	1,792	1,520	1,599	1,366	1,091	1,414	1,298	1,329	948	1,164	755	673
North West	411	401	374	149	141	148	116	163	149	153	160	136	112
South East	7,280	6,991	4,438	4,731	5,195	4,632	5,365	4,814	5,856	5,322	4,905	4,172	3,532
South West	4,863	4,863	3,162	2,027	2,297	1,970	2,395	2,777	3,195	3,251	2,627	1,601	1,622
East Anglia	1,819	1,864	1,400	1,226	1,126	1,042	907	675	902	1,015	905	636	885
East Midlands	2,092	1,705	1,291	1,405	1,745	1,777	1,565	1,422	1,172	1,423	1,455	859	698
West Midlands	1,090	1,013	419	474	547	444	599	556	790	745	665	361	303
Wales	506	538	291	260	350	335	277	337	383	390	514	423	391
Scotland	1,405	1,569	1,364	1,064	996	976	1,133	1,440	1,492	1,452	1,666	1,427	1,295
Northern Ireland	297	500	206	138	136	100	212	272	326	383	538	621	534
Total	21,646	21,429	14,629	13,226	14,059	12,669	14,169	13,876	15,727	15,228	14,735	11,070	10,113

SSN 20

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what details of information from the long-term costings regarding the SSN20 order he has supplied to the management of VSEL.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: None.

Private Housing

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 22 November 1991, *Official Report*, column *356*, if he will change his policy relating to the holding of information on the private housing arrangements or plans of those Army personnel who have applied for redundancy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As the Army redundancy programme has developed, information has been assembled on the current housing position, and future intentions, of some 5,200 Army personnel who indicated that they would be willing to be considered for selection. Eighty per cent. completed and returned a questionnaire. Of these 49 per cent. already owned their homes and another 33 per cent. indicated that it was their intention to purchase one.

Emergency Tours

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 18 November 1991, *Official Report*, column *86*, how many units have deployed on an emergency tour after an interval of less than two years, in each year between 1980 and 1990.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following number of infantry battalions have undertaken emergency tours, either in whole or in part, at an interval of less than 24 months:

	Number
1980	Nil
1981	Nil
1982	One
1983	Two
1984	Two
1985	One
1986	Seven
1987	Four
1988	One
1989	Two
1990	Two

Redundancies

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of redundancies amongst his Department's civilian personnel that will result from "Options for Change".

Mr. Hamilton: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has made clear, the number of MOD civilians is expected to fall in line with the 20 per cent. reduction in the size of the armed forces. It is too early to say exactly how many redundancies will be required.

Procurement Costs

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 28 November, *Official Report*, column *648-49*, how much of the procurement costs of *(a)* GWS26 vertical launch Sea Wolf missile system, *(b)* Spearfish torpedo, *(c)* TRIGAT medium-range missile, *(d)* Rapier field standard C and *(e)* EH101 ASW helicopter will be incurred in each year up to 1994-95.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is not our practice to make such details public.

Modernisation Programmes

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 20 December, *Official Report*, column *385* what is the cost of the extensive modernisation programme planned for Tidworth garrison; and what other extensive modernisation programmes are currently planned for property belonging to his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: About £250 million is also planned for Aldershot. There are no other programmes currently planned of equivalent scale. Details of other current schemes can be found in the long-term project table section of the supply estimates.

Royal William Yard

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to dispose of Royal William yard at Devonport dockyards; what is the current state of repair of the buildings at Royal William yard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: On current plans, Royal William yard will be surplus to Ministry of Defence requirements by the end of next year. We are currently examining options for disposal and hope to make a decision very soon. In the meantime, the buildings are being maintained.

Special Saving Scheme

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of the special saving scheme he is planning to help service personnel buy their own homes.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The cost of the special savings scheme will depend upon how many service men take advantage of the scheme, and the period for which they save. When fully operational, it might cost up to £50 million a year. This will represent a new commitment for which additional provision will be made.

WE177 Replacement

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the number of procurement options for the possible replacement of the WE177 free-fall bomb that are currently being considered.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) on 19 December 1991, *Official Report*, column *284*.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will change his policy relating to ethnic monitoring of promotion within the services.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Our policy relating to ethnic monitoring within the armed forces, including the monitoring of promotion, is currently under review and we shall be announcing the outcome of this review shortly.

Resettlement Provision

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to complete his review of resettlement provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the note mentioned in the answer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) on 24 February 1992 *Official Report*, column *395*.

Nuclear-powered Submarines

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the feasibility studies into SSN20 class nuclear-powered submarines were completed.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The studies into the then proposed SSN20 class were completed in 1989.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the first of class of a new generation of nuclear-powered submarines is currently expected to enter service by the end of the century; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The studies, which I announced in the debate on the Royal Navy on 27 June 1991, *Official Report*, column 1181, into a second batch of Trafalgar class nuclear-powered submarines to replace the Swiftsure class are now under way. Subject to the outcome of these studies, the submarines could begin entering service around the turn of the century.

Rapid Reaction Corps

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what guidance from NATO he has taken into account in determining the proposed levels of spares holdings for the British units which will be deployed with the rapid reaction corps.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: NATO guidance on stock levels is currently under review by member nations and NATO's military authorities and will be taken into account when it is approved.

Logistic planning for the United Kingdom element of a rapid reaction corps is still in its early stages.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether British units stationed in Germany as part of the proposed rapid reaction corps will be capable of more rapid deployment than those British units currently assigned to NATO as part of NORTHAG.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Precise readiness requirements for units assigned to the ACE rapid reaction corps have not yet been decided, but in general we would expect them to be less demanding than those that applied when we faced the possibility of surprise attack by Soviet forces stationed in eastern Europe.

Steel Tubes, Iraq

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 20 December, *Official Report*, column *383*, what action was taken by his Department as a result of establishing that the steel tubes which Walter Somers Ltd. proposed to export to Iraq were almost certainly pressure vessels of some kind.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The discussions with Walter Somers Ltd. were undertaken following a request from the Department of Trade and Industry for advice on the defence implications of the steel tubes which the company proposed to export to Iraq. Following these discussions the Department of Trade and Industry were informed that no military application could be established.

Ceremonial Uniforms

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 3 December, *Official Report*, column *87*, what records are kept of contributions towards the cost of purchasing ceremonial uniforms.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Parachute Regiments

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 19 December, *Official Report*, column *285*, whether he is now in a position to write to the hon. Member for Clackmannan regarding recruiting levels in the parachute regiments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I wrote to the hon. Member on 3 March 1992.

Northern Ireland Tours

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 18 November, *Official Report*, column *86*, what impact on the ability of units to react rapidly will result from units based in Germany undertaking a greater share of short, unaccompanied operational tours in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are confident that the Army will be able to maintain appropriate levels of readiness for NATO and national tasks.

NATO Review

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the review of readiness and availability requirements for NATO forces has been completed; and what effect Operation Granby has had on that review.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Good progress is being made on NATO's continuing review of readiness and availability requirements and has already resulted in some relaxation in the readiness of NATO forces. Details are classified. Work is underway to complete the review and all relevant factors, including the lessons to be learnt from the Gulf conflict, are being taken into account.

Information

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 February 1992, *Official Report*, column *329*, what are the factors which determine whether it is appropriate to make available information on plans for and progress of individual projects.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Plans for significant new projects are normally announced when decisions to place contracts or invite tenders are made. Progress on major projects is reported regularly in the major projects statement and the defence equipment programme review.

Homelessness

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 20 December 1991, *Official Report*, column *386*, what consideration has been given to his policy relating to the production of separate certification of impending discharge.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to my answer of 20 December 1991, *Official Report*, column *386*.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 6 March 1992

HOME DEPARTMENT

Mrs. K. Aidid

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to reply to the letter of 24 October 1991 from the hon. Member for Woolwich about the case of Mrs. K. Aidid of Chatham house, Rideout street, SE18, reference number K. 427442.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 27 February 1992.

Prisoners (Ill Health)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances prisoners who have been prematurely released because of ill health are recalled to serve the remainder of their sentences; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: A prisoner's medical condition is only one of the factors taken into account when assessing his suitability for release on parole. If a prisoner is released on parole, he may be recalled to prison if he breaches any of the conditions attached to his release on licence: he would not be recalled simply because of an improvement in his medical condition.

Where a prisoner is released on the ground of serious illness by the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy, the sentence is remitted. There is therefore no possibility of being recalled to prison.

Inquests

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inquests were held into death in prisons, in police custody, psychiatric and special hospitals in the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: Information on inquests on deaths in police custody is published annually. The most recent figures, for 1990, are contained in Home Office statistical bulletin 12/91 and in the annual report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. Figures for earlier years are given in the annual report of Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary.

The only other information available in my Department is the number of inquests on deaths which occurred in prison establishments, during the last five years. These were:

	Inquests
1987	80
1988	80
1989	80
1990	87
1991	71

Drugs

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimates have been made of the total volume of acquisitive crime committed to finance addiction for the last year for which such information is available; and what estimates have been made of the growth of this form of offending over the last 12 years.

Mr. John Patten: Estimates for heroin misusers are published in paragraph 2·4 of the 1991 report "Drug Misusers and the Criminal Justice System Part 1: Community Resources and the Probation Service" by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, a copy of which is in the Library. Estimates for crimes by those addicted to other substances are not available.

Drug-related Crime

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *42*, whether he will place in the Library estimates of drug-related crimes involving people other than heroin misusers.

Mr. John Patten: There are at present no reliable data on which such estimates might be based.

Bomb Warnings

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when, and by whom, the earliest warning of a bomb planted at London main line railway stations on 28 February was received; and if he will list the times at which the warning was received by *(a)* British Rail at London Bridge, *(b)* the Metropolitan police, *(c)* the British Transport police, *(d)* the London ambulance service, *(e)* the London fire and civil defence authority and *(f)* the press and broadcasting media.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: At 08.20 hours on 28 February the Metropolitan police were notified by Ulster Television that it had received a telephone warning. The Metropolitan police then tasked the various agencies concerned. I understand that Ulster Television received the telephone warning at 08.15 hours.

Criminal Justice Liaison Committees

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what conclusions he has reached on the formation of the area criminal justice liaison committees recommended by Lord Justice Woolf in his report on the prison disturbances in 1990.

Mr. John Patten: Following consultation with criminal justice services and discussion in the Criminal Justice Consultative Council, the Government have decided that 24 area committees should be set up in England and Wales. The purpose of these committees will be to promote better understanding, co-operation and co-ordination in the administration of the criminal justice system and early tasks are likely to include the overseeing of arrangements for the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and monitoring the implementation of the recommendations of the pre-trial issues working group.

Members of the committee will include representatives from the probation, prison, police and Crown prosecution services, justices' clerks, magistrates, barristers, solicitors and directors of social services. The committee will be chaired by circuit administrators or, in some cases, court administrators of the Lord Chancellor's Department.

Nominations for members of committees will be sought forthwith from representative criminal justice system organisations and invitations will be issued shortly thereafter. The Government hope that the committees will have their first meetings by about May.

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Applications (Publicity)

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the minimum time he is to allow for local authorities to have the text of the new regulations advising of the arrangements for compulsory publicity for all planning applications before they come into force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: We intend to issue the text of the amending order, and guidance on it, as soon as possible.

Housing (Redundant Service Men)

Sir Alan Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to ensure that local authorities accept responsibility for housing redundant service men without requiring evidence of eviction.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has announced a range of measures to help those who will be leaving the forces under "Options for Change". The homelessness code of guidance issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment gives specific guidance to local authorities on dealing with homelessness applications from ex-service personnel. It makes clear that authorities should not insist on a court order for possession before considering an application.

Waste Disposal

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what timetable he intends for the divestment by the statutory joint waste disposal authorities of their waste disposal operations; whether he plans to abolish these authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The statutory joint waste disposal authorities will shortly be sent notices of our intention to direct them to establish separate waste disposal companies or, where they are intending to privatise their waste disposal operations, a proposed timetable for this. All waste disposal authorities will then actively be involved in separating their operations from regulation and contract management. The timetable for each statutory authority will depend on individual circumstances, on which authorities will have an opportunity to make representations, but I expect that divestment will essentially be complete by April 1993. This separation is a major advance, introduced in the Environmental Protection Act 1990, in support of higher waste disposal standards.

The changes brought by the Environmental Protection Act and the proposed creation of an environment agency, will remove most of these authorities' current responsibilities. I have therefore decided that there is no role, in the medium and long term, for separate statutory joint waste disposal authorities.

This decision has been reached after consulting each of the six authorities and carefully considering the cases which they have made for their retention.

I have however been impressed by the concern expressed by each of the authorities that existing beneficial contracts should not be put at risk through abolition. Some authorities have also expressed doubts on whether our current powers for effecting changes to the authorities are satisfactory. Against this background, I shall be seeking an early opportunity for primary legislation to ensure that this reorganisation is achieved in a smooth and effective manner.

The closer association of waste disposal decisions with those who must meet the costs will, I am sure, lead to more efficient and more responsive waste disposal services for the community.

Royal William Yard, Plymouth

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans there are for the future of the Royal William yard and other sites in Plymouth.

Mr. Heseltine: After detailed discussion with my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Defence, I am today offering the local authorities the possibility of a new urban development corporation (UDC) in Plymouth. The new UDC would be responsible for regenerating parts of the defence estate which are surplus to the Ministry of Defence's operational requirements, together with nearby vacant or run-down areas.

Provided the local authorities respond positively to our proposals and accept the offer of partnership it involves, the UDC's task would be to promote development in its designated area and to help revitalise the local economy. The Secretary of State for Defence and I propose to make available from our budgets £45 million to the new UDC. In addition, the Ministry of Defence will be handing over to the UDC significant amounts of development land surplus to its requirements.

The new UDC will take a strategic view of the redevelopment of the area. I will be looking to the UDC to prepare a vision for the future of the area which takes account of the potential for employment, infrastructure, environment and leisure opportunities. The new UDC would need to work closely with its partners in the local council and the private sector to ensure that its objective of regeneration can be met.

One of the jewels in its crown will be the Royal William yard, which comprises one of the most important surviving groups of historic maritime buildings in the United Kingdom. With the rationalisation of the Ministry of Defence's operations in Plymouth dockyards, I am confident that the future of the Royal William yard and other sites would be best served by the comprehensive approach to regeneration which the UDC would be able to offer.

Methane Gas

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what inquiries his Department has made into the leakage of methane gas from abandoned coal mines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: A review of the extent of natural contamination in Great Britain, including methane emissions from coal mines, is being undertaken for my Department by the British Geological Survey and this is due to be completed in the summer of 1993. Research on the planning response to methane emissions from disused coal mines is in preparation and a contract is due to be placed in the summer of 1992.

Empty Council Houses

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authority dwellings have been reported as vacant in the London borough of Tower Hamlets in each year since 1984; what percentage of the local authority housing stock these figures represent; and what is the comparable percentage in other London boroughs.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 5 March 1992]*: The available information on empty local authority dwellings is as follows:

	Tower Hamlets Borough Council		*Other London authorities*
at 1 April	*Number*	*Percentage of stock*	*Percentage of stock*
1984	1,464	7·7	3·7
1985	1,534	8·2	3·8
1986	3,200	6·6	3·3
1987	2,825	5·8	3·2
1988	2,526	5·3	2·8
1989	1,840	4·0	2·7
1990	1,758	4·0	2·8
1991	1,895	4·5	2·4

Notes:

(a) Local authorities report the numbers of their own dwellings that are vacant in their annual housing investment programme returns (HIP1).

(b) In 1986, dwellings previously owned by the Greater London council were transferred to the boroughs. For 1984 and 1985, all GLC dwellings, including those which were subsequently transferred to Tower Hamlets borough council, are included in the dwelling stock of 'other London authorities'.

EMPLOYMENT

Industrial Accidents

35. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the number of industrial accidents in the Greater London area for each of the last five years.

Mr. Forth: The available information is provided in the following table:

Occupational injuries[1] occurring in the Greater London area reported[2] to HSE's factory and agricultural inspectorates and local authorities.

Year[3]	*Fatal*	[4]*Major*	[5]*Over 3 day*	*Total*
1986-87	52	3,587	14,649	18,288
1987-88	66	3,212	14,991	18,269
1988-89	66	2,943	15,195	18,204
1989-90	51	2,580	14,605	17,236
1990-91[6][7]	51	2,312	13,518	15,881

[1] Injuries at work to employees, self-employed people and members of the public injured as a result of someone else's work activity.

[2] Under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985 (RIDDOR).

[3] Years commencing 1 April.

[4] As defined under RIDDOR.

[5] An injury causing incapacity for work for more than three days and reportable for employed persons only.

[6] Includes reports made to the HSE's quarries inspectorate.

[7] Provisional.

A. H. Marks and Co. Ltd.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library a copy of the notes compiled by the Health and Safety Executive on the death of Louis Drake at A. H. Marks and Co. Ltd., Low Moor.

Mr. Forth: No. Notes made by inspectors are not equivalent to police note books and are not kept with a view to subsequent disclosure or use in evidence.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Departmental Staff

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women in his Department in each of grades (i) 1, (ii) 2, (iii) 3, (iv) 4, (v) 5, (vi) 6, (vii) 7, (viii) SEO, (ix) HEO, (x) administrative trainee, (xi) EO, (xii) CO and (xiii) CA.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is as follows:

The Northern Ireland Civil Service[1]

Grade	*Men*	*Women*
1	1	—
2	9	—
3	36	1
4	19	—
5	171	14
6	275	51
7	748	73
Deputy Principal	1,485	278
Administrative Trainee	1	1
Staff Officer	1,781	538
EOI	2,746	1,082
EOII	1,466	2,041
AO	1,882	5,390
AA	1,067	2,706

The Northern Ireland Office (Home Civil Service)[2]

Grade	*Men*	*Women*
1	1	—
2	2	—
3	6	—
4	1	—
5	8	—
6	4	—
7	16	3·5
SEO	2	4·0
HEO (D)	4	1·0
HEO	9	7·0

Grade	Men	Women
AT	—	—
EO	11	10·5
AO	10	14·5
AA	5	8·0

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[1] All non-industrial staff as at 1 January 1991.

[2] Non-industrial home civil servants in post as at 1 February 1992 (staff on loan/career breaks are not included).

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those parts of his Department, including executive agencies, carrying out reviews over the last 12 months into the pay and grading of staff and the firm of consultants engaged, where appropriate.

Dr. Mawhinney: No pay and grading reviews have been undertaken in the Northern Ireland Office, Northern Ireland Departments or executive agencies over the last 12 months. Reviews have been carried out in two non-departmental public bodies, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards, both by Hay Management Consultants.

Criminal Damage Compensation

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many claims have been made for compensation for criminal damage to agricultural property; and how much compensation has been paid in respect of such claims in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is as follows:

Financial Year	Number of claims received	Amount of compensation paid £
1987-88	58	120,759
1988-89	56	201,577
1989-90	58	214,628
1990-91	79	137,378
[1]1991	82	155,449

[1] To 29 February 1992.

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps will be taken to ensure that Northern Ireland and objective 1 regions are allocated the full finance as stipulated by the European Commission in respect of the suckler cow premium.

Mr. Hanley: The rate of suckler cow premium is being increased by £7·95 to £59·64 per cow in the less favoured areas and £55·38 elsewhere. This rate will apply throughout the United Kingdom. Funding was not available to meet the costs of paying the extra £2·40 to all United Kingdom producers.

Income Support

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many income support claimants there are at each social security office in Northern Ireland; and how many of these are in receipt of sickness benefit, invalidity benefit, unemployment benefit, or retirement pension.

Mr. Hanley: Social security operational matters are the responsibility of Mr. Alec Wylie, chief executive of the Social Security Agency. He will write to the hon. Gentleman with such information as is available and copies of his reply will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people there are in receipt of each income support premium in each social security office in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: I understand from Mr. Alec Wylie, chief executive of the Social Security Agency that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of dependants in respect of whom income support is paid to claimants by each social security office in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: Social security operational matters are the responsibility of Mr. Alex Wylie, chief executive of the Social Security Agency. However, I understand that no record is held of the numbers of dependants in respect of whom income support is paid to claimants.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are receiving unemployment benefit from each social security office in Northern Ireland showing how many are or are not in receipt of income support.

Mr. Hanley: Social security operational matters are the responsibility of Mr. Alec Wylie, chief executive of the Social Security Agency who informs me that no record is held of the number of people receiving unemployment benefit who are also in receipt of income support.

Political Talks

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what agreements have been reached about future representation of the respective political parties at talks on Northern Ireland's political future.

Mr. Brooke: The understanding is that talks would proceed on the basis outlined in my statement to the House of 26 March 1991 at columns 765-66 and involve the four main constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland.

Dyslexia

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures or guidelines apply in respect of dyslexic children under school transfer procedures.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 5 March 1992]*: None. The arrangements are the same for all children except those for whom a statement of special educational needs is maintained. Such children may not take part in the transfer procedure. If any parents think that their child's grade in the tests does not reflect his or her academic ability they can make a case to the relevant grammar school together with any appropriate information and evidence.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Russia (EC Beef)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what administrative and other costs are deducted by the Russians for every kilogram of EC beef sold under the assistance programme at the price of 60 roubles per kilogram on the Russian market.

Mrs. Chalker: The local costs of distribution and administration are met by the Russians. In St. Petersburg —but not in Moscow—they are financed by allocating to them 20 per cent. of the roubles received from the sale of EC beef. The remainder is placed in a counterpart fund, set up by the European Community and the Russian authorities, which is used to help the needy.

Vietnam

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what value of bilateral education aid is proposed for Vietnam; and how it will be spent.

Mrs. Chalker: We are discussing an economic reform orientated training project with the Vietnamese Government. The cost is not yet settled, but is likely to be of the order of £1 million over three to four years. We are also continuing our support for non-governmental organisation projects, for which we have committed £1·86 million since May 1990. Many of these NGO projects have a practical training component.

Women in Development

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British aid policy in relation to women in development.

Mrs. Chalker: To mark International Womens Day on Sunday 8 March we have published a booklet, "Women in Development", copies of which are in the Library. This explains our "women in development" policy and progress in implementing it.

Non-governmental Organisations

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what funding he proposes to make available to United Kingdom non-governmental organisations in 1992-93 through the Overseas Development Administration's joint funding scheme.

Mrs. Chalker: I propose to increase the allocation to the joint funding scheme by £5 million to £28 million in 1992-93. This represents an increase of about 22 per cent. on the 1991-92 budget and demonstrates the Government's continuing commitment to, and confidence in, the contribution made by voluntary organisations to developing countries.

THE ARTS

Heritage Objects

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is his response to the recommendation of the export reviewing committee about the introduction of a list of heritage objects for which export licences would not be granted.

Mr. Renton: The Committee's report makes a range of recommendations for improving the system of controlling the export of heritage objects. I have asked for comments on the report to reach me by 31 March. A list was recommended by the committee, but only on the assumption that new sources of funding would not be available. If the national lottery makes available, as I hope it will, new funds that will help keep in this country works of art that are important to our heritage, then a list should not be necessary for this purpose.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list each private sector consultancy firm which has been retained by each agency within his Department, and for his Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme; and whether the appointment in each case was the result of competitive tendering.

The Attorney-General: The legal secretariat to the Law Officers, the Treasury Solicitor's Department and the Serious Fraud Office have retained no private sector consultancy firms. The Crown Prosecution Service has retained P E International to advise on the service's market testing programme. This appointment was not the result of a competitive tender.

Magistrates

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Attorney-General how many magistrates are *(a)* men and *(b)* women.

The Attorney-General: As at 1 January 1992 there were 16,105 men and 13,336 women sitting as lay magistrates in England and Wales.

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list those parts of his Department, including executive agencies, carrying out reviews over the last 12 months into the pay and grading of staff; and the firm of consultants engaged, where appropriate.

The Attorney-General: My departments have not carried out any such reviews over the last 12 months.

Judiciary (Retirement Age)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Attorney-General whether he has any plans to bring forward proposals to reduce the retirement age for the judiciary.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor has today written to bodies representative of the judiciaries in

England and Wales and Northern Ireland seeking their views on reducing the retirement age of the judiciary to 70. The text of his letter is as follows:

> "I am writing to seek views on the appropriate maximum retirement age for the judiciary. I believe that the time has come to reduce the retirement age for the judiciary, and also to introduce a standard retirement age for all judges and judicial officers. What I would propose therefore is that all judges and judicial officers from the Lords of Appeal in Ordinary and Heads of Divisions downwards should, in future, be required to retire at the latest on their 70th birthdays.
>
> I intend that the new retirement age of 70 for full-time service should apply to those who are appointed to full-time judicial office after it comes into force. Anyone in full-time judicial office on the relevant day, and who remains in the same office, will be able to retain his or her existing maximum retirement age.
>
> I would welcome your views on the position of someone holding judicial office on the relevant day who is subsequently appointed to a different, usually more senior, judicial office. The two main possibilities here would seem to be to treat the change of office as a new appointment, with the consequence that the new retirement age of 70 will apply, or to allow the person concerned to retain the entitlement to retire at the present maximum retirement age of the junior office.
>
> A change in the retirement age will require primary legislation. Subject to the results of this consultation, I would intend to make any changes at the same time as the new judicial pension scheme is introduced.
>
> I propose that these changes should apply to Northern Ireland as well as to England and Wales. The Secretary of State for Scotland will be consulting on similar proposals for Scotland.
>
> I would welcome your views on these proposals. It would be helpful if they could be sent to Mr. S. F. Smith, Lord Chancellor's Department, Room 204, Trevelyan House, 30 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2BY to arrive no later than 31 March 1992."

Cases (Abandonment)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Attorney-General what consultation, and with whom, has to take place before a judge can decide to abandon a case; and whether members of the jury are included in such discussions.

The Attorney-General: A trial judge in criminal proceedings may in appropriate circumstances make any one of a range of orders the effect of which is that the whole or part of a prosecution cannot be proceeded with. The most frequently encountered of such orders is a directed acquittal following a submission of "no case to answer" or, under section 17 of the Criminal Justice Act 1967, where the prosecution has offered no evidence. Trial judges also have some inherent powers to stay proceedings and in certain circumstances may order that some or all of the counts in an indictment lie on the file.

The relevant parties to the proceedings are entitled to be heard before any such order is made. The making of any such order is the responsibility of the trial judge alone.

Estates (Winding-up Procedures)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Attorney-General if he will put forward proposals to impose time limits within which solicitors will be required to complete the procedures for the winding-up of estates, varying the time limits according to the values of the estates concerned.

The Attorney-General: The amount of work involved in the administration of estates varies too much from case to case to allow fixed time limits to be imposed for winding up: the degree of complexity of an estate is not necessarily related to its size. The quick and efficient administration of estates is best achieved by encouraging high standards on the part of solicitors. This is a matter for their professional body, the Law Society, as they are a self regulating profession. The Law Society offers guidance to practitioners on best practice; and has recommended ways in which practitioners might streamline the administration of estates, in their recently published "Probate Practitioners Handbook". Failure to act with due dispatch when dealing with a client's affairs is a ground on which a complaint can be made to the Solicitors Complaints Bureau.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Small Firms (Coalfield Areas)

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about new business support measures to assist small firms in coalfield areas.

Mr. Lilley: As foreseen in my statement on 17 February and following the European Commission's approval of the RECHAR programmes on 26 February, I am introducing in the English RECHAR areas a new £14 million scheme for business support measures, which will contribute to those programmes. This is subject to the Commission's approval under the state aids section of the EEC treaty.

Department of Trade and Industry regional offices will respond flexibly to the needs of each coalfield area, selecting the most suitable assistance from a range of authorised measures.

This scheme which will be additional to the Government's existing assistance for small firms, will help diversify the economy of ex-coalmining areas by providing assistance for business start-ups and for small to medium-sized companies seeking growth and innovation development.

The authorised measures are:

Support for economic promotion agencies and local community initiatives, e.g. local task forces and business clubs and for specialist consultancy support not otherwise provided.

Support for the provision of common services and feasibility studies relating to the provision of managed workspace and move-on business accommodation.

Encouragement for innovation in industry and its commercial application in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Assistance for risk appraisal by non-profit making organisations.

Support for the provision of information to SMEs to improve their access to relevant markets.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be inviting the local enterprise companies in Scottish RECHAR areas to promote business development schemes of their own tailored to local circumstances. Such schemes will be eligible for support from the European regional development fund and matching funding will be provided by the Government, under transitional arrangements for 1992-93.

In addition to the agreed new arrangements for regional innovation grants which will apply to all Great Britain, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be extending regional investment grants into the designated RECHAR areas in Wales.

Kimberly-Clark Factory, Humberside

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on progress on Kimberly-Clark's proposed project to build a factory at Barton-on-Humber.

Mr. Lilley: On 20 February, Glanford borough council resolved to grant planning permission to Kimberly-Clark to build a factory at Barton-on-Humber unless the Secretary of State for the Environment decided to call it in for his own determination.

I am very pleased to say my right hon. Friend has now written to say he will not be doing so. The way is now open for the council to proceed.

Over 770 jobs will be created directly by this project, which was won for the United Kingdom amid fierce competition from other European countries. It is another example of the success of this Government's policies in attracting investment from abroad.

Regional Enterprise Grants

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the future of the regional enterprise grants scheme.

Mr. Lilley: On 1 April 1992, subject to European Commission approval, the following changes will be made to regional enterprise grants. There are two types of assistance under this scheme—innovation and investment grants.

Regional innovation grants (RIN):

- will be extended to Intermediate and EC objective 2 areas not already covered;
- firms will be able to apply for more than one innovation grant;
- grants will now be available to firms employing under 50 people instead of below 25.
- additional advice will be provided to encourage business planning and the exploitation and marketing of successful projects.

Regional investment grants (RIG) will be subject to a simple additionality test which will require applicants to show that the grant is necessary if the project is to go ahead.

Additional signposting and advice will be provided for both grants to encourage business planning and exploitation and marketing of successful projects.

Regional innovation grants have proved to be cost-effective and an important trigger for new developments. These changes open the doors to many more firms to take up innovation opportunities.

Courts and Legal Services Act 1990

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to publish the Government's proposals for implementing the tying-in provisions of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990.

Mr. Leigh: I have today issued a consultative document setting out the Government's revised proposals for the subordinate legislation required to bring into force the provisions in the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 on the tying-in of services to residential property loans. Following suggestions made during the earlier consultation, we propose to supplement legislation under the Courts and Legal Services Act by also making regulations under the Consumer Credit Act 1974.

Our proposals have two parts. First, lenders and brokers will have to make clear to their customers if there is a link between a loan and the sale of some other service. This information would have to be provided to every customer inquiring about the availability of a loan secured on a home, regardless of the purpose of the loan.

Secondly, lenders will have to give borrowers a comprehensive statement of the impact of the terms and conditions of the loan of the decision whether or not to take any other service with it. This information would have to be provided with the lender's offer of a loan to buy a home.

I want to ensure that borrowers are not coerced or misled into buying services from mortgage lenders that they either do not want or would prefer to buy elsewhere.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

National Music Curriculum

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will meet a delegation from the Incorporated Society of Musicians to discuss the national music curriculum; and if he will make a statement on his response to their representations.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how long after the close of the consultation period on his proposals for music in the national curriculum final orders will be laid before Parliament;

(2) whether he intends to amend his proposals for music in the national curriculum to take account of the submission he has received from the Incorporated Society of Musicians;

(3) how many submissions, and from which organisations, he has received on his proposals for music in the national curriculum.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has received around 800 representation on his proposals for music in the national curriculum, as set out in the draft order published on 27 January. These have come from a wide range of organisations including local education authorities, educational, subject and professional associations.

My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to meet a delegation from the Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM). He will make the final order for music in the national curriculum after taking due account of the points made in the responses to the consultation exercise, including those from ISM.

GCSE

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many letters he has received criticising the proposed changes to GCSE; how many of these were from parents and governors; what response he has made to the criticisms expressed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: As I said in my reply of 24 February to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) at column *377*, varying views have been expressed in the letters we have received from different interested groups and individuals on the subject. My right hon. and learned

Friend and I have said that in order to maintain public confidence in GCSE, and given the difficulties of ensuring that course work is conducted under sufficiently uniform conditions and marked against nationwide standards, its course work element needs to be kept within agreed limits.

Stratford School

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library correspondence received from the former governors of Stratford school, prior to its change to grant-maintained status, and copies of the formal application for that status made by the persons responsible for the application, together with other official communications made to him, or from him to them, since their assumption of office.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the sums he calculates as being due to him from any London borough, or other education authority, in respect of registered pupils at Stratford school, the sums already paid, or due, from each authority, together with the basis of calculation for each and the method of verification of attendance that they may use.

Mr. Eggar: The annual maintenance grant (AMG) of Stratford school has been calculated on the basis of regulation 8 of the Education (Grant-Maintained Schools) (Finance) Regulations 1991, (SI 1991 No. 353). The whole of the final AMG for the school of £1,533,311 is a charge on Newham local education authority. To the extent that any pupils at the school belong to the area of another LEA, it is for Newham to recover their costs directly from any such LEA.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the occasions since 1 January when any inspector visited Stratford school together with the purpose and the duration of each visit.

Mr. Eggar: HMI makes regular termly visits to the school and keep in close contact with the progress being made. The last such visit was in December, the next will be later this month.

School Attendance Officers

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what person or body has the responsibility of school attendance officer for any grant-maintained school; and what reports they are required to make to him or to the local education authorities from which moneys or fees are due by virtue of a pupil's attendance at such schools.

Mr. Eggar: Responsibility for enforcing the school attendance legislation rests with local education authorities to which all schools, other than independent schools for boarders only, have a duty to report regular absentees. It is for each grant-maintained school to keep its register and to decide what action it should take to encourage regular attendance by its pupils.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the legal provisions concerning the power of governors of grant-maintained schools to nominate a person to whom money may be paid by him or from other persons or bodies; and what obligation is placed on any body of governors for auditing of annual accounts; and for what period.

Mr. Eggar: Money from the Department is paid direct to each grant-maintained school by placing it in its bank account, not by giving it to individuals. The schools are required to maintain rigorous controls over the drawing down of grant and other funds from their bank accounts. Schools are also required to appoint independent professional auditors and ensure their accounts are audited every year. Audit appointments are made for one year, renewable at the governing body's discretion.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what powers he has given to governors of grant-maintained schools to delegate their authority for appointment of any staff.

Mr. Eggar: The governing body of a grant-maintained school has power to delegate its functions under the articles of Government with respect to the appointment of staff. Whether or not the governing body has delegated any of its responsibilities with regard to the appointment of staff, the body or person whose responsibility it is must consider any advice given by the head teacher before determining to appoint any member of staff, except the head teacher's successor. There are of course a large number of statutory requirements which apply generally to the appointment of staff.

Funding Applications, Bradford

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, South on 25 February, *Official Report,* column 803, if he will list the deficiencies in the applications from Bradford for central Government funding.

Mr. Eggar: The deficiencies I had in mind included Bradford's initial failure to bid for a supplementary credit approval in 1991-92 to support additional capital expenditure on its schools; an initially unrealistic bid against the raising standards in inner city schools activity in the Department's 1992-93 grants for education support and training programme; and a bid for section 11 grant for 1992-93 which required a substantial amount of re-working to meet the new criteria for section 11. I have on a number of occasions made my concerns known to representatives of the authority. However, yesterday I announced that the submission by Greenhead school in Bradford under the technology schools initiative was one of the 21 best bids received by the Department.

Dental Health Research

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in tabular form details of all dental health research projects receiving funding from his Department; and if he will specify the nature and duration of each project, the name of the principal researcher and the institution at which the work is being carried out.

Mr. Alan Howarth *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* The main agency through which the Government support medical research in this country is the Medical Research Council (MRC). The MRC receives grant-in-aid from this Department, but is an independent body and decides how its money should be spent in the light of its judgment of priorities, opportunities and quality of research applications. MRC is supporting the following dental research projects:

Research institution	*Principal researcher*	*Title of grant*	*Duration of grant*
University of Bristol	Professor C. D. Stephens	Development of an expert system for the planning of simple orthodontic treatment	1 July 1988 to 30 June 1992
University of Leicester	Dr. I. S. Roberts	Molecular analysis of the effect of b. gingivalis secreted protease on pmnl. function and fibroblast proliferation	1 November 1988 to 31 January 1992
London Hospital Medical College	Dr. H. N. Shan	Nitrogen metabolism of oral spirochaetes involved in periodontal disease	1 May 1990 to 30 April 1992
University of Leicester	Dr. I. S. Roberts	Molecular approaches to the study of b. gingivalis capsule in attachment and resistance to host defence mechanisms	1 October 1989 to 30 September 1992
University of Newcastle upon Tyne	Professor J. J. Murray	Clinical and laboratory durability studies of glass polyalkenoate cement and composite resin in paediatric dentistry	1 October 1990 to 30 September 1993
University of Bristol	Dr. D. F. G. Poole	Formation of carious lesions in dental tissues and caries prevention by fluoride	1 October 1990 to 30 September 1993
University of Bristol	Dr. R. P. Shellis	Saliva/plaque/tooth equilibria and the reduction of dental caries	26 November 1990 to 25 November 1993
Queen Mary and Westfield College, London	Professor K. Brocklehurst	Characterisation and physiological function of proteinases produced by the key periodontal pathogens	July 1991 to June 1993
University of Leeds	Dr. C. Robinson	Control of biological apatite crystal growth in a rodent incisor model, implications for enamel hypoplasia	1 February 1991 to 31 January 1994
University of Sheffield	Mr. I. M. Brook	Ultrastructural and xray microanalytic study of the interface between bone and ceramic or glass ionomer implants	February 1992 to January 1993
Utd. Medical/Dental School Guy's and St. Thomas's, London	Dr. A. M. Edwina Kidd	Assessment of caries activity related to microbiology at the enamel-dentine junction during cavity preparation	August 1991 to July 1992
Strangeways Research Laboratory, Cambridge	Dr. J. J. Reynolds	Cellular control mechanisms in the regulation of connective tissue degredation	1 April 1982 to 31 March 1993
University of Manchester	Dr. S. L. Schor	Fibroblast heterogeneity and the control of epithelial-mesenchymal interactions in the oral mucosa	1 February 1989 to 31 January 1992
University of Newcastle upon Tyne	Dr. R. B. Russell	Dextranases and dextranase inhibitors of mutans streptococci	26 November 1990 to 25 November 1993
University of Manchester	Dr. P. T. Sharpe	Hox 7.1 Gene expression and tooth development	August 1991 to July 1994
University of Dundee	Mr. G. R. Ogden	Identification of cytokeratin in oral disease, using exfoliative cytology	July 1991 to June 1992

Research institution	*Principal researcher*	*Title of grant*	*Duration of grant*
Institute of Dental Surgery, London	Dr. Patrizia Ferretti	A molecular approach to the study of jaw regeneration in urodeles	October 1991 to September 1993
Royal College of Surgeons of England, London	Dr. C. T. Teo	Epstein-barr virus genomic activity in the oral cavity of normal and HIV infected individuals	1 April 1991 to 31 March 1994
University of Liverpool	Professor O. H. Petersen	MRC secretory control group	1 October 1988 to 30 September 1993
University of Manchester	Professor R. M. Case	Bicarbonate transport and the anionic basis of salivary secretion	1 July 1989 to 8 November 1992

The MRC also supports dental research on a longer term basis at its dental research unit directed by Professor N. W. Johnson at the London Hospital medical college, and through a group of dental researchers on its external scientific staff at the University of Bristol. Their research has been focused as follows:

MRC dental research unit

IGG antibodies to bacteroides gingivalis, b. intermedius, fusobacterium nucleatum and wolinella recta in patients with severe destructive periodontitis.

Detection of IGG antibodies in human sera to outer membrane components of bacteriodes species with reference to protease activity.

Perification and characterisation of bacteroides proteins identified as possible markers of periodontal disease susceptibility or activity.

Interaction of polymorphonuclear leucocytes and specific IGG opsonins to b. gingivalis in patients with severe destructive periodontitis.

Identification of markers of disease activity in gingival crevicular fluid.

Responsiveness of human gingival epithelial cells to inflammatory stimuli.

Statistical methods for data from periodontal research.

A longitudinal cohort study of the natural progression of periodontal breakdown in adults.

MRC dental group (Principal Researcher Dr. D. F. G. Poole)

Fluoride in the oral environment for controlling the initiation and progress of carious lesions.

Physiochemical and biochemical equilibria in the saliva-plaque-tooth system.

Research, including dental health research, is also conducted in universities using grants from the Universities Funding Council which is funded by the DES. Details of specific projects are not held centrally.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update his answer of 27 March 1990, *Official Report*, columns *165-66*, to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), concerning the numbers dependent on income support.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the table.

Number of claimants in receipt of Income Support.

Year	*Great Britain*	*England*	*Wales*	*Scotland*
1989	4,161,000	3,429,000	246,000	486,000
1990	4,180,000	3,451,000	248,000	481,000

Number of partners and dependent children of claimants in receipt of Income Support

Year	*[illegible]at Britain*	*England*	*Wales*	*Scotland*
1989	2,862,000	2,381,000	167,000	313,000
1990	2,843,000	2,370,000	177,000	296,000

Notes:

All figures are rounded to the nearest thousand and may not therefore sum.

The figures for 1989 may differ from those previously given. The earlier figures were based upon provisional estimates from the quarterly statistical enquiry for May 1989.

Source:

Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiries, 1989 and 1990.

Staffing

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update his answer of 16 March 1990, *Official Report*, columns 406-7, concerning the number of staff per 100,000 claimants.

Miss Widdecombe: The total number of staff administering the social security programme per 100,000 receiving benefits for the years 1979-80 to 1990-91 is in the table.

	Number
1979-80	384
1980-81	372
1981-82	353
1982-83	339
1983-84	325
1984-85	311
1985-86	316
1986-87	314
1987-88	326
1988-89	326
1989-90	307
1990-91	295

Seafarers (National Insurance)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the estimated cost in a full tax year of restricting the employer's national insurance contribution to the level of the employee's contribution in the case of United Kingdom seafarers.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not available.

Pensions

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of *(a)* doubling and *(b)* quadrupling the premium payable to pensioners over the age of 80 years.

Miss Widdecombe: The gross extra cost of doubling and quadrupling the retirement pension age addition would be £28 million and £84 million respectively. These costs do not take into account the savings in income-related benefits.

Resettlement Units

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement regarding the further replacement of resettlement units.

Miss Widdecombe: The development of replacement provision for the resettlement units at Stormy Down in South Wales and Southampton are considerably advanced. During the next 12 months the proposals for each of these units are expected to be complete. I have therefore agreed that our direct operation of these units should cease by 31 March 1993. As with all replacement schemes we will need to be satisfied, at that date, that sufficient suitable alternative accommodation is being provided.

Together the proposals for these two units will produce over 200 bed spaces which is far in excess of those in the respective units.

This announcement together with my earlier one, on 5 February at column *210*, on the transfer of the units at Camden and Newbury also by March 1993 will considerably advance our intention to withdraw from the direct operations of resettlement units.

National Insurance

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much would be raised by abolishing the ceiling on national insurance contributions.

Mr. Jack: We estimate that if the upper earnings limit for employees' contributions was abolished, the revenue yield for 1992-93 would be about £2·7 billion. If the self-employed upper profits limit was also abolished the additional yield would be about £0·5 billion.

WALES

Usk Bypass

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding proposals for an Usk bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. This is a county road matter and one for Gwent county council as the local highway authority.

U[illegible]k (Heavy Lorries)

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding a ban on heavy lorries through Usk and over the River Usk in Usk.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, has recently received a letter from Usk town council. This is a county road matter and one for Gwent county council as the responsible highway authority.

Youth Unemployment

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current level of unemployment in the Clwyd South-West constituency among school leavers in the 16 to 19 years age range.

Mr. David Hunt: In January 1992 there were 314 unemployed claimants in the Clwyd, South-West constituency aged under 20 years. A separate count of school leavers is not available.

Latchkey Children

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been spent in Wales on pilot schemes to cater for the care of latchkey children in 1991-92; and how much is budgeted to be spent in 1992-93.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: In April 1991, under the Department's scheme of support for child and family services, a grant was awarded to the Kids Clubs' Network for a new out of school care development project in Wales. The project development officer was appointed on 22 July 1991 and grant paid in 1991-92 amounts to £24,022. On 19 February 1992, I announced a grant award of £40,812 for this project in 1992-93.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the hospitals in Wales now considering applying for trust status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: There is increasing recognition from within the national health service in Wales that NHS trust status is the natural organisational model for the delivery of patient services. The Pembrokeshire NHS trust will become operational on 1 April. The statement by the hon. Gentleman at the Welsh Labour conference that Pembroke NHS trust would be brought back within the NHS under a Labour Government betrays either extreme ignorance of the fact that such trusts are, as their name implies, part of the NHS or an attempt to mislead the people of Wales.

In addition, 14 health units have been invited to prepare applications for NHS trust status from April 1993. The details were given by my right hon. Friend on 19 December 1991. The eventual decision whether to submit a formal application is a matter for the individual hospital or health unit in the light of local circumstances.

Special Protection Areas

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many proposals for special protection area designation have been formally submitted to his Department by the statutory conservation agencies or transferred from the Department of the Environment and not yet progressed to designation; and if he will list the dates on which those submissions were made.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The department has four proposals for special protection area designation which have not yet progressed to designation. They were all transferred from the Department of the Environment on 13 January 1992.

Local Government

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he had received by 2 March in favour of amalgamating the borough of Wrexham and the district of Alyn and Deeside, as a result of his recent consultation on the future of local government in Wales; how many of these representations were from individuals; and how many were from representative bodies.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Nine of which four were from local branches of the Conservative party, Plaid Cymru and the Green party and five from community or town councils. No representations were received in favour of this proposal from the Labour party.

Roads

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will respond to the first report of the Welsh Affairs Committee, Session 1991-92, "Roads in Wales", House of Commons paper 89.

Mr. David Hunt: I am pleased to announce that the response has been published today as Command Paper 1851.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list each private sector consultancy firm which hs been retained by each agency within his Department, and for his Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme; and whether the appointment in each case was the result of competitive tendering.

Mr. Maples: Touche Ross has been appointed to provide the private sector input to the study being undertaken to determine the scope for further market testing in Treasury in accordance with the White Paper, "Competing for Quality", (Cm. 1730). The appointment was made following the evaluation of proposals from six firms.

Rural Post Offices

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had proposing changes in the law to enable rural post offices to provide banking services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples: I have not received any representations along the lines described. Post offices already provide banking services on an agency basis for Girobank. There are no plans at present to further extend the Post Office's powers in this area and the Government are reluctant to see any extension of the public sector, not least because of concern for fair competition.

Investment and Research

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in detail the action taken by Her Majesty's Government to encourage investment and research.

Mr. Mellor: The key role played by the Government in encouraging investment and research is a commitment to a stable, low-inflation environment, to free and open markets and a lack of burdensome social and industrial regulation. There is, however, a role for Government support where there is evidence of market failure.

Full details of the Government's schemes for encouraging investment and research can be found in the recently published departmental reports for 1992-93 and in the annual review of Government-funded research and development, copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

PSBR

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the public sector borrowing requirement each year since 1974 at 1992 values; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The figures requested are set out in the table. Between 1974-75 and 1978-79, the PSBR averaged 6¾ per cent. of GDP. Since 1979-80, by contrast, it has averaged 1¾ per cent. of GDP.

Public sector borrowing requirement (£ million)

	Cash	*at 1991-92 prices*[1]
1974-75	8,001	38,939
1975-76	10,251	39,765
1976-77	8,263	28,234
1977-78	5,381	16,172
1978-79	9,174	24,857
1979-80	9,926	23,040
1980-81	12,519	24,559
1981-82	8,631	15,447
1982-83	8,904	14,877
1983-84	9,678	15,454
1984-85	10,134	15,411
1985-86	5,622	8,102
1986-87	3,559	4,966
1987-88	−3,406	−4,508
1988-89	−14,657	−18,097
1989-90	−7,932	−9,197
1990-91	−465	−498
1991-92	[2]10,500	10,500

[1] Using the GDP deflator

[2] Autumn Statement forecast

Income Tax

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the yield from income tax against the basic rate for each year from 1985-86 to 1990-91.

Mr. Maude: The information is in the table:

£ billion

Year	*Total tax liability*	*Tax liability* *At the basic rate*	*At the higher rate*	*Of which excess over the basic rate*
1985-86	38·8	33·5	5·2	2·1
1986-87	42·8	36·2	6·6	2·8
1987-88	45·3	37·4	7·9	3·7
1988-89	46·5	38·0	8·5	3·2
1989-90	53·4	43·0	10·5	3·9
1990-91	59·4	46·8	12·6	4·7

[1] Latest estimate based on a projection of the 1989-90 Survey of Personal Incomes.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what would be the reduction in disposable income in an average size constituency in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* the United Kingdom, assuming average levels of income from savings and employment as a result of (i) introducing a 9 per cent. surcharge tax on (ii) all savings and (iii) savings over £30,000 and (iv) increasing the top rate of income tax to 50 per cent;

(2) what would be the increase in disposable income in an average size constituency in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)*) the United Kingdom, assuming average levels of income from savings and employment as a result of (i) increasing all tax allowances by the rate of inflation and (ii) reducing the rate of income tax by 1p.

Mr. Maude: Available estimates at 1991-92 levels of income, which exclude any behavioural effects which might result, are given in the table. I regret that separate data for England, Scotland and Wales are not available.

	Total change in disposable income in United Kingdom (£ billion)	*Average change per constituency[1] (£ million)*
9 per cent. surcharge on all investment income	−2·6	−3·9
9 per cent. surcharge on income from savings of over £30,000	−1·3	−2·0
Increase in higher rate of tax to 50 per cent.	−3·3	−5·0
Increase in all income tax allowances and thresholds by 4·5 per cent.	+1·5	+2·3
Reduction of 1p in basic rate	+1·9	+3·0

[1] Column 1 divided by 650—the number of parliamentary constituencies.

"Next Steps"

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the progress of "next steps" in the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Norman Lamont: On 1 April the Inland Revenue will be setting up within the Department 34 executive offices covering the whole of its operational work in assessing and collecting taxes, and also important internal support services. This follows the establishment of the Valuation Office as an agency last year. As a result, the Inland Revenue will then be operating on "next steps" lines, with 96 per cent. of its staff working either in the Valuation Office Agency or in the 34 executive offices. This will mean less direct involvement from the centre, and more responsibility and accountability for heads of executive offices and their local managers. The purpose of these changes is to give taxpayers a better service, and to organise work more efficiently.

As a part of its major programme of change the Revenue set up two teams to review its organisation and structure and its management and grading. The principal aims were to achieve significant further improvements in service to the public, in operational effectiveness and in cost efficiency, and to ensure the fullest commitment of those who work in the Department. They have now completed their work. Copies of a summary of their reports will be placed in the Library.

The review teams envisage a slimmer and rather differently organised Department. Their proposals are designed to carry forward the policy set out in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's statement of 16 May 1991 on the Fraser report, in the Citizen's Charter and in the White Paper "Competing for Quality."

A number of the changes, if implemented, would take several years to complete. As a result, in 10 years time the Department might be 10 to 15 per cent. smaller than it is now. Further detailed planning and consultation will, however, be required before the future shape of the Department, and the way it does its work, can finally be settled. In addition to consultation with staff, the Inland Revenue is undertaking a major survey of taxpayers' views to ensure that the new arrangements properly reflect their priorities.

Meanwhile, however, there are a number of specific changes which we shall be carrying forward now.

First, the Inland Revenue is already engaged in introducing or testing a number of changes which are designed to improve the service it provides. We shall want to expand on this by examining proposals for moving, over a period of years, towards a new office structure. Taxpayer assistance offices would provide better local facilities, where the public could get inquiries dealt with, and problems resolved, on the spot. Other offices would deal with specialist and compliance work. And service offices would bring together, in a more efficient way, the bulk of the day-to-day work. Our aim is to move towards a single point of contact for every taxpayer. These changes will build on the existing experiments designed to remove the need for separate tax and collection offices in the same area.

Secondly, the Department will be taking forward for wider consultation—and, where appropriate, negotiation—proposals for a new performance and reporting system for staff of the Inland Revenue, and, linked to it, a new system for pay and grading, with a larger proportion of pay depending on an assessment of performance. These proposals would be consistent with moving to a single staff group, within the civil service, for most Revenue staff.

Thirdly, there will be a number of important changes to the relationship between the Department's head office and the new executive offices, in accordance with "next steps" principles. These include enhancing further the delegated authority and responsibility of managers; identifying opportunities to improve efficiency through market testing and internal charging; shortening lines of accountability and management; and making changes in management and reporting arrangements, including bringing operational functions more closely together.

Fourthly, to assist the Board of the Inland Revenue in managing the new departmental structure, a new management board will be formed, comprising the existing board members, other senior managers, and a number of members from the private sector in a part-time capacity. These last will impart valuable management expertise, experience and advice.

These changes represent together an important new beginning for the Inland Revenue. It will become a slimmer and more effective organisation, more interesting and satisfying to work for, providing ever better service to the public.

Overnight Subsistence Allowances

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what basis standard overnight subsistence allowances are calculated for civil servants travelling abroad.

Mr. Maples: Overseas subsistence allowances reflect the costs of accommodation, breakfast, lunch and dinner (including service charges and taxes) plus a small element to cover extra incidental expenses. Rates are based on the cost of reasonable quality and acceptable hotels in the particular locality and reflect discounts which are negotiated for visiting officials.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the standard overnight subsistence allowance expressed in pounds sterling which is payable to a civil servant of *(a)* grade 5, *(b)* grade 3 and *(c)* grade 1 travelling on official business to (1) Berlin, (2) Bonn, (3) Brussels, (4) Lisbon, (5) Luxembourg, (6) Madrid, (7) Paris, (8) Rome and (9) Washington.

Mr. Maples: Overseas subsistence allowances are calculated in local currency and the sterling equivalent depends upon the exchange rate available at the time of an official's visit. The table gives the current rates for the grades in question, together with approximate sterling equivalents.

		Local currency	*£*
Berlin	DM	249	(86)
Bonn	DM	209	(73)
Brussels	BFr	6,610	(111)
Lisbon	Esc	21,600	(87)
Luxembourg	BFr	7,080	(119)
Madrid	Pts	20,100	(111)
Paris	FFr	996	(102)
Rome	L	242,000	(112)
Washington	US$	161	[1](92)
Washington	US$	185	[2](105)

[1] Grade 5.

[2] Grades 1 and 3.

Child Care Tax Allowance

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated cost to the Exchequer in a full tax year of introducing a child care tax allowance on the first *(a)* £1,000, *(b)* £2,000 and *(c)* £5,000 of taxable income for (i) working single parents and (ii) couples where both spouses are working.

Mr. Maude: Estimates of the cost of introducing allowances against taxable incomes of (i) working single parents and (ii) the higher earner in a two earner family for 1992-93 are as follows:

Cost (£ million)

	Allowance of		
	£1,000 per year	*£2,000 per year*	*£5,000 per year*
Working single parents	60	120	220
Higher earner in a two earner family with children	900	1,800	4,300

Cost of Living (European Community)

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has about the comparative cost of living in the capital cities of the EC member states.

Mr. Maples: Following are the comparative costs of living in the capital cities of EC member states as of October 1991 (London = 100).

	Comparative cost of living
Copenhagen	111·0
Rome	104·1
Paris	101·7
Madrid	101·1
Brussels	100·8
London	100·0
Dublin	96·8
Bonn	95·0
Athens	93·2
Luxembourg	89·3
The Hague	88·7
Lisbon	88·4

Source: P-E International of Egham, Surrey.

Profit-related Pay Schemes

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average income and the distribution of income of those in profit-related pay schemes, in the United Kingdom, since the schemes began.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* The estimated average annual earnings of participants, including those working part-time, in registered profit-related pay schemes, in each year since schemes began are as follows. Information on the distribution of earnings is not available.

Live registered schemes in	*Average annual earnings of participants (£)*
March 1988	12,700
March 1989	12,000
March 1990	12,500
March 1991	11,500
January 1992	13,300

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Overnight Subsistence Allowance

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the standard overnight subsistence allowance expressed in pounds sterling which is payable to an hon. Member travelling on official business to (1) Berlin, (2) Bonn, (3) Brussels, (4) Lisbon, (5) Luxembourg, (6) Madrid, (7) Paris, (8) Rome and (9) Washington.

Mr. MacGregor: The standard overnight subsistence allowance payable to an hon. Member travelling on official business is the class A rate payable to senior staff in the home civil service. The rates are fixed by Her Majesty's Treasury and are regularly reviewed; they are normally expressed in the currency of the country to which they refer. For the current rates, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given today by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

HEALTH

Waiting Lists

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to reduce waiting lists at hospitals in the East Anglia region; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Provisional figures show for January 1992 that since last March, East Anglian health authority, backed by £1·36 million from the waiting list fund, has reduced the number of patients waiting over two years by 75 per cent. and the number waiting over one year by 43 per cent. in January alone the number of patients waiting over two years fell by 51 per cent. The authority expects to have no patient waiting over two years by 31 March.

Dentists

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what survey has been undertaken by his Department in the London borough of Wandsworth of dentists who practise in the borough but who no longer provide dental treatment under the national health service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Last September we asked family health services authorities to conduct on our behalf a sample survey of 20 per cent. of dentists on their dental lists. All the dentists on the Merton Sutton and Wandsworth dental list who took part in the survey indicated they would continue NHS treatment.

Vitamins and Minerals

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to limit the supply of any vitamins and minerals by making them available only on prescription.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gave my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Mr. Hague) on 27 February at column *611*.

A number of vitamin and mineral preparations are currently licensed medicines, some of which are already available only on prescription. There are a small number of essential vitamins and minerals sold as food supplements, which may have adverse effects when consumed in excess. We believe that, for these substances, safety concerns may indicate a need for limitations on the maximum freely available dose.

A United Kingdom outline proposal for a possible EC directive notes that the relationship between supplements sold as foods and those sold as medicines, including medicines on general sale, may need to be addressed. It is not yet clear whether this will form part of any EC measure.

Drug Addicts

44. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the present number of registered drug addicts in the Greater London area.

Mr. Dorrell: The Home Office maintains an index of people notified by doctors as addicted to one or more of a range of drugs controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. The number of new and renotified drug addicts in the Greater London area notified to the addicts index was 5,500 in 1990, the latest year for which figures are available.

Patients, Huddersfield

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide for the Huddersfield health authority for each year since 1979 *(a)* the numbers of in-patients treated and *(c)* the number of out-patients treated.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is given in the table. In addition, the number of day cases treated in Huddersfield district health authority over the period 1979 to 1991 increased by 26 per cent. from 1,951 to 2,459.

NHS hospitals Huddersfield District Health Authority

Year	*In-patient waiting list at 31 March*	*In-patient cases treated*	*New out-patients*	*Total out-patient attendances*
1979	3,863	[1]21,289	26,859	153,470
1980	2,731	[1]22,581	28,143	162,182
1981	2,159	[1]23,196	28,510	159,268
1982	2,044	[1]22,126	29,204	153,846
1983	2,920	[1]24,351	30,866	163,206
1984	2,655	[1]25,075	32,578	158,091
1985	2,770	[1]26,710	32,268	160,868
1986	2,697	[1]27,637	33,122	161,506
1987	2,175	—	—	—
1987-88	1,793	[1]30,869	35,150	152,706
1988-89	2,215	[1]28,544	38,841	165,550
1988-89	2,215	[2]32,364	38,841	165,550
1989-90	2,153	[2]30,785	36,304	168,607
1990-91	1,982	[2]33,704	36,873	171,110

[1] Hospital discharges.

[2] Finished consultant episodes.

Crutches and Walking Frames

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total cost of equipment such as crutches and walking frames which are not returned to hospitals by patients; and if he will make it a requirement for those using this equipment to pay a refundable deposit before being allowed to remove it from hospital grounds.

Mr. Dorrell: The cost to the NHS of unreturned equipment is not collected centrally. As with other services, it is the provider units themselves who are responsible for managing effectively the supply and control of such equipment.

General Practitioners

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average general practitioner list size in South Derbyshire district and Trent region in 1982 and the latest year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At 1 October 1982, the average general practitioner list size in Derbyshire family health services authority's area was 2,289 and the figure for Trent region was 2,251. At 1 April 1991, (the latest year for which figures are available) the average list size for Derbyshire family health services authority was 2,004 and the Trent region was 1,985. Figures are not available for the South Derbyshire district alone.

Hospital Statistics Bulletin

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when he published last year's national health service hospital activity statistics bulletin;

(2) when he received the draft of the new national health service hospital activity statistics bulletin; and when he intends to publish the bulletin.

Mr. Waldegrave: The bulletin containing statistics of NHS hospitals activity and facilities in 1989-90 was published on 12 December 1990.

I received the draft bulletin giving comparable figures for 1990-91 on 19 February, and intend to publish it shortly, as drafted.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many patients were removed from waiting lists *(a)* by admission for treatment and *(b)* for reasons other than treatment in each district in each of the four Thames regional health authorities in each six month period since September 1988;

(2) when the honourable Member for Peckham may expect a substantive reply to her question on waiting lists of 10 February.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 10 February 1992]:* We do not routinely collate information on all district health authorities centrally. For the relevant information at regional level, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 29 January at columns *599-602*. In the three years to March 1991, nearly 2·1 million patients were admitted from waiting lists in the Thames regions. In the same period the names of a further 290,122 were removed for other reasons, for example, because they had already been treated, had moved, or no longer needed treatment. This is good practice in line with the Royal College of Surgeons guidelines.

NHS Staff

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for *(a)* each regional health authority and *(b)* each district health authority the number of (i) nurses and midwives, (ii) medical staff, (iii) general and senior managers, (iv) administrative and clerical staff, (v) ancillary staff and (vi) ambulance staff for 1986 and for 1990.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 13 February 1992]:* Regional health authority data are shown in the table. District data could not be produced without incurring disproportionate cost.

The new grades of general and senior manager were introduced following the recommendations of the 1983 Griffiths report to strengthen accountability for the delivery of health authority objectives. An expansion in numbers occurred from 1989 following the extension of senior manager arrangements beyond the most senior posts in regions and districts and their introduction to units and family practitioner committees. Staff employed in these grades generally hold posts which were previously occupied by staff in other groups such as administrative and clerical or senior nursing grades.

NHS directly employed staff in post by specific staff groups as at 30 September 1986
England by regional health authorities
Whole-time equivalent[1]

Region	*Nursing and midwifery*[2]	*Medical and dental*[3]	*General managers*	*Admin and clerical staff*	*Ancillary staff*	*Ambulance staff*
Northern RHA	27,390	2,820	40	6,220	9,200	1,400
Yorkshire RHA	30,290	2,970	30	6,990	9,870	1,640
Trent RHA	37,120	3,780	50	8,850	12,970	1,970
East Anglia RHA	15,590	1,590	30	4,000	4,490	770
North West Thames RHA	28,670	3,310	30	7,710	7,790	490
North East Thames RHA	34,340	4,170	30	9,760	11,060	590
South East Thames RHA	30,370	3,510	50	8,900	10,110	960
South West Thames RHA	24,350	2,540	20	5,890	6,410	670
Wessex RHA	23,060	2,060	30	5,410	6,620	990
Oxford RHA	16,950	2,030	20	4,640	4,480	810
South Western RHA	26,980	2,630	30	6,710	8,060	1,470
West Midlands RHA	42,520	4,400	60	11,220	13,190	1,940
Mersey RHA	22,330	2,230	30	5,280	6,700	950
North Western RHA	37,860	4,040	60	9,510	11,640	1,670
London post graduate special Health Authorities	4,880	1,160	10	1,670	1,490	—
England Total[4]	402,690	43,250	510	110,840	124,270	18,970

[1] All figures are rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalent.

[2] Includes agency staff.

[3] Includes permanent paid, honorary and locum staff. Differences in the sum of numbers of staff for all regions are due to duplication of staff holding appointments in more than one region. Such staff are included separately in each region.

[4] Includes staff at the Dental Estimates Board, Prescription Pricing Authority, London Ambulance Service, and Family Practitioner Committees.

Source: Department of Health (SMI3) annual census of NHS medical and non-medical manpower.

National Health Service directly employed staff in post by specific staff groups as at 30 September 1990
England by Regional Health Authorities

Whole-time equivalent[1]

Region	*Nursing and midwifery*[2]	*Medical and dental*[3]	*General and senior managers*[4]	*Administration and clerical staff*	*Ancillary staff*	*Ambulance staff*
Northern Regional Health Authority	27,310	2,990	550	6,940	7,330	1,320
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	30,140	3,120	930	7,870	7,000	1,560
Trent Regional Health Authority	38,220	4,170	600	10,120	10,760	1,890
East Anglia Regional Health Authority	16,420	1,810	480	4,070	3,920	790
North West Thames Regional Health Authority	27,560	3,480	80	8,160	5,460	540
North East Thames Regional Health Authority	34,170	4,250	1,030	10,450	8,290	550
South East Thames Regional Health Authority	30,110	3,800	780	10,030	8,020	860
South West Thames Regional Health Authority	23,070	2,650	520	6,340	4,390	660
Wessex Regional Health Authority	23,690	2,540	610	5,840	5,360	940
Oxford Regional Health Authority	17,310	2,180	420	5,150	3,470	800
South Western Regional Health Authority	27,490	2,780	610	6,980	6,370	1,460
West Midlands Regional Health Authority	43,220	4,800	1,060	11,950	11,100	1,850
Mersey Regional Health Authority	21,180	2,440	500	5,810	4,690	880
North Western Regional Health Authority	37,120	4,450	690	10,070	8,020	1,580
London Post-graduate Special Health Authorities	4,970	1,380	130	1,840	1,080	—
ENGLAND TOTAL[5]	402,070	46,900	9,680	120,040	95,690	18,130

Source: Department of Health (SM13) Annual Census of National Health Service medical and non-medical manpower.

[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalent.

[2] Includes agency staff.

[3] Includes permanent paid, honorary and locum staff. Differences in the sum of numbers of staff for all regions are due to duplication of staff holding appointments in more than one region. Such staff are included separately in each region.

[4] Senior managers were progressively introduced from 1987.

[5] Includes staff at the Dental Estimates Board, Prescription Pricing Authority, London Ambulance Service, Family Practitioner Committees and other Statutory Authorities (eg. public Health Laboratory service and the Health Education Authority).

Cataract Operations

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in the last year for which figures are available, what was the number of patients awaiting cataract operations in England and Wales; and what percentage of them had been on the list for *(a)* six months, *(b)* a year, *(c)* two years and *(d)* more than two years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 24 February 1992]:* Waiting time information for specific conditions is not collected centrally. The latest information available centrally for the ophthalmology specialty as a whole in England is given in the table. This shows that fewer than 2 per cent. of patients had been waiting more than two years for ophthalmology treatment and 87 per cent. waited less than one year. Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Ophthalmology waiting list at March 1991
England—All cases
March 1991

	Numbers	*Percentage*
Total waiting	95,210	100
0-6 months	58,125	61·0
6-11 months	24,454	25·7
12-24 months	11,094	11·7
Over 24 months	1,537	1·6

Hospital Beds, York

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* acute and *(b)* long-stay hospital beds York health authority had open in each year since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* Figures relating to acute beds are given in the table. Information relating to long-stay beds is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Pratt, the chairman of York district health authority, for details.

National health service hospitals, York health authority

Year	*Average daily number of acute available beds*	*Total number of* *In-patients*	*Day cases*
1979	763	27,296	4,444
1980	767	28,085	4,658
1981	771	28,330	4,548
1982	750	27,071	3,796
1983	743	29,641	4,444
1984	726	30,020	4,469
1985	725	31,646	4,801
1986	716	32,596	5,686
1987-88	691	34,062	4,549
1988-89	689	[1]34,176	5,523
1988-89	—	[2]38,184	5,523
1989-90	673	39,434	5,626
1990-91	652	39,530	5,425

[1] Discharges and deaths.

[2] Finished consultant episodes.

Notes:

In-patients 1979 to 1988-89 discharges and deaths.

In-patients 1988-89 to 1990-91 finished consultant episodes.

1990-91 figures provisional.

Between 1979 and 1990-91 in York health authority the numbers of in-patient cases treated in the acute sector increased from 19,460 hospital discharges to 26,726 finished consultant episodes, an increase of 31 per cent. on a comparable basis, and for all sectors increased by 30 per cent. from 27,296 hospital discharges to 39,530 finished consultant episodes.

SCOTLAND

House Completions

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new houses were completed in Scotland in each year since 1978.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the number of new houses completed in Scotland for each year since 1978 is set out in the following table.

New dwellings completed in Scotland

Year	*Total*
1978	25,759
1979	23,782
1980	20,611
1981	20,015
1982	16,423
1983	17,931
1984	18,838
1985	18,411
1986	18,637
1987	17,711
1988	18,272
1989	20,172
[1]1990	19,906

[1] Figures include estimates.

Housing

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by district council the number of council houses sold since October 1980; if he will also show this as a percentage of total stock at the start of that period; and if he will show the number of new build houses in that period.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information by district council on the number of council houses sold since October 1980, expressed as a percentage of the total local authority stock, is set out in the following table.

Information on new building within each district is regularly published in the statistical bulletin—"Housing Trends in Scotland", available in the Library. The latest information is in table 5 of the bulletin HSG/1991/7.

Number of dwellings sold[1] *by local authorities October 1980 to 30 June 1991*

Local Authority District	*Total sales*	*Percentage of stock*[2]
Total, all local Authorities	171,858	19·2
Borders		
Berwickshire	725	25·4
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1,290	25·9
Roxburgh	1,337	21·3
Tweeddale	394	24·2
Central		
Clackmannan	1,952	20·4
Falkirk	6,996	20·8
Stirling	2,891	22·1
Dumfries and Galloway		
Annandale and Eskdale	1,429	27·9
Nithsdale	2,305	26·5
Stewartry	782	30·1
Wigtown	1,163	24·3
Fife		
Dunfermline	6,170	26·5
Kirkcaldy	6,323	24·0
North East Fife	2,844	35·2
Grampian		
Aberdeen	5,787	14·9
Banff and Buchan	3,053	23·9
Gordon	1,633	26·7
Kincardine and Deeside	831	22·7
Moray	3,001	27·3
Highland		
Badenoch and Strathspey	400	36·7
Caithness	888	20·6
Inverness	1,650	23·1
Lochaber	935	26·8
Nairn	269	24·3
Ross and Cromarty	997	15·8
Skye and Lochalsh	200	27·4
Sutherland	310	17·9
Lothian		
East Lothian	4,294	26·4
Edinburgh	14,744	26·2
Midlothian	3,686	27·9
West Lothian	3,956	17·9
Strathclyde		
Argyll and Bute	1,516	18·0
Bearsden and Milngavie	532	29·2
Clydebank	2,428	20·5
Clydesdale	1,510	15·5
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	884	20·1
Cumnock and Doon Valley	1,471	14·2
Cunninghame	4,247	18·6
Dumbarton	1,883	14·3
East Kilbride	497	30·6
Eastwood	545	27·3
Glasgow	23,274	13·4
Hamilton	4,515	19·6
Inverclyde	2,478	12·5
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	2,948	16·1
Kyle and Carrick	4,662	25·5
Monklands	4,088	14·3
Motherwell	4,938	12·4
Renfrew	7,522	19·0
Strathkelvin	2,642	23·9
Tayside		
Angus	3,243	22·2
Dundee	6,977	17·4
Perth and Kinross	4,395	26·8
Islands Councils		
Orkney Islands	425	28·1
Shetland Islands	417	16·7
Western Isles	586	23·7

[1] All sales of dwellings by local authorities.

[2] Stock of local authority dwellings as at 30 September 1980.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Eadie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column 478, on the treatment of candidiasis and myalgic encephalomyelitis, what is the annual cost of treatment by each health board after such patients are referred by general practitioners.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As stated in my previous answer of 25 February, at column *487*, costs for the treatment of these conditions cannot be identified separately.

Scottish Office Superannuation Division

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce his decisions on the recent report by management consultants on the Scottish Office superannuation division.

Mr. Lang: The consultants made a number of recommendations about the future status, organisation and management of the Scottish Office superannuation division. One of these was that the division should be designated as an executive agency within the Scottish Office under the Government's "next steps" programme. I have now decided that that recommendation should be accepted, with a view to launching the new agency by the autumn of this year. I shall announce a firm date in due course. Other recommendations from the review are at various stages of consideration and implementation.

NHS

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of Scottish gross domestic product was spent on the national health service in each of the last 25 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on a consistent basis is readily available only for the financial years 1974-75 to 1989-90 and is set out in the following table:

	NHS expenditure as percentage of GDP
1974-75	6·4
1975-76	6·8
1976-77	6·6
1977-78	6·6
1978-79	6·8
1979-80	7·1
1980-81	7·9
1981-82	8·2
1982-83	8·1
1983-84	8·0
1984-85	8·1
1985-86	7·9
1986-87	7·7
1987-88	7·7
1988-89	7·8
1989-90	7·8

Planned gross expenditure on the national health service in Scotland for 1992-93 is £3,725 million. This represents a real terms increase in expenditure on the NHS in Scotland of 44 per cent. since 1979-80.

DEFENCE

Royal Fleet Reserve

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements he has made for replacement of missing or inadequate items of home retention scale of kit, as presented by Royal Fleet reservists, consequent on the abolition of the annual reporting bounty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: When the annual reporting grant was withdrawn with effect from 1 November 1991, kit replacement was suspended. In the event of call up any replacement kit will be issued to reservists at their mobilisation centres.

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he introduced the system of annual reporting for *(a)* Royal Fleet reservists and *(b)* army reservists; what bounty has been payable in each case, and for how long; and what is the purpose of (i) annual reporting and (ii) the bounty payable.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Annual reporting was introduced for Royal Fleet reservists in 1986 and for Army reservists in 1981. Since 1986, those reservists serving in their first year of the Royal Fleet Reserve (Special Category) received a payment of £100 before tax for attending the Reservist reporting unit. Those serving in the second and third year of the Royal Fleet Reserve (Ordinary Category) received a payment of £80 before tax. Since 1981 all Army reservists who took part in the annual reporting exercise (ARCEX) received a payment of £100 before tax although ARCEX is currently suspended. The purpose of annual reporting is to ensure that health, kit and personal details of each reservist could be properly checked and updated so that reservists can be mobilised quickly and effectively when required. The purpose of the payment of the annual reporting grant was to (i) compensate those reservists who *(a)* had to take time off work without pay to report and *(b)* needed to purchase replacement kit; and (ii) provide an incentive for reservists to report to ensure that the purpose of annual reporting described above was achieved.

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of Royal Fleet reservists attended their annual reporting centre in each of the last five years for which figures are available; what proportion of annual reporting bounties payable have been withheld to cover the cost of replacement kit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The proportion of Royal Fleet reservists who reported to the reservist reporting unit in each of the last five years was as follows:

Year	*Percent*
1987	85·2
1988	85·5
1989	83·2
1990	85·3
1991	80·5

Approximately 1 per cent. of the annual reporting grant was withheld to cover kit replacement costs, over the last five years.

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when and for what reason he decided to cease payment of the annual reporting credit to Royal Fleet reservists; what was the total of Royal Fleet reserve annual reporting grant in the last year for which figures are available; and what effect he expects it to have on attendance of Royal Fleet reservists at annual reporting centres.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The annual reporting grant was withdrawn with effect from 1 November 1991. The total of the annual reporting grant paid out to the Royal Fleet Reserve in financial year 1990-91 was £474,804·58 after tax and after abatements for replacement items of kit. Since the annual reporting grant was withdrawn attendance of Royal Fleet reservists reporting to the reservist reporting unit has fallen.

Defence Establishments, Germany

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all United Kingdom-owned defence establishments in Germany.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Generally, facilities for visiting forces in Germany have been provided by the host nation. Exceptionally, buildings were purchased by the Ministry of Defence from the private sector to meet the accommodation requirements at the following establishments:

Vehicle Workshops, Redcar Barracks Bielefeld.
Material and Medical Depot, Bielefeld.

United Nations Peace-keeping Operations

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British service personnel have been killed or wounded in action while participating in United Nations peace-keeping operations in each year since 1961; what memorials exist to commemorate those British service personnel who have served with the United Nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Redundancies

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *675*, if he will list the public announcements of redundancies referred to in the answer, giving the date, the name of the company involved and the number of redundancies announced.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The announcements referred to are those made by the companies concerned.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Kenya

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will hold talks with the high commissioner for Kenya on the detention of Dr. Josephat Karanja and others.

Mrs. Chalker: Dr. Josephat Karanja is one of a number of Kenyan citizens arrested for alleged participation in a press conference held on 10 January at which President Moi was accused of planning an imminent military coup.

Dr. Karanja has been charged with publishing false rumours under section 66 of the Kenyan penal code and has been released on bail. There are no grounds for raising the case with the Kenyan authorities.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many meetings of the Council of Ministers there have been since the beginning of 1990; and if he will list the Ministers who attended each of these meetings.

Mr. Garel-Jones: There have been 177 meetings of the Council of Ministers since 1 January 1990. The United Kingdom is represented in the Council by the Secretary or Minister of State responsible for the subject matter under discussion.

Brussels (Secondees)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people were seconded to the United Kingdom's permanent representation to the European Community in Brussels in 1990 and 1991; and if he will break these figures down by Department of origin.

Mr. Garel-Jones: In 1990 and 1991 there were 22 seconded staff in addition to the 18 diplomatic service staff at the office of the United Kingdom permanent representative to the European Community, as follows:

Department	*1990*	*1991*
DTI	7	7
MAFF	4	4
Treasury	2	2
Employment	1	1
Environment	1	0
Customs and Excise	2	2
Agriculture (Northern Ireland)	0	1
Scottish office	1	1
Transport	1	1
ODA	1	1
NIO	1	1
Bank of England	1	1
	22	22

From the end of 1991 there have been additional temporary secondments in preparation for the United Kingdom presidency in July to December 1992.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 2 March.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Minister for Trade and the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I represented the United Kingdom at the Foreign Affairs Council on 2 March.

The Commission Vice-President, Mr. Andriessen, reported to the Council on his recent visit to several states of the former Soviet Union. The Council agreed that the Commission should continue its exploratory talks on enhanced trade and co-operation agreements with Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. It also agreed that the role of the EC task force monitoring the distribution of EC food aid should be expanded and the the EC should participate in the proposed international science and technology centre for retraining and redeploying nuclear scientists from the former Soviet Union.

Ministers agreed on the need for an early conclusion to the GATT Uruguay round and invited all participants to speed up negotiations.

President Delors presented the Commission's future financing proposals for 1993 to 1997. Member states gave their initial reactions. I questioned the Commission's proposals to increase the ceiling on our own resources and on agricultural spending, drawing attention to the extra funds that would in any case be available between now and 1997 within the existing limits on the Community's own resources.

The Council reviewed the negotiations on a European economic area in the light of the Commission's request to the European Court of Justice for a second opinion on the revised draft agreement. The Council expressed the hope that the court's opinion would be made available as soon as possible.

Ministers discussed EC relations with Morocco and invited the Commission to make proposals on economic and technical co-operation and the Political Committee to examine ways of strengthening political dialogue.

Ministers issued a statement condemning the recent violence in Sarajevo following the referendum on the future status of Bosnia-Herzegovina. They agreed that the Commission should begin exploratory talks with Slovenia on a trade and co-operation agreement.

The fifth meeting of the EC/Tunisia Co-operation Council was held in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council.

TRANSPORT

Roads

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the High Court challenges to road schemes that have been heard in each of the past five years, with the date when the motion was served in each case, and the date on which the action lapsed or was determined;

(2) what is the average, greatest and lowest number of sitting days in the High Court taken by challenges to the Secretary of State for Transport on road schemes in the past five years.

Mr. Chope: We do not hold such information. I will write to my hon. Friend.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance he gives to local authorities about the maintenance of retaining walls of roads under their control.

Mr. Chope: Retaining walls are included within the scope of the Department's procedures for the inspection and maintenance of structures on motorways and other trunk roads. Local authorities are encouraged to adopt these procedures in maintaining retaining walls on their own roads.

Health and Safety

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the proposals for United Kingdom legislation: relevant to EC directive 89/684 EEC and the content of the necessary training courses needed to meet the requirements of the directive to be finalised by the Health and Safety Executive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I expect to receive recommendations for regulations from the Health and Safety Commission shortly. Requirements for course content were notified to interested parties on 20 February. Further copies are available from the Health and Safety Executive.

Railway Investment

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what British Rail investment plans for new trains and rolling stock Her Majesty's Government *(a)* have authorised and which are awaiting completion and *(b)* are currently considering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail projects for new train and rolling stock builds, authorised by the Government and yet to be fully completed, are as follows:

Class	*Number authorised*
Diesel multiple unit vehicles:	
158 (tranches 2 and 3)	200
159/165	69
165	180
165/6	59
Electric multiple unit vehicles:	
465[1]	588
466	86
Diesel locomotives:	
60	100
Electric locomotives:	
92	37
High speed train sets:	
Channel Tunnel Services	21
Loco-haul coaches:	
Mark IV for ECML	31
CT Night Services[2]	139

[1] 188 have not yet been ordered by British Rail.

[2] This is total order—BR's share is likely to be some 85 coaches.

The only investment scheme currently under consideration by the Department is for 550 car-carrying wagons for Channel tunnel freight services.

Rail Modernisation

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much state aid there will be on track and train modernisation on the west coast main line to Glasgow.

Mr. Freeman: We would expect British Rail's proposals for the moderation of the west coast main line to Glasgow to earn an 8 per cent. return. They should not, therefore, require subsidy.

Car Engine Capacity

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average cubic capacity of engines of cars registered in the last year for which figures are available, for *(a)* United Kingdom-produced cars and *(b)* imported cars.

Mr. Chope: The information, as requested, is not available.

However, the distribution of cars first registered in Great Britain in 1991 by engine size is as follows:

Cars first registered in 1991

Cubic capacity	*Great Britain produced thousands*	*Imported thousands*
up to 1000	32	71
1001 – 1200	106	61
1201 – 1300	65	74
1301 – 1400	153	94
1401 – 1500	1	21
1501 – 1600	191	106
1601 – 1800	53	173

Cubic capacity	*Great Britain produced thousands*	*Imported thousands*
1801 - 2000	95	199
2001 - 2200	0	4
2201 - 2500	11	31
2501 - 3000	4	31
over 3000	14	9
Total	726	874
Average c.c.	1492	1606

Seat Belts

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of children he estimates travel in cars without wearing seat belts as required by law.

Mr. Chope: Children under 14 travelling in rear seats are required to use a seat belt or a child restraint appropriate to their age and weight only where one is fitted and available to be used. The latest survey of wearing rates, conducted by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory in October 1991, found that 12 per cent. of children were unrestrained in post-1987 cars—those fitted with seat belts at manufacture.

All front seat passengers are required to be restrained. The wearing rates for children and adults are very similar. Only 5 per cent. of children travel unrestrained.

Nuclear Transport Ships

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what notification his Department has received from Pacific Nuclear Transport Ltd. over the intended transfer of the Pacific Crane nuclear transport ship to sail under the Japanese flag.

Mr. McLoughlin: Any shipping company transferring a ship from United Kingdom registry is obliged to notify the registrar of the ship's home port. No such notification has been received.

British Rail

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the chairman or representatives of the board of British Rail on the future of British Rail; what issues were discussed; what future meetings are scheduled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on the future of BR. We shall publish our proposals as soon as we are ready.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on the future of British Rail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. friend regularly meets the chairman of British Rail to discuss a range of issues. We shall publish proposals for the future of BR as soon as we are ready.

Advisors

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the main advisers employed by his Department, the purpose for which they have been recruited and the period for which they have been employed.

Mr. McLoughlin: In common with my predecessors, I have a political adviser who is employed by the Department on terms approved by the Treasury. My present political adviser, Mr. P. Miller, was appointed on 2 January 1991.

The following list shows the other main advisers currently or recently employed by my Department. A wider range of advice is also acquired as and when needed through a number of consultancy contracts. The devolved nature of the Department means there is no central record of consultancies, and that information could only be assembled within the timescale at disproportionate cost.

Adviser	*Purpose of employment*	*Period*
Mr. D. Walker	Department's adviser on market testing	February to March 1992
Mr. P. Davies	Department's purchasing adviser	1987 to 1992
Samuel Montagu	Advice on privatisation of British Rail	November 1988 to date
Price Waterhouse	Appointed to advise Secretary of State on the privatisation of the National Bus Company	1985 to date
Mr. A. Thorning	Seconded from the Civil Aviation Authority to advise Ministers and the Department on civil aviation safety matters and a range of related technical issues	1 April 1992 to 31 December 1993
Civil Aviation Authority	Advice on various technical issues concerning aircraft noise and emissions	Ongoing
Warren Springs Laboratory (DTI)	Advice on technical issues concerning aircraft emissions	Ongoing
Defence Research Agency (MOD)	Advice on technical issues concerning aircraft noise and emissions	Ongoing
Price Waterhouse	Advice on privatisation of Trust Ports	July 1991 to date

ScotRail

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on the future of ScotRail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have received a number of representations about ScotRail's services.

Bus Safety

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to improve safety in England and Wales for school pupils transported by bus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Draft regulations are being finalised which will require all buses in Great Britain, when carrying children to or from school, to display a distinctive sign. This will indicate to other road users that children are present and may be crossing the road in the vicinity of these vehicles. These proposals will also permit the use of hazard warning lights, in conjunction with the signs, when children are boarding or alighting.

We intend to put these regulations before Parliament shortly.

London Transport

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out in tabular form *(a)* London Transport's fixed asset investment for each year since 1962, at current prices and *(b)* the total grant, the total capital grant, and the total revenue support grant paid to London Transport in each year since 1962, at current prices.

Mr. Freeman: The following table shows London Transport's investment and grant from 1974 until 1991-92. Information is not available in the form requested prior to 1974.

London Transport investment and grant

£ million (1990-91 prices)

	Investment	*Grant* Revenue	Capital	*Total*
1974	218	112	212	324
1975	209	348	196	544
1976	241	282	233	515
1977	181	178	135	313
1978	168	129	163	292
1979	224	113	216	329
1980	231	166	209	375
1981	249	135	222	357
1982	199	286	194	480
1983	250	257	241	498
[1]1984-85	244	208	147	355
1985-86	280	166	262	428
1986-87	308	85	293	378
1987-88	356	56	234	290
1988-89	344	44	192	236
1989-90	473	51	255	306
1990-91	634	84	451	535
[2]1991-92	559	114	503	617

[1] 15 month period.

[2] Forecast Outturn.

London Underground Crimes

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the total number of *(a)* crimes, *(b)* assaults on staff, *(c)* assaults on passengers, *(d)* indecent assaults, *(e)* rapes and *(f)* violent robberies which have occurred on London Underground, (i) in each month since April 1989 and (ii) in each year since 1971.

Mr. Freeman: I understand from London Underground that the information is as follows:

	January	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*	*Total*
All crimes													
1989	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15,583
1990	1,275	1,280	1,383	1,177	1,225	1,467	1,543	1,314	1,291	1,298	1,286	1,106	15,645
1991	1,397	1,112	1,513	1,340	1,511	1,355	1,436	1,268	1,120	1,073	1,126	1,041	15,292
Assaults on staff													
1989	—	—	—	14	20	12	6	10	6	11	12	13	[1]104
1990	12	13	11	10	9	12	9	14	8	21	9	12	140
1991	13	8	12	9	14	7	17	11	13	9	15	10	138
Assaults on passengers													
1989	—	—	—	49	51	55	52	48	39	56	58	77	[1]485
1990	54	64	67	43	34	39	55	35	48	47	36	47	569
1991	31	44	46	37	46	34	32	39	45	43	43	34	474
Indecent assaults													
1989	—	—	—	31	39	28	23	26	22	15	21	14	[1]219
1990	21	23	30	21	31	32	23	23	15	18	21	17	275
1991	18	13	14	14	17	25	30	19	18	22	16	8	214
Rape													
1989	—	—	—	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	[1]4
1990	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
1991	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Robberies													
1989	—	—	—	58	60	53	99	78	58	73	52	41	[1]532
1990	54	46	58	50	50	67	48	37	44	48	37	48	587
1991	75	38	56	50	46	45	45	43	56	31	48	30	563

[1] April to December.

Year	*All crimes*	*Assaults on staff*	*Assaults on passengers*	*Indecent assaults*	*Rape*	*Robberies*
1971	4,918	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1972	7,766	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1973	8,163	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1974	11,410	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1975	10,557	—	[1]383	78	—	144
1976	10,189	—	[1]254	60	—	118
1977	11,692	—	[1]335	56	—	173
1978	12,342	—	[1]373	67	—	207
1979	16,562	—	[1]578	65	—	222
1980	16,150	—	[1]519	71	—	307
1981	18,614	—	[1]480	105	—	402
1982	14,937	—	[1]535	115	—	453
1983	15,073	—	[1]599	101	—	361
1984	15,552	—	[1]747	87	—	606
1985	15,979	—	[1]837	87	—	694
1986	16,217	—	[1]1,014	160	—	685
1987	19,136	—	[1]1,045	182	—	883
1988	16,387	—	[1]1,165	194	—	1,128
1989	15,583	135	673	300	4	476
1990	15,645	140	569	275	2	587
1991	15,292	138	474	214	3	563

[1] Reported as violence against the person.

n/a = Not avaiable.

The statistics for assaults on passengers between 1975 and 1988 also include assaults on staff. The same situation applies to indecent assaults and rapes. The statistics for robberies cover instances where only threats were used as well as cases of violence.

Footway Parking

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to amend the Road Traffic Act 1974 to enable local authorities to designate areas in which footway parking can be prohibited.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* The provision in the Road Traffic Act 1974 was repealed by the Road Traffic Act 1991. We are committed to seeking effective alternative powers to enable local authorities to deal with the problem of parking on footways when a suitable legislative opportunity arises. Meanwhile, general parking restrictions and in some cases local Act provisions, can offer a remedy. The use of high kerbs and other road engineering measures such as bollards can also prove a highly effective deterrent to footway parking, provided proper provision is made for the needs of pedestrians with disabilities.

A6 (M) Bypass, Stockport

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to meet a deputation from the Stockport metropolitan borough council in connection with the proposed Stockport north-south A6 (M) bypass.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* We are considering a request from Stockport MBC for a meeting and will be contacting the council shortly.

Badgers

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what provisions are being made by his Department for the construction of badger crossings.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 5 March 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

The provision of badger crossings on trunk roads in England is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Our aim, where possible, is to design trunk roads to avoid interfering with badgers. Where setts or runs may be affected advice is obtained from English Nature and local badger groups about steps to be taken to move badgers or maintain their runs. Badger-proof fencing alongside the road and badger culverts under the carriageway are provided where appropriate.

The Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are responsible for the provision of badger crossings on roads for which they are the highway authority. For local roads, responsibility lies with the relevant local highway authority.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out by local authority, at 1991-92 prices *(a)* the transport supplementary grant and *(b)* the total capital allocation for each year from 1987-88 to 1991-92.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 5 March 1992]:* The information requested is not available at a fixed price base but is as attached with the price level appropriate to each year.

Transport Supplementary Grant and Capital Allocations London Boroughs—1987-88

Authority	*Grant paid £ million*	*Capital allocation £ million*
City of London	0·479	1·320
Barking and Dagenham	0·800	2·590
Barnet	0·475	1·340
Bexley	0·451	1·835
Brent	0·311	1·120
Bromley	0·429	1·710
Camden	0·107	1·430
Croydon	0·202	1·180
Ealing	1·911	5·145
Enfield	7·413	16·325
Greenwich	1·980	5·160
Hackney	0·200	1·675
Hammersmith and Fulham	0·118	0·360

Authority	*Grant paid* *£ million*	*Capital allocation* *£ million*
Haringey	1·478	3·400
Harrow	1·609	4·130
Havering	1·284	3·510
Hillingdon	2·421	7·300
Hounslow	0·623	1·960
Islington	0·103	0·800
Kensington and Chelsea	0·261	0·710
Kingston upon Thames	4·737	9·770
Lambeth	0·288	1·140
Lewisham	0·299	1·840
Merton	2·719	7·780
Newham	1·164	3·510
Redbridge	1·048	2·800
Richmond upon Thames	0·205	0·920
Southwark	0·734	2·970
Sutton	0·843	2·180
Tower Hamlets	0·169	0·970
Waltham Forest	1·091	2·670
Wandsworth	2·442	6·880
Westminster	0·383	2·360

Transport supplementary grant and capital allocations
Metropolitan districts—1987-88

Authority	*Grant paid* *£ million*	*Capital allocation* *£ million*
Bolton	2·050	4·600
Bury	0·332	1·140
Manchester	2·275	6·600
Oldham	0·270	1·360
Rochdale	0·250	1·010
Salford	3·301	6·880
Stockport	0·284	1·240
Tameside	0·247	0·900
Trafford	1·446	3·492
Wigan	1·650	3·710
Knowsley	0·143	0·630
Liverpool	2·267	6·190
St. Helens	0·150	0·630
Sefton	0·207	1·060
Wirral	0·377	1·300
Barnsley	0·473	1·990
Doncaster	0·226	1·310
Rotherham	0·167	1·290
Sheffield	2·105	6·020
Gateshead	0·800	2·440
Newcastle upon Tyne	1·715	5·720
North Tyneside	0·421	1·390
South Tyneside	0·970	2·440
Sunderland	1·100	2·750
Birmingham	3·913	10·980
Coventry	1·626	4·100
Dudley	0·644	2·600
Sandwell	0·595	2·440
Solihull	0·275	0·990
Walsall	1·370	3·940
Wolverhampton	2·844	6·790
Bradford	4·579	10·150
Calderdale	0·120	0·840
Kirklees	0·773	2·480
Leeds	0·553	2·770
Wakefield	0·180	1·000

Transport supplementary grant and capital allowances
Counties, 1987-88

Authority	*Grant paid* *£ million*	*Capital allocation* *£ million*
Avon	1·973	6·550
Bedfordshire	2·616	6·660
Berkshire	3·102	9·110
Buckinghamshire	2·035	4·610
Cambridgeshire	4·474	10·030
Cheshire	1·905	5·800
Cleveland	2·211	7·080
Cornwall	1·488	5·500
Cumbria	0·775	3·080
Derbyshire	0·748	5·600
Devon	3·185	9·502
Dorset	5·377	13·990
Durham	2·409	6·420
East Sussex	0·964	5·290
Essex	8·050	19·780
Gloucestershire	0·942	2·600
Hampshire	4·248	13·650
Herefore and Worcester	1·690	5·680
Hertfordshire	1·800	8·800
Humberside	1·967	7·360
Isle of Wight	0·883	2·130
Kent	5·813	18·640
Lancashire	6·375	16·510
Leicestershire	4·425	11·150
Lincolnshire	1·750	4·80
Norfolk	2·155	5·130
Northamptonshire	4·357	12·660
Northumberland	1·075	2·970
North Yorkshire	3·552	8·870
Nottinghamshire	1·850	5·700
Oxfordshire	0·801	4·890
Shropshire	1·294	4·290
Somerset	1·287	3·580
Staffordshire	3·015	10·000
Suffolk	0·899	5·010
Surrey	3·058	8·260
Warwickshire	1·459	4·300
West Sussex	3·089	7·200
Wiltshire	1·429	4·100

Transport supplementary grant and capital allocations
London boroughs—1988-89

Authority	*Grant paid* *£ million*	*Capital allocation* *£ million*
City of London	0·183	0·720
Barking and Dagenham	2·836	6·210
Barnet	0·400	1·110
Bexley	0·649	2·870
Brent	0·436	1·370
Bromley	3·883	8·880
Camden	0·131	0·710
Croydon	0·234	0·800
Ealing	1·938	6·820
Enfield	11·255	15·550
Greenwich	0·816	3·460
Hackney	0·427	1·910
Hammersmith and Fulham	0·065	0·285
Haringey	3·662	8·475
Harrow	3·578	9·690
Havering	0·320	1·330
Hillingdon	1·957	10·710
Hounslow	0·758	1·050
Islington	0·072	0·480
Kensington and Chelsea	0·069	1·170
Kingston upon Thames	0·331	5·690
Lambeth	0·247	0·850
Lewisham	0·970	2·530
Merton	2·529	6·850
Newham	0·343	2·850
Redbridge	0·403	1·980
Richmond upon Thames	0·186	0·850
Southwark	0·997	4·470
Sutton	0·778	2·830
Tower Hamlets	0·068	0·740
Waltham Forest	0·494	1·870
Wandsworth	0·554	2·800
Westminster	0·210	1·840

Transport Supplementary Grant and Capital Allocations Metropolitan Districts—1988-89

Authority	*Grant paid £ million*	*Capital allocation £ million*
Bolton	1·343	4·150
Bury	1·010	2·330
Manchester	3·145	8·135
Oldham	1·120	5·540
Rochdale	0·285	1·550
Salford	3·846	8·790
Stockport	0·180	1·270
Tameside	0·310	1·220
Trafford	0·642	2·130
Wigan	2·315	4·810
Knowsley	0·242	1·210
Liverpool	1·235	3·740
St. Helens	0·635	1·780
Sefton	0·171	1·910
Wirral	1·230	2·930
Barnsley	0·400	2·040
Doncaster	0·471	2·110
Rotherham	0·223	1·340
Sheffield	0·380	3·080
Gateshead	1·995	4·450
Newcastle upon Tyne	2·285	5·630
North Tyneside	0·380	1·080
South Tyneside	0·360	1·870
Sunderland	1·577	4·000
Birmingham	3·903	10·670
Coventry	1·942	4·710
Dudley	0·692	3·155
Sandwell	0·917	2·340
Solihull	0·510	1·320
Walsall	1·578	5·300
Wolverhampton	3·461	8·130
Bradford	1·686	4·630
Calderdale	0·210	1·560
Kirklees	1·319	3·880
Leeds	1·523	4·840
Wakefield	0·263	2·110

Transport Supplementary Grant and Capital Allocations Counties—1988-89

Authority	*Grant paid £ million*	*Capital allocation £ million*
Avon	4.306	10·600
Bedfordshire	3,249	7·110
Berkshire	2·688	10·540
Buckinghamshire	0·707	2·890
Cambridgeshire	2·255	7·220
Cheshire	1·364	4·830
Cleveland	3·162	9·320
Cornwall	2·270	7·320
Cumbria	1·400	3·720
Derbyshire	0·683	5·960
Devon	3·501	11·280
Dorset	4·320	10·690
Durham	1·938	4·800
East Sussex	2·121	7·180
Essex	8·730	19·320
Gloucestershire	1·077	4·720
Hampshire	4·115	11·620
Hereford and Worcester	1·976	4·740
Hertfordshire	3·095	8·860
Humberside	4·518	12·479
Isle of Wight	0·727	2·060
Kent	9·255	21·441
Lancashire	4·683	16·320
Leicestershire	4·945	14·460
Lincolnshire	1·139	3·830
Norfolk	2·150	5·500
Northamptonshire	3·235	11·180
Northumberland	0·544	1·940
North Yorkshire	1·925	6·440
Nottinghamshire	2·037	5·850
Oxfordshire	0·713	4·920
Shropshire	1·750	5·810
Somerset	3·211	9·370
Staffordshire	2·822	8·670
Suffolk	1·753	4·940
Surrey	2·236	7·998
Warwickshire	1·746	4·470
West Sussex	2·730	7·460
Wiltshire	0·361	2·770

Transport Supplementary Grant and Capital Allocations London Boroughs—1989-90

Authority	*Grant paid £ million*	*Capital allocation £ million*
City of London	0·194	0·630
Barking and Dagenham	1·895	4·580
Barnet	0·291	0·790
Bexley	1·118	2·780
Brent	0·450	1·190
Bromley	3·833	8·580
Camden	0·086	0·810
Croydon	0·294	1·110
Ealing	2·820	6·450
Enfield	11·958	24·120
Greenwich	0·023	2·590
Hackney	0·410	1·550
Hammersmith and Fulham	0·142	0·410
Haringey	5·812	11·592
Harrow	3·050	8·980
Havering	0·207	0·960
Hillingdon	4·530	3·262
Hounslow	0·714	1·630
Islington	0·148	0·530
Kensington and Chelsea	0·633	1·570
Kingston upon Thames	1·661	4·120
Lambeth	0·182	0·610
Lewisham	5·314	5·955
Merton	4·280	9·400
Newham	0·497	3·620
Redbridge	0·339	0·900
Richmond upon Thames	0·163	0·610
Southwark	1·952	5·610
Sutton	0·682	2·930
Tower Hamlets	0·070	1·020
Waltham Forest	0·476	1·500
Wandsworth	0·433	3·940
Westminster	0·750	2·270

Transport supplementary grant and capital allocations Metropolitan districts—1989-90

Authority	*Grant paid £ million*	*Capital allocation £ million*
Bolton	0·043	2·020
Bury	1·698	3·620
Manchester	1·328	4·985
Oldham	1·097	2·700
Rochdale	0·263	1·160
Salford	2·791	4·900
Stockport	0·018	0·600
Tameside	0·566	1·775
Trafford	1·765	4·240
Wigan	0·998	3·210
Knowsley	0·273	0·750
Liverpool	1·762	4·420
St. Helens	2·304	4·700
Sefton	0·327	1·020
Wirral	0·709	2·610
Barnsley	0·545	1·730
Doncaster	0·661	1·900
Rotherham	0·688	2·020
Sheffield	0·585	2·330

Authority	*Grant paid £ million*	*Capital allocation £ million*
Gateshead	2·050	4·760
Newcastle upon Tyne	2·763	6·258
North Tyneside	0·310	0·830
South Tyneside	0·215	1·290
Sunderland	0·965	2·740
Birmingham	3·954	11·700
Coventry	3·053	6·500
Dudley	0·368	1·905
Sandwell	0·943	2·550
Solihull	0·526	1·270
Walsall	1·072	2·352
Wolverhampton	1·548	4·300
Bradford	2·928	6·240
Calderdale	0·084	1·670
Kirklees	0·500	1·840
Leeds	1·541	4·300
Wakefield	0·308	1·300

Transport supplementary grant and capital allocations
Counties—1989-90

Authority	*Grant paid £ million*	*Capital allocation £ million*
Avon	4·196	10·140
Bedfordshire	4·103	9·050
Berkshire	1·195	4·880
Buckinghamshire	1·229	2·730
Cambridgeshire	2·298	5·710
Cheshire	2·776	6·310
Cleveland	4·492	9·720
Cornwall	1·743	4·390
Cumbria	0·640	2·005
Derbyshire	1·515	4·730
Devon	1·743	4·900
Dorset	3·102	7·540
Durham	1·915	4·640
East Sussex	2·482	6·720
Essex	5·074	15·469
Gloucestershire	1·563	4·180
Hampshire	4·832	9·800
Hereford and Worcester	0·346	2·300
Hertfordshire	3·050	7·950
Humberside	5·221	11·920
Isle of Wight	0·525	1·470
Kent	11·256	23·920
Lancashire	6·035	12·820
Leicestershire	3·971	9·440
Lincolnshire	1·189	3·030
Norfolk	1·416	4·160
Northamptonshire	4·125	9·340
Northumberland	0·363	2·380
North Yorkshire	2·653	7·330
Nottinghamshire	2·054	5·830
Oxfordshire	0·023	3·560
Shropshire	1·679	4·050
Somerset	3·785	8·680
Staffordshire	2·992	7·910
Suffolk	1·935	4·350
Surrey	4·684	11·400
Warwickshire	3·209	7·422
West Sussex	1·526	3·300
Wiltshire	0·109	1·430

Transport Supplementary Grant and Capital Allocations
London Boroughs—1990-91

Authority	*Grant paid £ million*	*Capital allocation £ million*
City of London	0·101	0·461
Berking and Dagenham	1·748	3·622
Barnet	0·161	0·571
Bexley	2·134	2·869
Brent	0·007	0·736
Bromley	3·834	4·328
Camden	0·189	1·095
Croydon	0·888	1·890
Ealing	2·429	4·913
Enfield	4·881	6·909
Greenwich	0·019	1·149
Hackney	0·186	0·791
Hammersmith and Fulham	0·148	1·303
Haringey	2·721	3·441
Harrow	3·214	5·668
Havering	0·215	0·568
Hillingdon	2·742	7·214
Hounslow	0·279	0·819
Islington	0·168	0·549
Kensington and Chelsea	0·285	0·694
Kingston upon Thames	0·566	1·881
Lambeth	0·154	0·280
Lewisham	1·987	3·081
Merton	7·100	7·282
Newham	1·791	2·869
Redbridge	0·134	0·598
Richmond upon Thames	0·172	0·633
Southwark	0·249	1·701
Sutton	0·590	3·198
Tower Hamlets	0·091	1·007
Waltham Forest	0·056	0·726
Wandsworth	1·011	3·429
Westminster	0·367	4·589

Transport supplementary grant and capital allocations
Metropolitan districts, 1990-91

	Grant paid £ million	*Capital allocation £ million*
Bolton	1·342	1·945
Bury	0·849	1·315
Manchester	4·816	8·385
Oldham	0·614	2·443
Rochdale	0·189	1·036
Salford	2·548	3·882
Stockport	0·458	0·959
Tameside	0·403	1·438
Trafford	0·389	2·188
Wigan	0·872	2·065
Knowsley	0·896	1·397
Liverpool	0·750	2·506
St. Helens	2·941	3·257
Sefton	0·369	0·951
Wirral	0·450	1·519
Barnsley	1·574	4·142
Doncaster	0·707	1·897
Rotherham	1·243	1·908
Sheffield	5·546	6·426
Gateshead	0·972	1·991
Newcastle upon Tyne	0·062	2·920
North Tyneside	0·153	0·542
South Tyneside	0·700	1·242
Sunderland	0·847	3·033
Birmingham	7·895	11·564
Coventry	1·474	2·362
Dudley	0·575	2·481
Sandwell	0·752	2·672
Solihull	0·428	1·325
Walsall	2·751	1·067
Wolverhampton	2·842	3·818
Bradford	2·467	4·242
Calderdale	0·096	1·428
Kirklees	0·060	0·735
Leeds	2·632	3·953
Wakefield	0·157	2·457

Transport Supplementary Grant and Capital Allocations Counties—1990-91

Authority	*Grant paid £ million*	*Capital allocation £ million*
Avon	6·714	7·305
Bedfordshire	2·591	3·791
Berkshire	1·882	5·962
Buckinghamshire	1·153	2·087
Cambridgeshire	1·932	4·316
Cheshire	4·154	6·174
Cleveland	5·442	6·351
Cornwall	2·797	4·670
Cumbria	2·326	3·326
Derbyshire	0·582	4·353
Devon	3·394	8·029
Dorset	2·866	4·544
Durham	2·410	2·932
East Sussex	3·071	5·742
Essex	6·686	11·906
Gloucestershire	1·933	3·215
Hampshire	7·639	8·126
Hereford and Worcester	1·338	2·585
Hertfordshire	3·025	4·700
Humberside	5·312	7·677
Isle of Wight	0·414	1·202
Kent	12·550	18·722
Lancashire	12·873	16·496
Leicestershire	3·047	4·558
Lincolnshire	1·574	2·481
Norfolk	5·673	7·317
Northamptonshire	2·849	5·115
Northumberland	1·481	2·265
North Yorkshire	3·444	4·909
Nottinghamshire	1·914	3·986
Oxfordshire	2·462	5·352
Shropshire	1·566	3·540
Somerset	3·156	4·486
Staffordshire	2·913	4·390
Suffolk	3·187	5·782
Surrey	6·330	10·402
Warwickshire	0·492	2·412
West Sussex	4·532	6·045
Wiltshire	2·985	4·714

Transport Supplementary Grant and Capital Allocations London Boroughs—1991-92

Authority	*Grant paid £ million*	*Capital allocation £ million*
City of London	0·309	0·455
Barking and Dagenham	1·835	2·255
Barnet	0·515	0·803
Bexley	1·250	1·858
Brent	0·693	2·557
Bromley	3·055	4·404
Camden	0·644	1·220
Croydon	0·769	1·452
Ealing	1·586	2·690
Enfield	4·500	4·666
Greenwich	0·000	0·521
Hackney	0·524	1·143
Hammersmith and Fulham	0·429	0·859
Haringey	1·066	1·577
Harrow	3·283	6·651
Havering	0·639	0·903
Hillingdon	6·352	9·537
Hounslow	0·472	0·926
Islington	0·362	0·953
Kensington and Chelsea	0·230	0·890
Kingston upon Thames	0·613	1·184
Lambeth	0·298	0·421
Lewisham	4·270	8·371
Merton	0·009	1·651
Newham	0·815	2·948
Redbridge	0·416	0·727
Richmond upon Thames	0·408	0·620
Southwark	0·449	2·530
Sutton	0·991	2·330
Tower Hamlets	0·495	1·277
Waltham Forest	0·389	0·687
Wandsworth	2·174	2·963
Westminster	0·846	4·384

Transport Supplementary Grant and Capital Allocations Metropolitan Districts—1991-92

Authority	*Grant paid £ million*	*Capital allocation £ million*
Bolton	1·264	1·468
Bury	0·433	0·578
Manchester	9·395	10·074
Oldham	1·948	2·864
Rochdale	0·464	0·605
Salford	1·569	3·064
Stockport	1·740	1·844
Tameside	0·690	1·309
Trafford	0·138	1·531
Wigan	1·846	2·800
Knowsley	1·670	1·806
Liverpool	0·000	2·711
St· Helens	7·781	8·740
Sefton	0·619	0·823
Wirral	0·000	1·298
Barnsley	2·671	3·236
Doncaster	2·292	4·474
Rotherham	0·662	0·908
Sheffield	5·012	8·680
Gateshead	0·756	1·042
Newcastle upon Tyne	0·989	2·829
North Tyneside	0·315	0·409
South Tyneside	0·961	1·097
Sunderland	1·913	2·542
Birmingham	10·256	15·524
Coventry	2·793	3·301
Dudley	1·444	2·522
Sandwell	1·180	1·557
Solihull	0·442	1·752
Walsall	0·440	2·120
Wolverhampton	6·160	7·486
Bradford	2·280	3·442
Calderdale	0·367	0·491
Kirklees	0·949	1·605
Leeds	1·987	3·260
Wakefield	1·213	2·745

Transport Supplementary Grant and Capital Allocations Counties—1991-92

Authority	*Grant paid £ million*	*Capital allocation £ million*
Avon	8·855	10·568
Bedfordshire	3·228	3·481
Berkshire	2·707	4·779
Buckinghamshire	1·849	2·385
Cambridgeshire	1·870	2·606
Cheshire	5·501	6·797
Cleveland	3·689	4·804
Cornwall	3·958	5·512
Cumbria	3·312	3·634
Derbyshire	1·158	6·332
Devon	5·062	6·838
Dorset	2·770	3·687
Durham	3·659	4·060
East Sussex	5·231	6·963
Essex	6·448	8·569
Gloucestershire	2·091	2·840
Hampshire	12·179	13·099
Hereford and Worcester	3·227	3·981
Hertfordshire	3·253	5·655

Authority	*Grant paid* *£ million*	*Capital allocation* *£ million*
Humberside	5·589	8·307
Isle of Wight	0·971	1·282
Kent	37·229	39·538
Lancashire	11·232	13·594
Leicestershire	5·643	6·532
Lincolnshire	1·840	3·530
Norfolk	4·732	6·326
Northamptonshire	3·864	5·098
Northumberland	3·143	3·993
North Yorkshire	6·157	9·321
Nottinghamshire	5·555	7·267
Oxfordshire	2·984	3·998
Shropshire	4·355	5·621
Somerset	3·013	4·166
Staffordshire	3·927	6·182
Suffolk	9·298	11·715
Surrey	5·121	8·947
Warwickshire	0·951	2·765
West Sussex	4·126	4·882
Wiltshire	2·688	4·429

ENERGY

Colombian Coal

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with British Coal on whether to refer the importing of Colombian coal to the European Commission.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: None. I am aware that British Coal has submitted a complaint to the European Commission about dumping of coal by Colombia, United States of America and China.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements he has made for the introduction of veterinary supervision at slaughterhouses; what agreements have been reached on the subject at the Council of Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: On 29 July 1991, the Council of Ministers adopted a directive (91/497/EEC) introducing common public health rules, including rules on veterinary supervision, for all slaughterhouses with effect from 1 January 1993.

The Department will shortly be consulting publicly on the draft regulations which will implement this directive in Great Britain.

Storage

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much was spent on public storage and food aid and for each commodity in *(a)* the EC and *(b)* the United Kingdom, for each year since 1987, including 1991.

Mr. Gummer: The information is given in the following tables.

It should be noted that the tables for expenditure on public storage in the EC and the United Kingdom are not compatible because EC budget costs cover depreciation losses, whereas member states pay out the full buying-in price and carry the depreciated value until sale.

Expenditure on food aid cannot be broken down by commodity, and the EC total figure for 1987 cannot be provided within the time available. Figures for 1991 are not available.

(a) EC expenditure in public storage

£ million

	January to December				
	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Cereals	672	865	377	888	989
Rice	3	8	43	40	24
Oils/fats	44	60	33	−17	[1] −13
Wine	46	459	230	147	176
Tobacco	19	19	69	63	38
Milk and milk products	716	499	328	726	723
Beef	708	805	367	648	1,604
Pigmeat	34	29	41	52	12
Delayed reimbursement for disposal of 1988 stocks	—	841	945	966	555

[1] Represents sales out of intervention at a price greater than the depreciated value.

Sources:

1987-90: EAGGF Financial reports.

1991: Provisional outturn.

(b) United Kingdom expenditure on public storage

£ million

	April to March				
	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Cereals	−29·0	33·2	−22·5	15·3	19·6
Butter	128·8	−53·6	−11·8	55·6	8·3
Skimmed milk powder	−17·5	−1·1	−0·1	9·0	−5·2
Beef	66·3	17·7	−1·2	297·4	300·7
Others	—	−0·4	—	[1]—	[1]—

[1] — Figure is less than £50,000.

Source: Appropriation Accounts 1987-88 to 1990-91 and Spring Supplementary Estimate 1991-92, for Class IV, vote 1, 1987-88 to 1989-90 and Class III, vote 1, 1990-91 to 1991-92.

Notes:

Expenditure includes intervention purchases, incidental costs (including storage) less sales. At times sales receipts are greater than payments.

This expenditure excludes receipts from the EC budget for depreciation on entry, losses on sales, etc.

(c) Expenditure on food aid

£ million

	January to December				
	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1900*	*1991*
United Kingdom total	21·6	19·3	31·4	15·9	28·7
EC total	—	333	292	341	N/a

N/a—Not available.

Notes:

Figures for 1987-90 taken from British Aid Statistics. The figures for 1991 are provisional

United Kingdom figures do not include United Kingdom contributions to EC food aid which are reflected in EC figures.

EC Regulation No. 866/90

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the implementation of EC regulation No. 866/90 in the United Kingdom, including the type of projects which have received assistance and the amount spent.

Mr. Gummer: EC regulation 866/90 has been fully implemented in the United Kingdom and the first round of awards was approved by the Commission on 13 December 1991. This allocated grants totalling £15·2 million to 53 marketing and processing projects in the redmeat, pigmeat, milk, horticulture, potatoes, cereals, protein crops, poultry and egg sectors. The first claims for grant have only recently been received and are now being checked before payment.

Commodity Prices

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the prices, in £ per tonne, in the United Kingdom for the main agricultural commodities for the latest available date.

Mr. Gummer: United Kingdom market prices for the main agricultural commodities are set out in the table.

Selected average market/wholesale prices United Kingdom Prices are for week ending 29 February 1992 unless otherwise stated

	£/tonne
Wheat (Grower to merchant price, all purchases, England and Wales)	[1]128
Barley (Grower to merchant price, all purchases, England and Wales)	[1]120
Sugar (Refined bulk granulated)	605
Butter (GB salted)	2,066
Liquid Milk	[2]174
Cheddar Cheese (English mild white creamery)	2,430
Fat Cattle (GB all clean cattle, liveweight)	[3]1,063
Fat Sheep (Estimated dressed carcase weight)	2,154
Fat Pigs (All pigs, deadweight)	1,217
Poultry Meat (Broilers, liveweight)	556
Eggs (Size 3, packer to producer price)	493
Potatoes (Maincrop)	98

[1] W/e 20 February: prices are inclusive of co-responsibility levy.

[2] Provisional average price for the month of January.

[3] W/e 22 February.

Note: A wide range of price quotations exists for individual commodities depending on quality, presentation, stage of marketing etc. Those shown are intended to be illustrative of prices paid by wholesalers or received by producers. Some prices are highly seasonal.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the latest figures available for *(a)* the levies applicable in the United Kingdom and *(b)* the notional world prices for the main traded agricultural commodities in £ per tonne.

Mr. Gummer: The concept of "notional world prices", as represented by the lowest offer prices underlying the Commission's calculations of variable import levies, is misleading. Such prices reflect, among other things, the particular level of supplies on the residual international market encouraged by agricultural support policies pursued throughout the world. They cannot be viewed independently of existing support policies. If support policies did not exist, I would expect "world prices" to be higher. Subject to these important qualifications, "lowest offer prices" are shown in the table, together with the information requested on import levies.

Levy applicable in the United Kingdom and "lowest offer price"[1] on 5 March 1992 for the main traded agricultural commodities

	Levy[2] applicable in United Kingdom £ per tonne	*"Lowest offer price" £ per tonne*
Common wheat	115	79
Barley	114	63
Maize	103	73
Rice	303	153
Sugar	[3]362	149
Olive oil	578	993
Butter	[4]1,966	659
Skimmed milk powder	924	626
Cheese (Cheddar)	1,753	1,003
Beef and veal	[5]1,988	1,087
Pigmeat	530	760
Sheepmeat	[6]n/a	n/a
Poultrymeat	281	910
Eggs	275	685

[1] "Lowest offer prices" have been calculated by subtracting the levy applicable on 5 March 1992 from the threshold/guide price. The beef price is also adjusted for duty. In the case of pigmeat, poultrymeat and eggs, the "world" price has been taken as the sluicegate price for the headings defined in [2] below. The resulting estimate has been converted from ecu/t at the appropriate market rate of exchange £0·812568 = 1 ecu.

[2] The rates of levy vary for different tariff headings. The rates quoted are: beef and veal—carcase; pigmeat—carcase; poultrymeat—70 per cent. chickens; rice—husked long grain; olive oil—virgin lampante; eggs—in shell.

[3] In practice the United Kingdom's imports from third countries are normally covered by the Lomé convention and enter the Community levy-free.

[4] A special lower rate of levy is applicable to imports of butter from New Zealand.

[5] Most imports of beef from third countries are subject to special arrangements allowing entry at reduced levy rates.

[6] Imports of lamb under voluntary restraint arrangements with principal suppliers and related agreements enter free of charge. Any imports outside these arrangements are subject to levies which cannot exceed the 20 per cent. tariff bound in the GATT.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 9 March 1992

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Syria

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Syrian authorities concerning the violation of human rights of Jews in Syria.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have made our views clear to the Syrian Government about their human rights record, including the problems of the Jewish community.

Baltic Republics (Gold)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the gold or money equivalent to be transferred to the Baltic republics has now been transferred; and which other countries in the eastern European areas have gold reserves deposited in London.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We hope to reach final agreement with each Baltic Government on the transfer of gold, or its equivalent in money, by the end of March. We hope to receive shortly formal responses from the Baltic Governments to our proposals for the transfer, which we put to them in January.

Where countries choose to hold their gold and other international reserves is a matter of banking confidentiality and for them alone to disclose if they wish to. I am not in a position to do so.

International Science and Technology Centre

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statment on the role of the international science and technology centre in Russia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We support the proposal to establish an international science and technology centre in the CIS to reduce the risk of proliferation of expertise in building weapons of mass destruction. The EC is considering a financial contribution to the initiative from its technical assistance budget.

Chief Scientific Adviser (Moscow Visit)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the visit of Professor Bill Stewart, the chief scientific adviser, to Moscow.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The chief scientific adviser proposes to make an early visit to Moscow for discussions with leading members of the scientific community. These will be directed to identifying ways in which the west can help to sustain the science base in the CIS.

Post Cold War Conference

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have provided any financial support or other assistance to the conference of former Heads of State and Government in Europe and America on "The World after the Cold War: National Roles and Responsibilities" held in Berlin on 4 March .

Mr. Garel-Jones: The conference of European and American former Heads of State and Government on the "Post Cold War World: Roles and Responsibilities of Nations" was held in Berlin on 5 March. Her Majesty's Government did not provide any financial support. Lord Callaghan was one of the participants and a member of the British embassy in Berlin attended.

Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what negotiations on nuclear disarmament, pursuant to United Kingdom commitments under the 1968 nuclear non-proliferation treaty article VI provisions, currently involve the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The focus of nuclear arms control negotiations remains on the arsenals of the United States and Russia. We welcome the prospect of further reductions in their nuclear arsenals. Consistent with our nuclear non-proliferation treaty obligations, we are willing to consider involvement in strategic arms control negotiations when the time is right. But our deterrent force is a minimum only, and not comparable to those of the United States and Russia. President Yeltsin has accepted this position. We have, however, already announced substantial reductions in our sub-strategic nuclear capability, including ending our role in the deployment of the Lance missile and nuclear artillery in Europe, the withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons from Royal Navy ships in normal circumstances, and a reduction of about 50 per cent. in the number of our free-fall nuclear bombs.

British-Argentine Group

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting of the British-Argentine high-level group held in Buenos Aires.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The British and Argentine delegations exchanged information and explored ideas on the scope for co-operation on activities deriving from their respective legislative measures relating to the continental shelf in the south-west Atlantic. There will be a second meeting of the high-level group in London in late June 1992.

Hong Kong

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the annual report on Hong Kong will be laid before Parliament.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The report is being published and laid before Parliament today. Copies will be placed in the Library of the House.

ENVIRONMENT

Toxic Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the report, "Waste Not Want Not—the Production and Dumping of Toxic Waste in Britain and Ireland", by R. Allen.

Mr. Heseltine: A copy has already been ordered.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *411*, to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), if he will set out the details of his departmental publicity on the duty of care for the disposal and carriage of waste under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Baldry: The duty of care on holders of waste to ensure that it is properly dealt with under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and the related provisions for the registration of carriers of controlled waste under the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989, come into force throughout Great Britain on 1 April.

It is vital that all businesses are informed of the implications of these new laws which require them to take a fair share of the responsibility for the waste they produce or handle. A large number of people need to know about the duty; there are over 2 million business addresses in Great Britain. My Department's information campaign accordingly includes the distribution of some 6·5 million copies of a free explanatory leaflet through local authorities, trade associations and journals. So that knowledge of the new duty is widespread, we are placing advertisements in the national and provincial daily newspapers.

Water Companies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State Environment if he will indicate, for each of the 10 water plcs, the cost at current market prices of purchasing a controlling interest of the companies' shares; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: At the price given in the second column of the table, the cost of purchasing a 51 per cent. stake in each of the privatised water companies would be as given in the third column.

Company	*Price per share*	*£ million*
Anglian	368	553·10
North West	375	680·47
Northumbrian	400	133·62
Severn Trent	348	627·57
Southern	341	284·69
South West	382	231·84
Thames	382	748·50
Welsh	388	285·15
Wessex	414	216·63
Yorkshire	401	401·86

Note: The share prices are those given in the *Financial Times for the close of business on 3 March 1992.*

Eco-labelling

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue a logo to be used in connection with eco-labelling; and if he will publish a copy.

Mr. Baldry: The logo for the European Community eco-labelling scheme was agreed as part of the eco-labelling regulation in December. An environmental labelling factsheet, which includes the logo, has been deposited in the Library.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many products he expects to have been awarded eco-labels by the end of 1992;

(2) if he will publish a timetable for the introduction of eco-labelling.

Mr. Baldry: The European Community regulation which will introduce the official eco-labelling scheme was agreed at December's Environmental Council. We expect that it will be formerly adopted at the Environment Council later this month.

The Commission is aiming to launch the scheme in the autumn with 10 to 12 product categories. The number of awards of the label will depend on industry's response to the scheme.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent the use of minimum packaging will be a requisite of any product awarded an eco-label.

Mr. Baldry: Under the European Community scheme the packaging of a product will be taken into account, together with the other impacts of the product over its lifecycle, in establishing criteria for the award of an eco-label.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what criteria are being set for awarding an eco-label to detergents, paints, carrier bags, bleaches and toilet rolls;

(2) what plans he has for the award of eco-labels to services such as dry cleaning, car breakers, photographic processors or taxis.

Mr. Baldry: Agreement has now been reached at European level on the first product categories that are to be developed for inclusion in the eco-labelling scheme. The United Kingdom is taking the lead in developing criteria for washing machines, dishwashers, hairsprays, soil improvers and light bulbs. Other member states have agreed to take the lead in developing criteria for photocopying paper, kitchen rolls, toilet paper, writing paper, paints, laundry detergents and other cleaning agents, insulation materials, batteries and solar heating systems. Other product groups, which could include services, will be agreed in due course.

No proposals for criteria have yet been formally submitted.

Uniform Business Rate, Leeds

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against the uniform business rate have been lodged each year since its introduction in the Leeds metropolitan district.

Mr. Key: In Leeds, 10,289 appeals were lodged in 1990-91 and 3,497 between 1 April 1991 and the end of February 1992.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against the uniform business rate remain outstanding in the Leeds metropolitan district.

Mr. Key: In Leeds, 11,307 appeals were outstanding at the end of February.

Local Authority Rate, Leeds

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals were made by local businesses against the local authority rate in 1989-90 in the Leeds metropolitan district.

Mr. Key: In Leeds, 1,452 appeals were made by businesses in 1989-90.

RECHAR, Rotherham

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the amount which will be due to be provided from RECHAR for purposes within the metropolitan borough of Rotherham.

Mr. Yeo: Approval of projects within the South Yorkshire RECHAR area is the responsibility of the programme co-ordinating committee, which has not yet formally met. Consequently, no estimate can be given of the value of projects within the metropolitan borough of Rotherham which will be funded by RECHAR.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the district authorities in Northamptonshire setting out *(a)* the 1992-93 community charge and last year's community charge, *(b)* the percentage increase, subdividing that increase into that part accountable to the district and that part accountable to the county, *(c)* the percentage increase between 1990-91 and 1991-92 having made allowances for the £140 rebate and *(d)* identifying which party is currently in control.

Mr. Key: Not all authorities in Northamptonshire have supplied the relevant information. Charging authorities have until 18 March to make their "Demands and Precepts Return" to the Department and they have until 1 April to set a charge. The available information is as follows:

Authority	*1991-92 community charge (£)*	*1992-93 community charge (£)*	*Change in 1992-93 charge over 1991-92 (per cent.)*	*Change in 1991-92 charge over 1990-91 (per cent.)*
East Northants	250	220	14	17
Kettering	257	230	12	14
Wellingborough	145	129	12	−7

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the community charge figures for Westminster and Wandsworth in 1992-93.

Mr. Key: The authorities mentioned have yet to make a return to the Department giving this information. Charging authorities have until 18 March to make their "Demands and Precepts Return" to the Department and they have until 1 April in which to set a charge.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total sum provided from central funds through the standard spending grant for the Westminster, Wandsworth and Rotherham local authorities, respectively, expressed on a per capita basis; and what were the community charge figures for these local authorities in 1991.

Mr. Key: The information requested is as follows.

	1991-92 Revenue support grant £ per adult	*1991-92 Community charge £ per adult*
Westminster	997·27	36·00
Wandsworth	711·40	0·00
Rotherham	211·30	232·46

Note: Community charge figures are after the £140 reduction made by the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991, for which authorities are compensated by Exchequer grant in 1991-92. Authorities also receive £349·18 per adult from the non domestic rate pool in respect of 1991-92.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the community charge collection costs per head of relevant population for each of the west midland authorities, for each of the years available.

Mr. Key: The information is as follows:

Community charge collection costs per head of relevant population (£)

Authority	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Birmingham	10·62	12·08
Coventry	11·54	11·24
Dudley	11·70	8·24
Sandwell	14·47	16·43
Solihull	11·70	13·00
Walsall	16·73	18·11
Wolverhampton	13·49	16·55

Local Government Commission

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 4 February, *Official Report,* column *135,* if he is now able to publish the draft procedural guidance for the local government commission.

Mr. Key: The draft procedural guidance will be published for comment as soon as possible.

Wild Birds

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has received from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee concerning the international trade in wild caught birds.

Mr. Baldry: The JNCC's report "International Trade in Wildlife: A Review of Sustainable Use", published last October, is relevant to the bird trade. Since then, I have had discussions with both the UNCC and other interested organisations about the aspects of the trade, especially in the context of proposals for discussion at the current conference of the parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, CITES.

Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the representations by the Merseyside fire and civil defence authority in respect of the financial difficulties facing it in carrying out its statutory duties; if he intends to meet members of the authority as requested; if he is reviewing its standard spending assessment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Our reply of 25 February to Merseyside fire and civil defence authority's letter made clear that we did not consider it appropriate to meet the authority to discuss its budget. We have taken our decisions on the revenue support grant settlement for 1992-93, under which the authority's standard spending assessment increases by 7·4 per cent., but we are prepared to consider any new evidence on SSAs for the future.

National Stadium

Mr. Denis Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what calculations have been made by the Government of the revenue consequences of building a national stadium in Manchester; and what consideration has been given as to which authority would have ongoing responsibility for meeting them.

Mr. Portillo: Studies indicate that a stadium in east Manchester would cover its operating costs and make a profit. The detailed calculations use material which is commercial-in-confidence and it would be prejudicial to future negotiations to make this public.

Mr. Denis Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the costs of the intended national stadium in Manchester, announced by the Minister for Sport on 3 March, it is intended should be provided from central Government funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Government are already committed to the purchase and preparation of the stadium site. The costs of this will be met from central Government funds and part of the £55 million allocated to the Manchester Olympic bid will be used for this purpose.

Government Properties

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has considered ways in which empty Government residential properties might be brought into use to house homeless people; and if he will make a statement.

Sie George Young: The Public Accounts Committee reporting on homelessness in June last year drew attention to the potential for using empty Government residential properties to help house the homeless. Other Government Departments, which are individually responsible for managing their own properties, have co-operated with my own in drawing up best practice guidance on the management of their empty properties.

The guidance emphasises the need for Departments to have clear strategies for their stock; the role of local authorities and housing associations in alleviating homelessness, and the advantages of making maximum use of short-term lets of properties which are temporarily vacant. It explains the potential for contracting out management of such properties to housing associations and others.

It also sets out simplified disposal procedures, endorsed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury which may be used by Departments selling their properties to housing associations and others. These procedures should speed up property sales. Quicker sales should bring more of such properties into use faster, and thus contribute to relieving housing stress in pressure areas. My Department's regional controllers will play a liaison role as necessary in bringing together Departments, authorities and housing associations to help speed the process.

Great strides have been made in recent years in reducing the numbers of empty properties held by Government Departments. However, further progress can be made particularly where local authorities have great difficulty in housing the homeless. I hope that all those who receive the guidance will act on the advice and to make better use of their properties in accordance with the spirit of the PAC report.

The guidance is being issued today by my Department and that of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I am arranging for it to be placed in the House Libraries. Copies are being sent to all Government Departments and local authorities, and distributed to registered housing associations through the Housing Corporation.

Rural Housing Programme

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce the allocation of resources to local authorities under his Department's rural housing special programme for 1992-93.

Mr. Yeo: Local authorities that have been successful in bidding for resources under my Department's rural housing special programme for 1992-93 are being informed today. These allocations follow the success of this programme in its first year in 1991-92 in seeking to address, at low unit costs, shortages of social housing which exist for local people in some rural areas.

The £30 million of additional supplementary credit approvals are being targeted on those local authorities in rural areas with the greatest need for low-cost rented housing and where best value for money will be obtained. The programme is designed in part to take advantage of the Department's planning policies for the provision of social housing in rural areas, articulated in DOE circular 7/91. This explains that local authorities may now give planning permission for low-cost housing to meet local needs on some sites where commercial housing would not be allowed. Research carried out by the Department recently indicated that this policy was achieving positive results.

All the schemes will be undertaken by housing associations, and this programme is in addition to the Housing Corporation's own programmes for shared ownership and rented housing in rural areas. The corporation's rural programme has targets for approvals rising to 2,250 in 1993-94.

The allocations which I am announcing today should support the creation of 1,016 new units in 1992-93, from 138 schemes in 112 local authorities.

A schedule of allocations has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Coal and the Environment

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is in a position to announce his decisions on the recommendations contained in the report of the informal working group on coal and the environment published last year.

Mr. Yeo: The informal working group was comprised of officials from the Departments of the Environment and of Energy and British Coal. It was set up to review progress on improving the environmental context of coal extraction, to identify where further improvements might be made and to recommend action. The group's report identified a number of options for change and was issued for public consultation in June 1991. In the light of the responses to that consultation, we propose to bring forward amendments to the General Development Order 1988 and to the Town and Country Planning (National Coal Board) Regulations 1974. The effect of these amendments would be:

> To provide for British Coal's permitted development rights for underground working to continue within a sensible planning unit based on the existing infrastructure of, and capital already invested in, the particular colliery. They will not be able to work outside that unit without obtaining specific planning permission in the normal way.
>
> To incorporate British Coal's special permitted development rights for opencast coal exploration within the general permitted development rights for minerals exploration. Those rights will be amended to provide for a six monthly indefinitely renewable permission subject to giving periodic notice to the mineral planning authority.
>
> That British Coal's specialised entitlements to compensation following adverse planning decisions will be fully aligned with the general planning compensation regime applying to all mineral operators.

I believe this will provide a clear and fair planning framework for the coal industry now and in the future.

"This Common Inheritance"

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress on the implementation of the commitments set out in the first anniversary report on the environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance"; and whether there will be a second progress report this year.

Mr. Heseltine: I am very pleased to announce further progress on the 400 commitments to action made in last September's anniversary report on "This Common Inheritance". To demonstrate our continuing commitment to environmental issues, the Government will issue a further detailed report on progress in October 1992. This will draw on the findings of the new statistical report on the environment to be produced by my Department in September this year.

Britain is a world leader in the integration of environmental issues across Government Departments. This successful integration has been assisted by the strong role now played by the "green" Ministers in every Department. These Ministers seek to ensure environmental considerations are taken into account in the work of their Departments, as recently announced in the environmental coverage in Department's 1992 reports; training to back up guidance Departments use when considering the environmental impact of their policies and programmes; advice provided by a range of new environmental advisory bodies, such as the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment.

This concerted approach has allowed the Government to make progress on its environmental commitments in all areas.

In the international arena the members of the Antarctic treaty successfully completed and, in October 1991, signed the protocol on environmental protection of the Antarctic which provides for a 50-year ban on mineral activity in the Antarctic. The British Government have also continued to prepare for the UN Conference on Environment and Development—"The Earth Summit"—which the Prime Minister will attend in Rio in June 1992. The United Kingdom has played a leading role in the negotiations for international conventions on climate change and the conservation of the world's biological diversity, both of which it is hoped will be ready for signature in Rio.

In the European Community significant progress has included agreement in December 1991 on a Community eco-labelling scheme for products which achieve a high degree of environmental performance; agreement in December 1991 on a habitats directive to protect endangered wildlife and natural habitats; agreement on a regulation to control the export of certain hazardous chemicals, mainly pesticides; adoption in December 1991 of a directive on the protection of water against nitrate pollution. The Government have also announced that the use of CFCs will be phased out by the end of 1995, two years ahead of the EC target.

On policies affecting the countryside, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, has continued to press for the inclusion of environmental considerations in negotiations on the reform of the common agricultural policy. Other policies on the countryside include: the launch of "Action for the Countryside", a statement of the Government's policies to enhance the conservation, development and enjoyment of the English countryside, introducing a number of new initiatives to fund and encourage such action; increased protection for sites of special scientific interest; publication of a revised planning policy guidance note on the countryside and the rual economy, setting out a balanced approach to rural development and conservation; publication of "Our Farming Future" setting out the Government's policies for reconciling agricultural and environmental objectives; measures to improve the environment of the farmed uplands, particularly moorland.

In addition, the Employment department has continued to develop policies to encourage environmentally sustainable tourism, with the publication by the English tourist board of the "Green Light: a guide to sustainable tourism" in December 1991.

As far as the marine environment is concerned my right hon. Friend, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and

Food has secured agreement in the EC restricting the length of drift nets to be used by all EC vessels wherever they fish in the world.

Measures which affect the local environment include: the introduction in Britain of the first phase of a system of integrated pollution control, which brings together the regulation of pollution of air, land and water. This has attracted considerable interest in the EC, and may form the basis for Community-wide action; implementation of the majority of the provisions of the Planning and Compensation Act including a development plan-led system which pays close attention to environmental factors, supported by strengthened planning guidance; introduction, in January 1992, of the first phase of a new urban air quality monitoring network, which will provide more information for the public on a wide range of air pollutants; the launch in November 1991 of a major national publicity campaign "Helping the Earth Begins at Home" to raise householders' awareness of the link between home energy use and global warming, and to encourage greater energy efficiency.

At the Department of Transport, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has also been making progress on our commitments to make transport more sensitive to the environment by: the introduction of MoT emissions checking to reduce vehicle pollution; publication of "Keeping Buses Moving", a guide to bus priority in urban areas, allocation of £10 million for local bus schemes, and approval of further work in developing the Midland metro light rail scheme.

At the Department of Health work has continued to develop the strategy for "greening the NHS", encouraging the use of environmentally sensitive products, and making more effective use of resources.

Many other Departments are developing their own environmental initiatives. At the Department of Education and Science, the expert committee appointed to consider environmental higher and further education is making good progress; the Ministry of Defence has launched a thorough environmental review of its work; and the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Offices all have environmental programmes to meet their particular needs.

Charterhouse Estates Ltd.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department has given in grants to Charterhouse Estates Ltd. for its involvement in the Liverpool 1 area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 3 March 1992]:* A city grant of £196,000 was awarded to Charterhouse Estates Ltd. on 6 March 1992 for the conversion of 14-16 Fleet street, Liverpool to a studio-business complex. This was the first and only grant offered so far by the Department to the company for its involvement in the Liverpool 1 area.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many residential properties owned by his Department are *(a)* empty, *(b)* for sale on the open market, *(c)* intended for sale on the open market and *(d)* for sale to housing associations, in terms of numbers and percentage of stock.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 5 March 1992]:* The Department of the Environment manages 52 residential properties, as distinct from those held and managed by other Departments as part of their departmental estate. Of this total, 7—13·5 per cent.—are *(a)* empty, none are *(b)* for sale on the open market, 12—23 per cent.—are *(c)* intended for sale on the open market and none are *(d)* for sale to housing associations.

Travelling Showpeople

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from national showmen in respect of winter quarters.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 5 March 1992]:* We have recently received a number of representations on behalf of the National Showmen Fight for Rights about the advice given in circular 22/91—"Travelling Showpeople".

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will put forward proposals requiring local authorities to include within their local plans their policies on the provision of facilities for travelling showpeople.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* My Department has recently issued guidance to local planning authorities in circular 22/91, "Travelling Showpeople" which, among other things, emphasises that local planning authorities should consider the needs of travelling showpeople when preparing local plans and unitary development plans.

International Wildlife

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps he is taking to establish an inspection and enforcement service fully to enforce international wildlife controls as recommended in the report on international trade in wildlife;

(2) what is his estimate of the cost of implementing all the recommendations in the recent Joint Nature Conservation Committee report on international trade in wildlife as they apply to the trade in wild birds; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will introduce import taxes or charges for licence applications for traders of wild birds.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* Implementation of many of the JNCC's recommendations, including those relating to inspection and enforcement and import taxes and charges, needs to be considered by the European Community as a whole. The European Commission's proposals for changes in the relevant Community legislation were published last month and we shall be consulting widely on them. Until agreement has been reached within the Community on the precise changes to be introduced, it will not be possible to estimate the total costs of implementation.

Wild Birds

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional funding he will make available to implement the new measures to protect wild birds in trade that were announced by him on 27 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* The Department has made provision for staff to analyse and take follow-up action on the checklists completed in relation to imports of live animals. We shall make additional funding available for other measures as and when necessary.

Special Protection Areas

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to issue revised guidance to local planning authorities on the treatment of designated and candidate special protection areas in the light of the Leybucht Dyke case heard in the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Minister for Housing and Planning to my hon. Friend the member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) on 27 February 1992, *Official Report* column *562*. We published draft guidance on that day, and will issue it in final form later this year in a new planning policy guidance note on nature conservation.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when officials from his Department last met staff of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to discuss future special protection area designations; and what was agreed.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* My officials last met staff of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and English Nature on 13 February to discuss special protection area designations. Progress on sites already submitted to the Department was discussed and the Government expect to announce a number of further designations shortly. Discussions are continuing on the future work programme. It was agreed to maintain the momentum through 1992-93 and beyond.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list where nuclear waste from power stations, all other nuclear installations, and imported waste, are stored in Britain.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* Low-level radioactive waste is disposed of at British Nuclear Fuels' shallow disposal facility at Drigg. Intermediate-level radioactive waste is currently stored on site awaiting deep disposal. High-level or heat-generating radioacative waste is stored at Sellafield and Dounreay. No radioactive waste is imported into the country.

Local Government Services

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he provides county councils on the supply of disaggregated information about the cost of provision of the local government services to district councils.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* Each year the Department of the Environment publishes a document "Standard Spending Assessment Handbook" which sets out underlying information about the service elements of standard spending assessments for each English local authority. A copy is sent to each authority and copies of the 1990-91 and 1991-92 editions are available in the House Library. In addition, every local authority is obliged to publish its accounts annually.

Ultraviolet Radiation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes in ultraviolet radiation levels have been revealed by the continuous monitoring by the National Radiological Protection Board in the last three months; if he will publish the relevant data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply.

A preliminary analysis of results obtained at Chilton, Oxfordshire, as part of the National Radiological Protection Board's programme of development for solar radiation measurement, for the months December 1991 to February 1992, does not indicate any signficant differences in mean levels from those expected. Temporal variations in levels appear to be within the range of variations expected from variability in local weather conditions.

Business Property Values

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the change in average business property values since April 1988.

Mr. Maples: I have been asked to reply.

There are no statistics available in relation to average business property values which would enable information to be supplied in the form requested.

Nuclear Reprocessing Plant

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will next meet the European Commissioner for Environmental Matters to discuss the impact of the Dounreay reprocessing plant on the Irish sea and the surrounding environment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

Rent Arrears Scheme, Hackney

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his decision to end Hackney council's arrears-to-rents scheme.

Miss Widdecombe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 7 February at column *324*. We do not have the information to provide an estimate of the amount of housing benefit that may have already been paid.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Duchy Visit

34. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to visit the Duchy.

37. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next plans to visit the Duchy.

38. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next plans to visit the Duchy.

39. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to visit the Duchy in April.

40. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to visit the Duchy.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) earlier today.

Legal Advisers

35. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many legal advisers there are in the Duchy office.

Mr. Chris Patten: There are two legal executives employed by the Duchy in the Duchy office. The Duchy solicitor is a partner in a firm of solicitors and he regularly visits the Duchy office but is not a member of the staff.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

External Trade Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the significance of the figures in the final column of table F2 of the monthly review of external trade statistics.

Mr. Sainsbury: The series referred to is a measure of changes in the prices of exports of manufactured goods from the United Kingdom's 11 main competitors.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the outcome of his annual review of Export Credits Guarantee Department premium rates.

Mr. Sainsbury: Experience of the use of the portfolio management system indicates that it provides a sound basis for helping to determine the appropriate level of premiums. We continue to press ahead with our international initiative to encourage the use of systems which more closely match premiums to risk. Meanwhile, I have now completed the first annual review of Export Credits Guarantee Department's rates taking account of experience of the practical operation of the system, the latest forecasts of economic prospects in all the main markets, and the competitive position of British exporters. It is clear from this review that in the event current premium rates need adjusting to reflect changes both in trading patterns and in the creditworthiness of various markets so as to achieve our planned likelihood of avoiding underwriting losses. I am happy to say that we have therefore been able to make substantial reductions for many markets, though there will be some increases in others, notably those whose prospects have significantly weakened. The new rates will come into effect from 6 April. The Export Credits Guarantee Department will be in touch with exporters, and their representative associations, to inform them of the changes.

ENERGY

Renewable Energy Sources

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a further statement on the role of renewables within the Government's overall energy strategy.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government's renewable energy policy is to stimulate the development and deployment of all technologies with prospects of commercial viability and environmental acceptability. This is being implemented by supporting a collaborative research, development and demonstration programme with industry, providing an appropriate institutional framework, and utilising the non-fossil fuel obligation which has resulted in contracts being placed for more than 600 MW of electricity from renewable sources. Moreover an independent advisory group, which I chair, is currently reviewing renewable energy strategy. I expect the group to report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy in the spring.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to undertake an environmental assessment of the current 100 MW target for renewables.

Mr. Moynihan: For renewables projects which require planning permission, the likely environmental impact will need to be taken into account when the application is determined. In some cases, there will be a requirement for environmental assessment. Environmental assessment will also need to be undertaken for those projects promoted by means of a private Bill.

Nuclear Levy

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what would be the cost of transferring the burden of the nuclear levy from industry to the Exchequer.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Fossil fuel levy receipts in 1990-91 were £1,175 million, of which an estimated £300 million derived from sales to industry. The terms of the Non-Fossil Fuel Obligation contracts ensure that the levy revenues needed to finance nuclear-sourced electricity will decline substantially, in real terms, by 1997-98.

Orimulsion

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received concerning the burning of orimulsion; and to which power stations they relate.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations mostly relating to National Power plc's application to fit electrostatic precipitators in order to use orimulsion as a fuel at its Pembroke power station, and also in relation to the burning of orimulsion at Grain, Richborough and Ince power stations. My right hon. Friend has decided not to proceed further with National Power plc's application until he has received the considered views of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what weights of plutonium arising from foreign nuclear fuel reprocessed at Sellafield were returned to the respective countries of origin in *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* 1991; and if he will specify which countries were involved and under which safeguards arrangements.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: None.

Nuclear Proliferation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list *(a)* all measures taken by his Department in the last 12 months to prevent nuclear proliferation, *(b)* the number of personnel in his Department working to prevent nuclear proliferation and *(c)* his Department's total expenditure on control of nuclear proliferation in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My Department has been involved in several important initiatives in the last 12 months, aimed at strengthening nuclear non-proliferation controls.

As the lead Department on safeguards issues and provider of the United Kingdom representation on the International Atomic Energy Agency board of governors, we have been developing policy on measures to strengthen IAEA safeguards, in consultation with other Departments and our international partners. My Department has supported the IAEA and its role in the United Nations special commission's activities in Iraq, in facilitating the availability of technical advice and assistance from United Kingdom nuclear experts.

My officials continued to advise DTI on export licence applications for nuclear related materials and equipment. They provide technical advice to other Departments and take part in United Kingdom delegations to international export control organisations such as the European Community political co-operation group on nuclear non-proliferation, the nuclear suppliers group, and the Zangger committee.

Nine administrative and technical staff from the Department's atomic energy division, are directly involved to some degree on nuclear non-proliferation issues. Figures are not readily available on expenditure specifically related to this work.

Gas-fired Power Stations

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the permissions granted for the construction of new gas-fired power stations by company and planned generating capacity.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 24 February at columns *397-400*.

The hon. Member will, however, wish to know that my right hon. Friend has now given consent to the application by Citigen Ltd to construct a 90 MW station fuelled by gas and fuel oil at Charterhouse street, London EC1.

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list each private sector consultancy firm which has been retained by each agency within his Department, and for his Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme; and whether the appointment in each case was the result of competitive tendering.

Mr. Wakeham: No consultancy firm has been appointed so far.

Coal

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the energy intensity figure, in tonnes coal equivalent per $1,000 gross domestic product, for each of the European Community and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries in *(a)* 1973 and *(b)* the latest year for which figures are available in each case.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Figures for energy intensity in member countries, on the basis of tonnes of coal equivalent per $1,000 of GDP—at 1985 prices and exchange rates—are as follows:

	1973	*1989*
Australia	0·86	0·79
Austria	0·73	0·56
Belgium	1·22	0·89
Canada	1·12	0·93
Denmark	0·73	0·50
Finland	0·94	0·77
France	0·74	0·63
Germany	0·89	0·67
Greece	0·85	1·04
Iceland	0·87	0·70
Ireland	1·01	0·78
Italy	0·73	0·54
Japan	0·64	0·44
Luxembourg	2·73	1·39
Netherlands	1·05	0·80
New Zealand	0·72	0·96
Norway	0·73	0·62
Portugal	0·77	1·10
Spain	0·67	0·74
Sweden	0·83	0·74
Switzerland	0·39	0·39
Turkey	1·32	1·31
United Kingdom	0·97	0·68
United States	0·98	0·73

Sources: Energy Balances of OECD Countries 1987-1988 (OECD, 1990) and Energy Balances of OECD Countries 1980-1989 (OECD, 1991).

Figures for energy intensity in member countries are published by the OECD, on the basis of tonnes of oil equivalent per $1,000 of GDP. The figures have been converted to the basis of tonnes of coal equivalent per $1,000 of GDP, using the standard conversion factor of 1.7.

Petroleum Production

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are Her Majesty's Government's latest forecasts of levels of United Kingdom petroleum production.

Mr. Wakeham: The latest forecasts for the United Kingdom petroleum production in the years 1992 to 1996 are as follows:

	Million Tonnes
1992	85-105
1993	85-115
1994	95-130
1995	95-130
1996	90-130

As in previous years, the forecasts are presented in the form of a range of outcomes for each year. These take into account the many uncertainties involved. The figures include stabilised crude oil, natural gas liquids—NGLs and condensates. NGL and condensate production is expected to contribute between 4 million and 10 million tonnes annually to these figures.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what response he has given to representations from high-energy-using industry, including the engineering steel industry, about proposed increases in electricity prices.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend asked major energy users, including the engineering and steel industries, to provide detailed information on electricity prices so that the Government may better understand their position. This work has made good progress.

Nuclear Safeguards

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on issues discussed, proposals rejected and decisions taken at the most recent special meeting of the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency that focused upon international nuclear safeguards.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: A report on the issues discussed at the February board of governors has been made by the International Atomic Energy Agency in the form of a press release, No. PR 92/12, dated 26 February. A copy of the press release has been deposited in the Library of the House.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether the United Kingdom ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna has made any additional pledge of resources, scientific expertise or technology for safeguards at the IAEA board of governors special meeting on improving international nuclear safeguards that opened in Vienna on 24 February.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No.

Coal Mining

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he intends to meet the National Union of Mineworkers to discuss the future of coal mining in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend and I have no plans at present to meet the National Union of Mineworkers to discuss the future of coal mining in Britain.

Nuclear Transport Ships

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the liability coverage *(a)* currently in place or *(b)* planned, for (i) Pacific Nuclear Transport Ltd. ships and (ii) Nuclear Transport Ltd. ships registered in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As the licensed operator of the Sellafield site, British Nuclear Fuels plc is responsible for complying with the provisions of the Nuclear Installations Act 1965, as amended, with regard to insurance for the transport of nuclear materials to or from the site. The insurance arrangements for meeting these requirements in respect of ships registered in the United Kingdom and owned by Pacific Nuclear Transport Limited—PNTL—are a commercial matter for BNFL and PNTL. Nuclear Transport Limited owns no such ships.

EMPLOYMENT

Craft Apprentices

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will tabulate the number of craft apprentices as defined by legal indentures currently attending either day release or sandwich courses at colleges of higher or further education, showing the number by convenient classes or categories of craft, trade, or future occupation;

(2) if he will tabulate the number of craft apprenticeships entered into in each year since 1980 in convenient classes or categories of craft, trade, or future occupation.

Mr. Jackson: The information is not available in the precise form requested. Estimates for Great Britain from the labour force survey of the number of people undertaking craft apprenticeships at the time of the survey are given in the table.

Spring each Year	*Thousands*
1983	229
1984	196
1985	201
1986	170
1987	173
1988	177
1989	206
1990	201

Note: Information for 1981 from the Labour Force Survey is not comparable with that for other years. There was no Labour Force Survey in 1980 or 1982.

Of the 201,000 craft apprentices in the spring of 1990, around 90,000 were attending day release or sandwich courses.

Customs Clearance Agents

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what compensation or redundancy arrangements will be available for customs clearance agents and their employees after 1 January 1993.

Mr. Forth: Statutory entitlements to redundancy payments, based on age and length of service, are provided for in part VI of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, and, in Northern Ireland, the Contracts of Employment and Redundancy Payments Act (Northern Ireland) 1965.

Employers (Disability Adaptations)

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on levies on employers in other EC countries who do not adapt premises or equipment for employees with disabilities.

Mr. Jackson: We have no information to suggest that any EC country places a levy on employers in this way.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to place a levy on employers who do not adapt premises or equipment for employees with disabilities in order to subsidise other employers to carry out such works; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: We have no intention of adopting such a policy.

Under the aids to premises and equipment—APE—scheme, the Employment Service currently makes grants available to employers towards the cost of adapting premises or equipment for an existing disabled employee or a new recruit who is disabled to enable them to work more effectively and productively.

In the summary paper published in 1990 "Evaluation of special schemes for people with disabilities" the large majority of employers interviewed who had benefited from the APE scheme said they would have been prepared to pay more towards the costs of an adaptation. Nevertheless, there was no call either from those employers or from individual beneficiaries for a levy of employers who did not adapt premises or equipment. There is no evidence that such a levy would improve the employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had with his EC counterparts on harmonising duties of employers to provide facilities for employees with disabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: We have had no such discussions. EC countries provide for the employment and training needs of people with disabilities in a variety of ways, according to the circumstances which exist in the country concerned. We are in the process of improving the effectiveness of our employment and training services for people with disabilities, following extensive consultations. We take the experience of other countries, including EC countries, into account as appropriate. We also take opportunities to inform representatives from other member states about developments in the United Kingdom.

YTS Fatalities

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the date of, cause of and compensation paid in each fatality on a youth training scheme since 1979, or latest convenient date.

Mr. Jackson: The information on dates and causes of fatalities is in the table.

The Employment Department does not pay damages in compensation to families of trainees fatally injured on YT, or the former YTS. However, training providers are contractually obliged to obtain insurance to cover any claims to compensation or damages. Payments made by either insurance companies or YT training providers are a private matter between them and the trainees' families. The Employment Department is not informed of these settlements.

Cause of fatality	*Date*
Lorry hit horse, trainee run over	27 June 1983
Trainee fell down disused mine shaft	7 September 1983
Trapped under fork lift truck	12 October 1983
Crushed by reversing tractor	1 February 1984
Road Traffic Accident	27 July 1984
Motorcycle accident	22 August 1984
Dumper truck overturned into stream	24 September 1984
Shock to lungs caused by burning	28 January 1985
Traumatic asphyxiation	26 February 1985
Electrocution	29 July 1985
Road Traffic Accident	20 August 1985
Road Traffic Accident	7 May 1986
Fall from ladder	12 May 1986
Road Traffic Accident	30 June 1986
Trapped whilst loading lorry	3 October 1986
Trapped whilst directing vehicle	11 November 1986
Electrocution	26 November 1986
Road Traffic Accident	22 December 1986
Trapped in farm silo	4 March 1987
Hit by girder carried on fork lift truck	18 March 1987
Road Traffic Accident	13 April 1987
Trapped under wheels of tractor	17 August 1987
Trapped under worktops	23 October 1987
Trapped between tractor and building	16 November 1987
Trapped in silage machine	14 December 1987
Knocked down by motorcycle	12 January 1988
Drowned at sea	14 January 1988
Killed in explosion	5 August 1988
Fall from ladder	15 August 1988
Digger bucket collapsed on trainee	18 August 1988
Road Traffic Accident	14 September 1988
Road Traffic Accident	5 October 1988
Road Traffic Accident	2 November 1988
Acetate caught fire	2 November 1988
Electrocution	3 March 1989
Fell through roof opening	19 April 1989
Trapped in fire	18 May 1989
Road Traffic Accident	1 December 1989
Crushed by dumper truck	17 January 1990
Decapitation at sea	1 October 1990
Caught in explosion	18 January 1991
Hit by car	21 March 1991
Found in building on fire	21 March 1991
Hit by speeding motorcycle	19 September 1991

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployment benefit claimants there were in Coventry, in December 1978 and December 1991.

Mr. Jackson: In December 1991, there were 18,520 people claiming unemployment-related benefits in the Coventry local authority district. Information on the numbers claiming unemployment related benefits for local areas such as local authority districts has been available only since June 1983.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the proportion of the populations of Wandsworth, Westminster and Rotherham which are currently unemployed.

Mr. Jackson: The latest total population estimates available from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys are for mid-year 1990. The latest available numbers of unemployed claimants relate to January 1992. These data have been used for all three areas in the following reply.

In the local authority district of Wandsworth the total population estimates is 256,200 and the number of unemployed claimants is 15,863. On this basis, approximately one person in 16 is claimant unemployed.

In the local authority district of Westminster the total population estimate is 179,200 and the number of unemployed claimants is 9,470. On this basis, approximately one person in 19 is claimant unemployed.

In the local authority district of Rotherham the total population estimate is 254,500 and the number of unemployed claimants is 14,115. On this basis, approximately one person in 18 is claimant unemployed.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Central and Eastern Europe

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what way his Department has supported the activities of the legal profession in England and Wales in giving legal technical assistance for central and eastern Europe with particular reference to Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia and Armenia; and if he will make a statement as to the extent to which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office assistance unit has been involved in supporting these activities.

Mrs. Chalker: We consider the evolving legal professions in eastern and central European countries and those of the former Soviet Union to be an integral part in the process of democratisation. The know-how fund has, to help in this process, worked closely with the various bilateral legal associations, the Lord Chancellor's Department, the Law Society and the Bar Council. The Scottish legal profession is also involved in projects, particularly in the Baltic republics.

The following activities have been supported:

Poland

Security Law and Banking Supervision Law—The provision of British legal advisers to the Government of Poland to complete work on drafting a Security Law and to discuss a draft law on Banking Supervision.

Lawyer Placement Scheme—To enable ten lawyers from Lodz to come to the United Kingdom to learn about the structure and operation of the legal profession.

Reform of Land Valuation and Property Registration—Advice from British experts on how to secure title to land, and advice on valuation procedures for foreign and Polish investments consistent with Polish political constraints.

Management of a Law Practice—A seminar held in Poland, on the management of a lawyer's office.

Czechoslovakia

Assistance to the Czech Bar Association—To advise on the establishment of a specialist legal publishing house.

Commercial Law Seminar—Two day seminar in Prague to familiarise Czechoslovak lawyers with United Kingdom commercial law, organised by the British-Czechoslovak Law Association.

Placement Scheme for Officials from the Czech and Slovak Ministries of Justice—A one-month long placement scheme on commercial law organised by Queen Mary and Westfield College.

Bulgaria:

Bar Council/Law Society Visit—Joint mission by the Bar Council and Law Society to identify possible areas of assistance.

Environmental Law—Commentary on the Draft Bulgarian Environmental Protection Law.

Legal Workshop—A legal workshop by the British-Bulgarian Legal Association in Bankya.

Hungary

Placement Scheme for Hungarian Lawyers—Placement scheme to give young Hungarian lawyers direct experience of United Kingdom commercial law practices.

Anglo-Hungarian Legal Seminar—Seminar on the practical negotiations of a joint venture including dealing with financing documents and intellectual property matters.

Anglo/Hungarian Legal Seminar—Seminar on Criminal Justice and the administration of the probation service.

UN Conference on Environment and Development

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals are being developed by his Department's Overseas Development Administration for submission to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in June.

Mrs. Chalker: My Department contributes to the Government's preparations for UNCED, which are led by the Department of the Environment. Proposals to be discussed by world leaders at the UNCED are the subject of intergovernmental negotiations in the UNCED preparatory committee, which is meeting in New York from 2 March to 3 April. ODA officials are included in the United Kingdom delegation, and the ODA has contributed to submissions made by the United Kingdom to earlier meetings of the preparatory committee, including on population and the environment, and technology transfer. The Secretary of State for the Environment spoke to the preparatory committee on 2 March setting out the United Kingdom's views. A copy of his speech is in the Library.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Dorset LEA (Funding)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the percentage change in real terms in funding to the Dorset local education authority since 1979.

Mr. Fallon: Local authorities are free to determine their own spending priorities between education and other services within the framework of the annual local authority finance settlement. Dorset local education authority's outturn expenditure in 1979-80, including the cost of higher education which in 1989-90 became the responsibility of the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council was some £74 million. Its expenditure in 1989-90, the latest year for which actual spending information is available, was some £169 million. The real terms percentage change between these figures is 14 per cent.

Walsall Council (Budget)

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the position of Walsall metropolitan borough council in his Department's list of levels of overheads for education authorities in England; what percentage of the council's education budget is spent on administration costs and the average administrative costs per pupil; and if he will give the comparable figures for each of the education authorities in the west midlands.

Mr. Fallon: The information is set out in the table.

Expenditure on central administration relating to primary and secondary schools, 1991-92[1]

LEA	*As percentage of PSB*[2] *Per cent*	*Ranking by percentage*[3] *Number*	*As expenditure per pupil £*
Walsall	3·40	46	60
Birmingham	3·85	64	60
Coventry	4·37	73	80
Dudley	3·64	54	60
Hereford and Worcester	3·18	38	50
Sandwell	4·51	75	80
Shropshire	2·00	7	40
Solihull	1·93	5	30
Staffordshire	4·10	67	70
Warwickshire	3·19	40	50
Wolverhampton	5·33	90	100

[1] The figures are derived from local education authorities' budget statements prepared under Section 42 of the Education Reform Act.

[2] The potential schools budget (PSB) consists of all spending on schools other than capital expenditure, expenditure supported by Government specific grants, and expenditure on school meals, home to school transport and transitional exceptions from delegation such as grounds maintenance.

[3] The ranking is according to the percentage of PSB spent on central administration by each of the 97 LEAs (excluding most inner London LEAs) which currently have local management of schools schemes in operation. The lowest percentage is ranked as 1.

Legislation (Representations)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations his Department has had from the North West Regional Association of Education Authorities in regard to the Further and Higher Education Bill [Lords] and the Education (Schools) Bill; what replies he is sending; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Representations about a number of aspects of the Further and Higher Education Bill and the Education (Schools) Bill were received in letters from the association in late February. Replies to those letters were sent on 6 March.

Population Statistics

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the proportion of the population attending local authority schools and the proportion of the population aged over 75 years in the areas of the Wandsworth, Westminster and Rotherham local authorities.

Mr. Fallon: The proportions for 1991 are set out in the table:

	Percentage of the population	
	Attending schools maintained by local education authority	*Aged 75 years or over*
Wandsworth	10·8	7·0
Westminster	9·2	8·0
Rotherham	16·9	5·9

Student Maintenance

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what support will be given from public funds towards students' maintenance in the academic year 1992-93.

Mr. Alan Howarth: We propose the following increases in student support. They are subject, in each case, to parliamentary approval of the necessary regulations.

The maximum rates of loan in the United Kingdom will be as follows:

Loan rates 1992-93	*Full year rate (£)*	*Final year rate (£)*
Students living away from home:		
in London	830	605
elsewhere	715	525
Students living at home	570	415

The main rates of maintenance grant for mandatory award holders from England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and their equivalents in Scotland, will be the same as in the current academic year. The rates for England, Wales and Northern Ireland are as follows; Scottish rates are slightly different.

Main grant rates 1992-93	*(£)*
Students living away from home:	
in London	2,845
elsewhere	2,265
Students living at home	1,795

These grant and loan rates will enable average student support in the United Kingdom from main grant and loan to grow by 4·5 per cent. next year. The resources available to students from England, Wales and Northern Ireland will be as follows:

Resources from main grant and loan, 1992-93	*Full year (£)*	*Final year (£)*
Students living away from home:		
in London	3,675	3,450
elsewhere	2,980	2,790
Students living at home	2,365	2,210

We shall adjust the parental and spouse contribution scales for mandatory awards for students from England, Wales and Northern Ireland, so that the contribution assessed for a parent or spouse whose residual income rises in line with average earnings will continue to fall in real terms.

We shall increase the supplementary allowances payable within the mandatory award by 4·5 per cent., thereby maintaining their value in real terms.

We shall make similar adjustments to the scales and allowances used for equivalent awards elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

I am placing in the Library details of all the rates of grant and loan and of the parental and spouse contribution rules.

Museums

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make funds available to secure the future of the Hancock museum, Newcastle and the Sunderland museum.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Funding these museums is not a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend.

The Hancock museum is owned by the Natural History Society of Northumberland. Its running costs are provided by Newcastle university. Like all universities, Newcastle is an autonomous institution responsible for managing its own financial affairs. It is for the university to decide the level of funding for this facility in the light of other priorities.

The Sunderland museum is the responsibility of the Tyne and Wear museums service.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are his plans for capital expenditure for grant-maintained schools for the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to his reply, 23 January 1991, c. 310-14]:* In my earlier reply I said that I would announce in due course further capital allocations to grant-maintained schools for named projects to start in 1992-93. We have agreed allocations with a total value of £8·8 million. Some projects are phased over two years.

Of the 60 schools that submitted bids for consideration in the second round, 38 have received an allocation for a named project. Having now seen all the bids together I have also decided to make allocations to four schools who submitted technology-related bids last year which were unsuccessful in the first round. Together with the announcement I made on Thursday about technology schools initiative allocations we now have 101 schools which have benefited from the TSI.

The grant-maintained schools will make good use of the funds allocated to them which will enable them to improve the facilities and working environments for their pupils.

The following is a list of the named project allocations.

Second tranche of Named Project Capital allocations for grant-maintained schools in 1992-93

£000s

School and Project	*Total Project Allocation*
Technology Schools Initiative	
Adams' Grammar School	
Technology building	470
Aylesford School	
Phase I of new technology building	380
Burntwood School	
Upgrading of technology facilities	553
Claremont High School	
Technology facilities	250
Cranbrook School	
Design and technology centre	438
The Crypt School	
Information Technology development	151
Desborough Comprehensive School	
Technology and design facilities	465
The Glyn School	
Technology block	350
La Retraite High School	
Technology block	750
Moseley Park School	
Technology suite	730
Netherthorpe School	
Extension to existing technology building	300
Northampton School for Boys	
Technology provision	250
TOTAL FOR TECHNOLOGY	5,087
Other	
Ash Green School	
Roof and structural work	100
Baines School	
Phase I: 2 storey classroom block	750
Belmont Primary School	
Health and safety (kitchen)	25
Brookmead School	
Extend, refurbish and equip science and technology	85
Copland Community School	
Window replacement	75
Elmwood Primary School	
Boilers	54
Fulston Manor School	
Rural science block extension to form laboratory	48
Gartree School	
Re-roofing of science and mathematics block	75
Hayes Manor School	
Fire protection	114
Hayes School	
Science refurbishment	280
Kelsey Park School	
Science refurbishment	300
King John Middle School, Northants	
Refurbish HORSA huts	250
Langley Grammar School	
Health and safety	150
Loddon Middle School	
Technology room	73
Magdalen CE/Methodist Primary School	
Health and safety (playground)	15
Mellow Lane School	
Fire protection, under pinning and repairs	120
Myton School	
Health and safety (kitchen refurbishment)	28
Newlands Spring Primary School	
Permanent replacement of 1 temporary classroom	55
Norwich Road School	
Sanitary facilities	93
Oldborough Manor High School	
Lower School rewiring	91
Parkstone Grammar School	
Renewal of curtain walling	116
The Plume School	
Business studies suite	58
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Penrith	
Roof and structural repairs	102
Riddlesdown High School	
Health and safety improvements	107
Ringwood Comprehensive School	
Science laboratory refurbishment	85
Salterlee Primary School	
Essential health and safety	18
St. Mary's RC Primary School, Hertfordshire	
Roof renewal	108
Thomas Whitehead CE School	
Erection of Elliot relocatable classroom	25
Wrotham School	
Roofing and associated repairs	100
Yarborough High School	
Science block	200

School and Project	*Total Project Allocation*
TOTAL FOR OTHER PROJECTS	3,700

HEALTH

East Dorset Health Authority

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the expenditure of the East Dorset health authority in 1979 and for the current year; what percentage change in real terms this represents; and if he will make a statement on health services in the Bournemouth area.

Mr. Dorrell: The East Dorset health authority was established on 1 April 1982. The annual accounts of the authority show total revenue expenditure of £54·5 million, cash, for 1982-83 and £114·7 million, cash, for 1990-91, the latest year available. These figures represent an increase in real terms of 34·6 per cent. measured at 1991-92 prices.

For 1979-80 the annual accounts of the former Dorset area health authority record total revenue expenditure of £54·1 million, cash, compared with £165·9 million, cash, by the successor East and West Dorset health authorities in the financial year 1990-91—an increase in real terms of 41·2 per cent. measured at 1991-92 prices.

East Dorset health authority is to be congratulated on its achievements since the commencement of the Government's NHS reforms and I expect the services provided to residents to continue to improve.

A major landmark within the Bournemouth area is the opening, in February, of phase II of the new Royal Bournemouth hospital. Phase I, opened in 1989, provided general medical and general surgical beds and enabled the centralisation of vascular surgery and urology services to take place at a later date.

Phase II will include a 24-hour accident and emergency service which will be operational by August 1992 and will be additional to the similar service already provided at Poole. This will mean that East Dorset will have two 24-hour accident and emergency services. Increased orthopaedic services together with the existing orthopaedic in-patient facilities transferred from Christchurch hospital and a trauma service for fractured necks will all improve the local services for elderly people.

The 24-hour accident and emergency service and the introduction of a low-risk obstetric unit which the authority plan to develop into the first midwife-led maternity unit in the United Kingdom have both been included as a direct response to consumer representations.

The extra capacity at the Royal Bournemouth hospital is allowing the authority to offer many added benefits to local residents including reduced waiting times for out-patients. Since April 1991, the total number of people in East Dorset waiting for more than one year for in-patient treatment has reduced by over 50 per cent. and by 31 March 1992 is expected to represent only 6 per cent. of all people waiting.

The number of people awaiting treatment for more than two years has reduced by 90 per cent. and there will be no people waiting for more than two years by the end of March 1992.

Ambulance Services

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of the merger of the Mersey ambulance service and the Cheshire county ambulance service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Donald Wilson, the chairman of the Mersey regional health authority, for details.

Bio Products Laboratory

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what activities of the Bio Products Laboratory were deemed to be activities as defined under schedule 8 to the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 in relation to the transitional arrangements on licensing applying to loss of Crown immunity status on 1 April 1991.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Activities related to the sale, supply, manufacture and wholesale dealing of medicinal products which are licensable activities by virtue of sections 7 and 8 of the Medicines Act 1968.

Nurses, Cheshire

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of nurses employed in the county of Cheshire; and if he will give the totals for 1970, 1980 and 1990.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is available only for health service regions and districts.

Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the criteria by which a company is assessed for inclusion within the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The pharmaceutical price regulation scheme is a voluntary agreement between the Health Departments and the Association of the British Pharmaceutical industry. It is intended to apply to all companies supplying national health service medicines which are prescribed by medical or dental practitioners.

The term "national health service medicines" refers to any human pharmaceutical product which is marketed under a specific brand name. The agreement therefore does not cover pharmaceutical products which are sold under their generic title, nor packs which are predominately intended for sale to the public without a prescription.

GP Budget Holders

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance his Department gives to hospitals on the procedures concerning the relative priority with which patients of budget holders may be seen compared to non-budget holder patients; what representations he has received on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Following representations made by the BMA we discussed this issue with the Joint Consultants Committee; and issued joint guidance to hospital consultants in June 1991 in executive letter (91)84. The guidance clearly states that "provider units will not offer contracts to one purchaser which would disadvantage the patients of another purchaser". Copies of the executive letter are available in the Library.

Cosmetic Treatment

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether female transplant patients may receive free cosmetic treatment from the national health service for such things as hair growth caused by anti-rejection pills.

Mr. Dorrell: The treatment of such a patient under the NHS is a matter for the clinical judgment of the doctor responsible for her care.

Rehabilitation Medicine Consultants

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the number of consultants in rehabilitation medicine in post at 31 December 1990, 31 March 1991, 30 June 1991, 30 September 1991 and 31 December 1991, respectively.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information on the number of hospital medical staff is collected on an annual basis by census as at 30 September each year. The latest information available is for 30 September 1990 and this shows that there were 11 consultants in rehabilitation medicine in England at that date.

Census data for 30 September 1991 will be available later this year, a copy of which will be placed in the Library.

Hospital Appointments

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of people within Trent regional health authority who failed to attend national health service hospitals after being granted firm appointments in the year to March 1991; and how many of these obtained private treatment instead.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary gave my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson) on 19 November 1991 at column *130*. The total number of patients on the waiting list at 31 March 1991 in Trent for ordinary or day case admission who had deferred admission at their own request was 4,417. Information is not collected centrally on numbers who failed to attend for in-patient and day case treatment or who obtained private treatment instead.

Meningitis

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent on information campaigns about meningitis in each of the last three years; and what plans his Department has for future campaigns.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Health education campaigns are conducted on behalf of the Government by the Health Education Authority which is funded by the Department. During the coming year, as part of its promotion of immunisation, the HEA will provide information on the new vaccine to be introduced against haemophilus influenzae b, a major cause of bacterial meningitis in young children; it is not possible to break-down this expenditure. In addition the Department makes an annual grant of £15,000 per annum to the National Meningitis Trust to help fund its information campaigns for both members of the public and professionals, and the HEA has assisted the trust with production of an information pack for GPs.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what governmental initiatives have been taken in the last five years as to research into meningitis; what financial assistance has been given, and to which bodies, to organisations involved either in research into the disease or support to families affected; and whether such assistance is able to be separately identified as to amounts spent on research, administration and salaries of those working for organisations receiving Government support.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science. Figures for the last five years for MRC research into meningitis are as follows:

	£
1986-87	144,057
1987-88	215,603
1988-89	160,467
1989-90	339,091
1990-91	460,000

MRC research on meningitis funded in 1990-91 was as follows:

Direct support (through MRC's own Units):
- Clinical Research Centre, Division of Communicable Diseases, Harrow, Middlesex.
  - Pathogenesis and immunobiology of meningococcal infection.
- MRC Laboratories, The Gambia, West Africa.
  - Serological studies with Haemophilus Influenzae Type B polysaccharide/protein conjugate vaccines.

Indirect support (through grants to University departments):
- Professor E. R. Moxon, Department of Paediatrics, University of Oxford.
  - Molecular basis of Haemophilus Influenzae pathogenicity.
- Dr. G. J. Boulnois, Department of Microbiology, University of Leicester.
  - Genetic engineering of Polysaccharides.
- Professor T. H. Pennington, Department of Bacteriology, University of Aberdeen.
  - Studies on the population genetics and typing of Neisseria Meningitidis.
- Dr. J. E. Heckels, Department of Microbiology, University of Southampton.
  - Immunobiology of meningococcal outer membrane proteins.
- Dr. D. M. Jones, Manchester Public Health Laboratory, Public Health Laboratory Service Board, London.
  - To investigate Neisseria Meningitidis surface antigens for induction of protective antibody after disease/carriage.
- Dr. J. J. McFadden, Department of Microbiology, University of Surrey, Guildford.
  - DNA probes to study epidemiology and virulence of Neisseria Meningitidis infections.
- Dr. B. G. Spratt, School of Biological Sciences, University of Sussex, Brighton.
  - Molecular basis and molecular epidemiology of the emergence of penicillin resistance in Neisseria Meningitidis.
- Dr. Rosalyn A. Davies, Department of Neuro-otology, Institute of Neurology, London.

The use of brain-stem acoustically evoked responses to predict permanent hearing loss following bacterial meningitis.

Dr. A. Robinson, Bacterial Antigens Group, Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research, Porton.

A preliminary investigation into the mechanisms of meningococcal meningitis.

In the last five years the Department of Health has commissioned the following meningitis related research projects:

1. "A Prospective Case-control Study of Meningococcal Disease in Eight West Country Health Districts". Total cost: £58,874. Study undertaken by Bristol and Weston Health Authority;
2. "Meningoencephalitis Associated with the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) Vaccine." Total estimated cost: £129,195. Study being undertaken by Oxfordshire Health Authority;
3. "Clinical Trial of Haemophilus Influenzae Vaccine." Total estimated cost £129,275. Study being undertaken by the Public Health Laboratory Service.

It is not possible to break down this expenditure into amounts spent on research, administration and salaries. Money given to the National Meningitis Trust is not intended for research purposes.

Community Nurses

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each years since 1979 the number of community nursing staff employed and the number of visits undertaken to patients over retirement age.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 6 February 1992]:* The information is not available in the form requested. Also, definitional changes between 1979 and 1990 and differences in definition between manpower and activity statistics make detailed comparisons difficult.

Table 1 shows the number of community health care nursing staff between 1979 and 1990. Included in the figures are all primary health care staff, except school nurses, agency staff and midwifery staff: community psychiatric nurses and community mental handicap nurses are included from 1981, the first year for which data were available.

Table 2 shows the number of people aged 65 and over who were seen by a home nurse or health visitor between 1979 and 1987-88, and by a district nurse, health visitor, community psychiatric nurse, community mental handicap nurse or other community nurse in 1988-89 and 1989-90, following the introduction of a new data collection system. Figures are not collected centrally on the total number of contacts with community nurses by age.

Table 1

Primary Health Care (Community) Nursing[1] Staff at 30 September Each Year

England

Year	*Whole-time equivalent[2]*
[3]1979	29,500
[3]1980	32,100
1981	35,700
1982	35,600
1983	36,300
1984	37,000
1985	39,000
1986	38,800
1987	39,000
1988	39,700
[4]1989	39,300
1990	40,700

Source:

Department of Health (SMI3) annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.

Notes:

[1] Excludes school nursing, midwifery and agency staff, but includes community psychiatric and community mental handicap nursing staff.

[2] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest one hundred (100) whole-time equivalents.

[3] Not adjusted for reduction in nurses working hours during 1980-81 (from 40 to 37·5 hours per week).

[4] Understated figure due to errors in occupation coding at South East Thames Region.

Table 2

First contacts Home/Community nursing (thousands) *England*

Year	*First contacts with 65s and over*
1979	1,819·9
1980	1,898·7
1981	1,903·0
1982	1,955·9
1983	2,005·9
1984	2,039·8
1985	2,077·4
1986	2,018·3
1987-88	2,030·5
1988-89[1] [2]	2,144·0
1989-90	1,955·0

Sources: LHS 27/3, KC56-59

[1] For 1988-89 and 1989-90, there was a change in the method of data collection, and therefore the figures are not comparable to past years.

[2] This estimate was based on incomplete age data for the first year of a new data collection system and appears to over estimate the true figure.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Criminal Statistics

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what percentage the levels of notifiable criminal offences and crimes of violence, respectively, changed in Leicestershire during the last 12 months for which records are available.

Mr. John Patten: In the 12 months to September 1991, recorded crime in Leicestershire increased by 29·5 per cent. over the previous 12 months and crimes of violence increased by 9·8 per cent.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what number and what percentage reported *(a)* criminal offences and *(b)* crimes of violence have altered in Leicestershire during the last six months for which records are available.

Mr. John Patten: In the six months to September 1991, recorded crime in Leicestershire increased by 29·6 per cent. over the corresponding six months of 1990. Crimes of violence increased by 14·6 per cent. over the same period.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* notifiable criminal offences and *(b)* crimes of violence were notified to the police during the last six months of 1979 and of 1991, respectively.

Mr. John Patten: In the last six months of 1979 there were 1,296,570 notifiable offences recorded in England and Wales of which 69,023 were crimes of violence. Information for the last six months of 1991 is not yet available.

Police Manpower

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what number and by what percentage the number of police officers in Leicestershire has altered since May 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At the end of December 1991 police strength in Leicestershire constabulary was 1,808. This is an increase of 107, or 6·3 per cent., since the Government first took office in May 1979.

Press Code of Practice

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to consult the chairman of the Press Complaints Committee on strengthening the code of practice of national newspapers to protect mentally disordered persons from intrusion by the presss; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None. Changes to the code of practice are matters for the newspaper industry to consider. The Government have, however, made it clear that they will review the effectiveness of press self-regulation in the middle of this year.

Poll-Tax (Liability Hearings)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many liability hearings for outstanding poll tax have so far taken place with the defendant present; of these how many *(a)* orders were made or *(b)* no order were made; and what is the status of those not falling into either categories *(a)* or *(b)*.

Mr. John Patten: Information on liability hearings for non-payment of community charge where the defendant was present is available for the period 1 April 1991 to 31 December 1991. During that period the total number of liability hearings conducted where the defendant was present was about 129,000. Liability orders were made in about 107,000 of these hearings. Other information about liability hearings with the defendant present is not collected.

Auto Crime

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many motor vehicles were *(a)* broken into and *(b)* stolen, during the latest year for which figures are available in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: The available information relates to thefts of and from motor vehicles recorded by the police in England and Wales. Provisional figures for 1991 show that there were 582,267 thefts of a motor vehicle and 913,706 thefts from a motor vehicle. These figures were released earlier today in Home Office statistical bulletin 2/92, a copy of which will be available in the Library shortly.

Overseas Voters

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the total cost of establishing and publishing the system of overseas voter registrations.

Mrs. Rumbold: Advertising campaigns to inform British citizens living abroad of their voting rights were undertaken in 1986, when the overseas franchise was introduced by the Representation of the People Act 1985; and in 1990, upon the extension of the qualifying period from five to 20 years, under the Representation of the People Act 1989. The total costs involved were £279,000 and £705,000 respectively. In 1991 a total of £1,400 was spent on updating the posters used in British diplomatic posts abroad.

The costs of the passage of the 1985 and 1989 Acts were largely absorbed within existing provision. Estimates of any additional costs involved could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The cost to local authorities of registering overseas electors under the 1989 Act in 1990 and 1991 is estimated to be £172,000. Estimates for the years 1986 to 1989 are not available.

Police Statistics

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list, in rank order, for each (i) police authority and (ii) county police authority in England, including average figures *(a)* the number of police offices in 1979, *(b)* the number of police offices for the latest year for which figures are available and *(c)* the difference between the two ranking by *(c)*;

(2) if he will list, in rank order, for each *(a)* police authority and *(b)* county police authority in England, including average figures (i) the number of police officers in 1981, (ii) the number of police officers for the latest year for which figures are available and (iii) the difference between the two, ranking by (iii).

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Drugs

Mr. Nelson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what initiative on drugs is being planned to coincide with the United Kingdom presidency of the European Council in the second half of 1992.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: European drug prevention week will take place on 16 to 22 November, and we shall be playing a full and active part. This initiative was proposed by the United Kingdom, and has been taken up by all our EC partners. In the United Kingdom, a wide range of national, regional and local events is being planned with the overall objective of raising awareness of the dangers of drug and solvent misuse, especially among young people.

Life Sentence Prisoners

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has established the order in which existing discretionary life sentence prisoners, who are eligible for consideration under the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, will have their cases considered by the Parole Board; and where the hearings will be held.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The hearings will be held in the establishments in which the prisoners concerned are located. It will be for the Parole Board to decide the order in which cases are heard. To assist it in this task, I will provide the board with a list of those eligible in each establishment in suggested order of priority for hearing. The lists will be prepared on the following basis.

Prisoners due for a review under existing arrangements between now and 1 October, when the new provisions come into force, will be offered the opportunity to defer their reviews so that they can benefit from the new arrangements. Those who opt to defer will be at the top of the list, in original date order.

Next will be any prisoner for whom the Parole Board has previously made a release recommendation which was not accepted. Thereafter, prisoners will be ranked in order of the month in which, under existing procedures, their next Parole Board review would have been due to commence. Where a number of cases rank equally in the same month, account will then be taken of the length of time served past expiry of the tariff period of sentence, with priority being give to those who have been detained longest. If further fine tuning within the same month is necessary, any prisoner who has previously been released on licence, but recalled to prison, will be placed below others who have previously been detained for the same length of time past tariff. Account will also be taken of any compassionate considerations indicating that an early hearing is appropriate.

Police Complaints Authority

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he has made to appoint a successor to Judge Francis Petre as chairman of the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Her Majesty the Queen has approved the appointment of Sir Leonard Peach as chairman of the Police Complaints Authority with effect from 1 August 1992 when the current chairman, Judge Francis Petre, retires on 31 July 1992. I welcome this appointment. Sir Leonard Peach, who served from 1986-89 as chief executive of the NHS management board, is shortly to retire from IBM (UK) Ltd. after a distinguished career.

PRIME MINISTER

Women's Issues

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to alter the present departmental structure for consideration of women's issues.

The Prime Minister: I am currently examining existing departmental responsibilities for women's issues.

Value Added Tax

Dr. Marek: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy not to widen the scope of VAT by introducing a positive rate on those items that are presently zero-rated.

The Prime Minister: The Government have no plans to extend the scope of VAT to any items which are currently zero-rated, and no need to do so.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to meet with non-governmental organisations which specialise in non-proliferation issues to discuss the outcome of the special session of the United Nations Security Council decisions on nuclear non-proliferation agreed in New York on 31 January.

The Prime Minister: I have no specific plans to do so. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is in close touch with non-governmental organisations in this field.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister whether the library at 10 Downing street contains a copy of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish the main points of the agreed United Nations Security Council special session policy to control nuclear proliferation held in New York on 31 January; indicating what plans he has to publicise the strategy agreed on nuclear non-proliferation.

The Prime Minister: The agreed conclusions of the high-level meeting of the Security Council on 31 January are set out in the statement which I made at the time on behalf of all members of the Security Council, and on which I reported to the House on 3 February at columns 21-35. The statement has been published as Security Council document S/23500, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Scotland

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the occasions on which he has officially visited Scotland since he assumed his present office, and the engagements he undertook during those visits.

The Prime Minister: I have made five official visits to Scotland, when I undertook a number of different engagements.

Wales

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the occasions on which he has officially visited Wales since he assumed his present office, and the engagements he has undertaken during those visits.

The Prime Minister I have made one official visit to Wales, when I undertook a number of different engagements.

National Health Service Improvements

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Prime Minister how many letters he has received in the past six months seeking improvements in the national health service.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* I have received many representations on the national health service.

The Government have increased the resources available to the National Health Service with the result that National Health Service spending has risen by 55 per cent. in real terms under this Government and next year National Health Service spending in England will rise to £618 per person, compared with £409 per head—1992-93 prices—in 1979.

The Government's reforms are beginning to deliver improved health care. In 1991-92, the first year of our reforms, the National Health Service is forecast to treat 5·6 per cent. more in-patients and 4·3 per cent. more out-patients than last year.

Libya

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the visit to Libya by Vasily Safranchuk, the United Nations envoy.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 25 February 1992]:* The United Nations Secretary-General has now reported to the Security Council the outcome of Mr. Safronchuk's recent visits to Libya. That report states that Security Council resolution 731 has not yet been complied with. We agree with that assessment. Libya must comply with United Nations Security Council resolution 731 or face further measures.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will state the total funds made available for research into the causes of myalgic encephalomyelitis in the last five years; and how much of this has been for research into the physical causes of myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Mr. Hanley: No grant applications for research into the causes of myalgic encephalomyelitis have been received by the Department of Health and Social Services. However, I understand that in the last five years research at the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast into the physical causes of ME has been supported by grants of approximately £20,000 from the ME Association and other private sources.

Dentistry

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial resources will be made available to the dentistry profession in Northern Ireland to implement the Poswillo report.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) on 5 March, *Official Report,* column *238.*

Heating (Health Problems)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will support and encourage the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and health boards in Northern Ireland jointly to investigate the cause of asthma and repeated chest infections in children and report on the incidence of these health problems in relation to the type of heating installed in homes.

Mr. Hanley: I am not aware of any evidence of a causal link between asthma or other chest infections and any types of home heating and have no immediate plans to instigate such an investigation unless evidence is forthcoming.

Social Security

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each year from 1978-79 to the latest available, the total number of staff administering the social security programme.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Total number of staff*
1984	4,488
1985	4,435
1986	4,508
1987	4,692
1988	4,544
1989	4,470·5
1990	4,352·5
1991-92	4,284

Information prior to 1984 is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Civil Unrest (Compensation)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications for compensation under the scheme of compensation for loss of employment through civil unrest have been rejected since 1970 on the grounds that the applicant had not been employed for two years or more and what percentage of rejected applications such rejections represent.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave him on 3 February 1992 (*Official Report,* Vol. 203, col. 30).

CIVIL SERVICE

Morale

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what new initiatives he intends to introduce to improve morale in the civil service.

Mr. Renton: Our aim is to have an efficient, effective and well-motivated civil service. Managers in Departments and agencies continually work to achieve this.

SCOTLAND

Students' Allowances

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish details of any changes in students' allowances for session 1992-93.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am publishing today the main rates of allowances payable under the postgraduate students' allowances scheme for vocational postgraduate courses which do not attract student loans, together with the rates of various supplementary allowances payable to both undergraduate and vocational postgraduate award holders. The main rates of maintenance allowance for undergraduates will remain frozen at their 1990-91 cash levels following the introduction of student loans.

Details of the new rates have been placed in the Library. The increases in these rates are broadly in line with the 4·5 per cent. increase in the overall provision for student maintenance announced by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Agricultural Scientific Services

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about his plans to establish the agricultural scientific services of the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department as an executive agency.

Mr. Lang: I have decided that, under the "next steps" initiative, the agricultural scientific services will become an executive agency from 1 April 1992. The agency will be called the Scottish Agricultural Science Agency—SASA—and will continue to be part of the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department.

For 1992-93, the first year of operation, I have set the following key performance targets for SASA:

development of a full accruals accounting system by April 1993;

completion of 95 per cent. of all scientific tests and analyses within the timetable set by the customers;

evaluation of quality assurance schemes for all laboratory activities leading to accreditation during 1993-94;

achievement of at least 1½ per cent. efficiency gain;

establishment of base line figures for quantitative indices of performance including (eg unit cost per sample; cost per scientist direct hour; staff utilisation) including the development of a comprehensive work-recording system, leading to an average efficiency gain for these indices of 1½ per cent.;

charges for charged services to be set at full economic cost to achieve full cost recovery; make the progress necessary in the first year to ensure the implementation of full customer-contractor arrangements by 1 April 1994;

by a formalised process, secure the views of all customers on the quality of the work done by end March 1993.

Fish Protection

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will designate more waters under the EC directive for protection or improvement of freshwaters to support fish life.

Mr. Lang: Yes. I have today made arrangements for over 2,300 km of Scottish waters to be added to those already designated for protection or improvement under directive 78/659/EEC. The waters concerned have all been designated as salmonid.

The designations, based on submissions from the river purification boards—RPBs—bring the total length designated in Scotland to 36,577 km. More than three quarters of the total length of all Scottish rivers are now covered, almost 98 per cent of which conform to the directive's provisions. I should like to pay tribute to the RPBs, local authorities and industry for their contribution towards maintaining and improving the quality of these waters.

Natural Heritage Areas

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will issue the statement of the Government's position on the implementation of natural heritage areas in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have written today to Magnus Magnusson, chairman of Scottish Natural Heritage, to send him the text of the Government's statement on the implementation of the natural heritage areas provision, contained in the Scottish Natural Heritage Act 1991, following the period of public consultation last year. In preparing this statement full account was taken of the points made during the passage of the Act, as well as the many views expressed by the public bodies and individuals during the consultation period. A copy of this statement and a summary of the responses to the consultation paper has been placed in the Library of the House.

I am very grateful to all who responded formally to the consultation paper. A wide range of views were expressed. Many showed strong support for the principle of natural heritage areas and for the associated concept of integrated management of areas of outstanding importance to the natural heritage in Scotland. Many respondents agreed that the implementation of the designation should be based where possible on the voluntary principle. There was considerable stress on the importance of ensuring the active involvement of local communities in natural heritage areas. It was also generally agreed that there was a need to influence in many areas sensitive and sustainable land management while taking account of the public desire for access. I am confident that the new designation will provide a suitable and successful framework which will allow Scottish Natural Heritage and others to develop successful partnerships which will safeguard and enhance areas of outstanding importance to the natural heritage of Scotland.

A number of respondents doubted whether the natural heritage area concept alone would be sufficient to protect every area of outstanding natural heritage significance in Scotland. The statement of the Government's position makes plain that such designation should only apply where Scottish Natural Heritage has made a clear case that it will provide an effective mechanism for protection and where the proposal for designation has the backing of the relevant interests. If Scottish Natural Heritage were to advise, after careful examination, that another model of administration is necessary for a particular area, I would give that advice most careful consideration.

Water Quality

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the quality of Scotland's rivers and other surface waters.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A full report of the wate quality survey of Scotland 1990 is being prepared for publication, but I am pleased to announce that a summary has been published today and copies have been placed in the Library. The results of the survey are like a breath of fresh air in the current climate of pollution scare stories.

Hon. Members will be interested to note the main findings of the survey which was carried out by the river purification boards and is the most comprehensive yet undertaken. They are:

the proportion of Scotland's rivers which are "unpolluted" has risen from 94·9 per cent. in 1985 to 97 per cent. in 1990, representing a net increase of 968 km;

there has been a 56 per cent. reduction in the length of "grossly polluted" rivers in Scotland between 1985 and 1990;

there have been significant improvements in the quality of Scotland's estuaries—96·2 per cent. of estuaries and 91·3 per cent. of coastal waters are of a satisfactory quality.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Lindane

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the Advisory Committee on Pesticides will conclude its investigations on lindane.

Mr. Maclean: The Advisory Committee on Pesticides should conclude its investigations on lindane by this autumn.

Investment

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give figures for investment in agriculture for each of the last eight years in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* England.

Mr. Gummer: Estimates of investment in fixed capital in agriculture for the United Kingdom and for England in the last eight years are as follows:

£ million

Year	*United Kingdom*	*England*
1983	1,366	903
1984	1,353	850
1985	1,267	804
1986	1,048	641
1987	968	622
1988	1,125	776
1989	1,123	754
1990	1,182	[1]—

[1] Not yet available.

Experimental Husbandry Farms

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the experimental husbandry farms that have been closed since 1980, giving in each case the date of their closure.

Mr. Gummer: The only experimental husbandry farm to close since 1980 was Great House which closed on 26 May 1982. The experimental husbandry farm at Trawsgoed was transferred to the Agriculture and Food Research Council on 1 April 1991 to form part of the new Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research.

Meat Inspection

Mr. Alison: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to review the levels of charges paid by the meat industry to local authorities for the inspection of fresh meat.

Mr. Gummer: Charges for the inspection of fresh meat, including poultry meat, are levied in accordance with Community legislation intended to harmonise their collection by member states. This legislation is currently under review. In Great Britain, charges are levied by local authorities to recover the costs of the inspection services which they provide; under the new arrangements for meat hygiene enforcement which I have announced today, this work will transfer to the new service when it is established.

In preparation for future discussions on this subject within the Community, and reflecting our concern over existing variation in the levels of charges set by local authorities for the inspection services which they provide, the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales and I have decided to carry out a review of inspection charge levels at a sample of plants in Great Britain. This review will be carried out by the Government in conjunction with independent consultants, and will seek to identify any possible means of reducing inspection costs whilst maintaining existing inspection requirements. It will also seek to collect information relevant to the operation of revised United Kingdom and Community charging arrangements. We intend to publish the results of the review within two months.

Under EC legislation the European Commission was due to submit a report to the Council of Ministers on the operation of the harmonised arrangements in the light of experience acquired before 1 January 1992, accompanied by any proposals for their revision. This report is still awaited and I have written to the Agriculture Commissioner to emphasise the importance which the United Kingdom attaches to this review, in order to achieve conditions of fair competition which have not yet been attained. I have also drawn his attention to some of the charges set by the French Government, which appear not to conform to Community rules. I have written to the French Minister of Agriculture on the same point.

Meat Hygiene

Mr. Alison: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress is being made on future meat hygiene enforcement arrangements.

Mr. Gummer: The review of fresh meat hygiene enforcement was commissioned last year by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Health, for Scotland and for Wales, and myself as part of our preparations for implementing the European single market.

My right hon. Friends and I have given careful consideration to the findings of the detailed study of methods of providing a meat hygiene service, which was carried out by officials of my Department and the Department of Health, assisted by Price Waterhouse. We have concluded that for Great Britain the interests of the meat industry, our consumers and overseas customers would best be served by the creation of a national meat hygiene service. The service would be constituted as an agency of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and would therefore be fully accountable to British Ministers. We are confident that this is the best way of achieving a consistent and cost-effective enforcement service in the special circumstances of the fresh meat sector. Local authorities' responsibilities for enforcing other food legislation are not affected by the decision to create a specialist meat hygiene agency.

Officials will work very closely with the local authority associations, the organisations representing the veterinary and environmental health professions and the meat inspectors, and the meat industry, to ensure a smooth transition to the new arrangements. The date for transfer of responsibility of meat hygiene enforcement to the agency will depend on the availability of parliamentary time for the necessary primary legislation. For the time being, local authorities will remain responsible for enforcing the meat hygiene legislation and providing the meat inspection service.

The decision to create this service is a further element in the Government's policy of ensuring that food safety standards in this country remain second to none. The new service will ensure that hygiene standards in the British meat industry allow it to compete effectively both in the single market and worldwide, and further enhance consumer confidence in the high standards of British meat.

Pesticides

Mr. Hague: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the use of ethylene bisdithiocarbamate pesticides.

Mr. Maclean: The Environmental Protection Agency —EPA—has, I understand, decided to reinstate approval for the use of ethylene bisdithiocarbamate pesticides—EBDCs—on 42 crops. This decision is very much in line with the view we took on this issue over two years ago, based on advice from the independent Advisory Committee on Pesticides—ACP—which was published in January 1990. After an exhaustive examination the committee found no evidence of cancer or other adverse health effects to consumers from the use of EBDCs or from the metabolite ethylenethiourea. I am glad that the EPA has now reached a similar conclusion. This is a further vindication of work carried out by the ACP and reinforces the confidence the public should have in the effectiveness of the United Kingdom system for approving pesticides.

Fishing Vessel Licences

Mr. Harris: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the new rules applying to the aggregation and transfer of fishing vessel licences, and to the licensees of vessels of 10 m registered length and below.

Mr. Gummer: The required reduction in capacity where fishing vessel licences are aggregated is increased with immediate effect from 10 to 20 per cent. In addition all transfers of single licences between vessels are now subject to a 20 per cent. reduction in capacity. The formula for calculating vessel capacity remains unchanged. Fisheries Departments are writing to fishing organisations notifying them of the change and seeking views as to whether these reductions should be varied, for instance, according to type and/or age of vessel.

These rules apply to all new applications. Applications for transfers or aggregations lodged with Fisheries Departments on or before 27 February will be dealt with under the rules in force at the time.

In addition, from 1 January 1993 all vessels of 10 m and below wishing to fish for sea fish for profit will require a licence. However, fishing for salmon or migratory trout and fishing by vessels used wholly for the purpose of conveying persons wishing to fish for pleasure with rod and line and by hand line will continue to be exempt from this requirement. Licences will in principle be issued only to vessels which are already actively involved in fishing. This will be assessed by reference to whether the vessel was registered under part II of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 on 27 February 1992, the date of my original announcement, and whether it was fishing for profit in the preceding 12 months. Fisheries Departments will be consulting the industry about the detailed operation of these rules, including their application to replacement vessels, and about other matters arising from the licensing of this part of the fleet.

Correspondence

Sir Robin Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a full reply will be sent by his Department to the letters dated 26 November and 18 December from Cheriton Bishop parish council to his divisional veterinary officer at Exeter, and passed by him to his London headquarters.

Mr. Maclean: The Ministry's regional veterinary officer did discuss the matters raised in this correspondence with the clerk of the parish council. However, I concede that an unacceptable delay has occurred in concluding this correspondence, because the papers were lost. This is an unusual occurrence for which I apologise. The omission had in fact been noticed when the parish council recently wrote to the Prime Minister, myself and others and a repy covering the points raised in all these letters will be sent shortly.

TRANSPORT

Network Express

16. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with British Rail concerning the ordering of the Network Express trains for the Kent coast services.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend and I meet the chairman of British Rail regularly when we discuss all current issues.

30. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the new Networker rolling stock to be supplied for the north-west Kent commuter service is still scheduled for introduction from April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The first Networker units delivered to network SouthEast are currently undergoing testing. NSE expects to introduce some Networkers into service with the May timetable.

Roads, London

17. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with local authorities and service providers about the state of roads in London.

Mr. Chope: I chair the London Consultative Committee which provides a forum to discuss road and traffic issues with the London local authority associations. The committee last met on 6 February 1992.

M66

18. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress on the M66 from Denton to Middleton.

Mr. Chope: I expect work on the first construction contract at the the northern end of the scheme to start early next year, subject to resources being available. A public inquiry into revised orders and compulsory purchase order for the central and southern sections of the scheme ended on 5 February. Subject to a satisfactory outcome, I expect work to start on the Tameside section south of the River Medlock next year and on the final section north of the River Medlock in 1995.

BR Maintenance Repairs

19. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from organisations concerning the disruption to other transport users and pedestrians by British Rail when carrying out maintenance repairs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I am aware from British Rail that a bridge renewal scheme in the hon. Member's constituency has led to a petition from local residents about the disruption to bus services. British Rail consults highway authorities and the police where road closures and diversions are needed. In this case, I understand that BR has also recently agreed to pay for extra bussing while the bridge is closed for three weeks.

Underground Proposals

20. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made in developing proposals to extend the tube network to Camberwell, Dulwich and beyond.

Mr. Freeman: London Transport and the five London boroughs directly affected are working together on the south London rail study. I understand that phase I of the study, which looks at the transport needs of the area, is now close to completion. Phase II, which will look at the case for extending underground lines, should start later this year.

Pensioners' Travel Concessions

21. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what financial arrangements are being made with the transport authorities in the west midlands to ensure that pensioners can continue to use their travel concessions at all times of the day and without additional costs to them.

Mr. McLoughlin: The responsibility for concessionary fares schemes in the west midlands lies entirely with the passenger transport authority and the district councils. It is for them to decide what level of concessions is appropriate in relation to other local spending priorities.

Buses, London

22. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much capital investment has been made in London Buses Ltd. in 1991-92.

Mr. Freeman: Capital investment in London Buses Ltd. is expected to reach £38 million in 1991-92, an increase of £10 million over the previous year. Of this, some £24 million will be spent on purchasing almost 300 new buses.

27. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many double-decker buses, how many hoppa buses and how many buses of other types are currently licensed for use in the metropolis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: London Buses Ltd.'s vehicle fleet is made up as follows: 3,705 double-deckers, 991 midibuses and 154 single deckers and coaches. There are vehicles other than those owned by London Buses Ltd. which operate bus services in London: for example, vehicles owned by private bus operators running services under contract to London Transport or on London local service licences. Information on the number and types of those vehicles is not held centrally.

Train Builders

23. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what encouragement he intends to give to British train builders to develop new techniques and services for British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced on 21 February a £15 million collaborative research programme for the railway equipment industry. The programme will operate in close co-operation with the Department of Transport and other interested parties.

Freight Transport

24. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that more freight is transferred from road to rail and that the freight passes round rather than through London.

Mr. McLoughlin: We are actively supporting BR's participation in joint ventures with the private sector; paving the way for liberalisation of access to the rail network to widen customer choice; backing investment for BR's new channel tunnel services; and encouraging companies to take advantage of freight facilities grants. The routeing of freight services is a matter for British Rail.

Bypasses

25. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the number of bypasses commenced in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Chope: In 1990-91, 21 bypasses, 93 miles in length, were started. It is expected that a further 13 bypasses, 33 miles in length, will have been started by the end of March 1992. In addition to these schemes, there were 34 other scheme starts in 1990-91 and 34 planned for 1991-92. Although not described as bypasses, most of these relieve one or more communities of through traffic. For example, the 13-mile long A30 Okehampton-Launceston improvement will benefit a number of villages on the existing trunk road.

Speed Limits (Commercial Vehicles)

26. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in the Council of Ministers towards agreeing speed limits for commercial vehicles.

Mr. Chope: The Commission made a proposal in 1988 to harmonise vehicle speed limits in the European Community, but it has not been discussed in the Council. A directive agreed at the Transport Council on 16 December 1991 will set a maximum speed for EC-registered heavy goods vehicles over 12 tonnes. The setting of speed limits will remain, however, a national responsibility.

Multi-airline Business

28. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of implementing a competitive multi-airline business in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: The United Kingdom has a large number of airlines which operate in a very competitive market. This has been aided by the United Kingdom's liberal licensing policies. The Government are seeking to ensure that the new European Community licensing regime, which will come into force throughout the EC as part of the single market, is as liberal as possible. The Government believe that this is the best way to bring about a market in which a range of airlines can compete and thus meet effectively the needs of consumers.

New Road

29. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of new road have been opened since 1979.

Mr. Chope: A total of 1,250 miles of new road has opened between April 1979 and December 1991, including 840 miles of trunk road and 410 miles of motorway.

Roads Programme

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of the roads programme involves expanding capacity on existing routes.

Mr. Rifkind: Over 90 per cent. of the roads programme covers projects which are either bypasses or involve the improvement of existing roads.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what amount of public money was spent on motorway trunk road construction in 1990-91.

Mr. Chope: Expenditure on construction of motorways and trunk roads in England during 1990-91 was £1,281 million.

Central European Time

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department has undertaken on the potential effect on the number of road accidents if the United Kingdom were to move to central European time.

Mr. Chope: The research carried out by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory is referred to in "Summer Time: A Consultation Document", Cm 722, June 1989.

Transatlantic Air Services

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he discussed transatlantic services between Birmingham and the east coast of the United States at the bilateral talks between the United States Administration and Her Majesty's Government in connection with transatlantic air services.

Mr. McLoughlin: The interests of Birmingham and other regional airports are very much borne in mind as we pursue our negotiations with the Americans. The recent round of discussions covered the possibilities for opening up additional opportunities for both sides, including new routes, without going into the detail of specific services at this stage.

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the bilateral talks between the United States Administration and Her Majesty's Government in connection with transatlantic air services.

Mr. McLoughlin: Discussions with the United States Government are continuing about the possibilities for the liberalisation of transatlantic air services. Our aim is to remove obstacles to fair competition between airlines, and to remove unnecessary regulation.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the total cost of strengthening roads and bridges from 1999, following implemention of EC regulations to allow 44-tonne heavy goods vehicles on United Kingdom roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Department has an existing 15-year programme of bridge rehabilitation for trunk roads and motorways, which commenced in 1987-88. The programme includes the assessment and where necessary strengthening of bridges and other structures, to deal with shortfalls in existing bridge strengths which have occurred as a result of the increased loading from and density of heavy traffic since the bridges were designed, and to get ready for heavier axle weights in 1999. The Department is also funding corresponding activities by local authorities in respect of their own bridges. Similar programmes exist in respect of the bridge stock owned by British Rail, British Waterways Board and London Underground Ltd. Expenditure after 1999 will depend on the progress with these programmes.

Pavement wear after 1999 will depend on the growth of heavy goods vehicles, the extent of changes in the composition of the goods vehicle fleet including the take up of 44-tonne vehicles and whether 44-tonne vehicles are equipped with five or six axles.

Construction Companies (Contracts)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the construction companies awarded contracts worth over £250,000 by his Department since 1 April 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Since 1 April 1991 the following companies have been awarded works contracts valued at £250,000 or more:

A. R. C. Ltd.
Amey Construction Ltd.
Armstrong Addison and Co. Ltd.
T. Armstrong (Construction) Ltd.
Associated Asphalt Co. Ltd.
Balfour Beatty Ltd.
Birse Construction Ltd.
Henry Boot Northern Ltd.
Henry Boot Southern Ltd.
Bovis Construction Ltd.
A. F. Budge (Contractors) Ltd.
C. M. R. Electronics Ltd.
Cambridgeshire Construction Ltd.

P. J. Carey (Contractors) Ltd.
Cementation Construction Ltd.
Colas Roads Ltd.
Costain Civil Engineering Ltd.
Cumbrian Industrials Ltd.
Currall Lewis and Martin Ltd.
R. M. Douglas (Construction) Ltd.
Eden Construction Ltd.
Exploration Associates Ltd.
Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd.
Fitzpatrick Contractors Ltd.
Galliford (UK) Ltd.
The Glacier Metal Co. Ltd.
M. J. Gleeson Group plc.
Hargreaves Quarries Ltd.
Kier Construction Ltd.
Kimbell Construction Ltd.
John Laing Construction.
Lilley Construction Ltd.
Alfred McAlpine Construction Ltd.
Alfred McAlpine Quarry Products Ltd.
Sir Robert McAlpine and Sons Ltd.
H. W. Martin (Safety Fencing) Ltd.
May Gurney and Co. Ltd.
Midland Oak Construction Ltd.
Miller Construction Ltd.
Monk Construction Ltd.
Morrison Shand Construction Ltd.
John Mowlem Construction plc
Norwest Holst Construction Ltd.
Norwest Holst Soil Engineering Ltd.
Edmund Nuttall Ltd.
Peek Traffic Ltd.
Pirelli Construction Co. Ltd.
Prismo Ltd.
Protek Fencing Ltd.
Rawlings Brothers (EP) Ltd.
Redland Aggregates Ltd.
Rees Hough Ltd.
Remsdaq Ltd.
Ringway Ltd.
Roadstone Surface Dressing Ltd.
Roadworks (1952) Ltd.
Rochford Tree Landscapes Ltd.
S. I. A. C. Construction Ltd.
Serco Ltd.
Shephard Hill Civil Engineering Ltd.
Stenoak Fencing and Construction Ltd.
Surrey Operational Services Ltd.
Tarmac Construction Ltd.
Tarmac Quarry Products Ltd.
T. Taziker and Co. Ltd.
Tilcon Ltd.
W. and H. (Roads) Ltd.
Walcon Construction Ltd.
Thomas W. Ward (Roadstone) Ltd.
R. and C. Williams Ltd.
Wimpey Asphalt Ltd.
Wimpey Geotech Ltd.
Wimpey Hobbs Ltd.
Wrekin Construction Co. Ltd.

Autoguide Traffic System

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what deadline he has given to the current licensee for the introduction of an autoguide traffic direction system;

(2) when he expects the pilot scheme for the introduction of the autoguide traffic direction system to become operational in London.

Mr. Chope: My Department is reviewing the situation in the light of extensive developments in relevant technology.

Hazardous Chemicals

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has concerning the number of incidents in which accidents have led to the leakage of hazardous chemicals when being transported by *(a)* roads and *(b)* railways; what were the respective volume of chemicals carried and distances travelled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Information on incidents is available in the recently published Health and Safety Commission advisory committee on dangerous substances report on major hazard aspects of the transport of dangerous substances, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice is given by his Department on the use of railways or roads for the movement of hazardous chemicals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Consignors of dangerous substances are free to choose the mode of transport most appropriate for their needs, provided that they comply with the relevant safety requirements. There is no evidence that one mode of transport is generally safer than another.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assistance is given by his Department to companies producing hazardous chemicals towards the cost of constructing and maintaining rail terminals to enable them more easily to move their products by rail.

Mr. Mcloughlin: Freight facilities grants are available under section 8 of the Raiways Act 1974 to assist with the capital cost of rail freight facilities where there is a significant benefit to the environment through the removal of lorries from sensitive roads. They are payable where, without grant, the commercial decision would be to use road transport and are available for any type of goods.

Trust Ports

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about implementation of the Ports Act 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement my right hon. and learned Friend made earlier today.

Ashford International Station

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress with the study of the options for an international passenger station at Ashford.

Mr. Rifkind: British Rail has completed its preliminary study of the options for a less costly international passenger station than its original proposal. I consider that a central Ashford option best meets the various objectives. I have accordingly invited Sir Bob Reid to put forward a full investment submission for a central Ashford international passenger station to share the site of the present Network SouthEast station.

British Rail Station Car Parks

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps the Government are taking to encourage the involvement of private sector firms in the management and security of British Rail station car parks.

Mr. Freeman: The Government have requested the British Rail board to explore the possibility of contracting out more of its support functions. A number of station car parks within the Network SouthEast area are already privately managed. I am asking British Rail to consider the feasibility of contracting out responsibility for the provision of other station car parking facilities.

St. Pancras Chambers

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the future of St. Pancras Chambers.

Mr. Freeman: The long term use of St. Pancras Chambers, the grade I listed former Midland Grand hotel, has been under review by British Rail, whose preferred solution is to return the building to use as a high-quality hotel, but no options are ruled out. British Rail is exploring options with private sector involvement.

British Rail considers that it is unlikely that the full commercial potential of the building can be realised until the benefits resulting from the works included in the King's Cross Railways Bill and the associated lands development scheme are completed. During the interim period British Rail is therefore examining possible alternative uses.

As a first step in the overall programme there is a need to undertake extensive works to stabilise both the interior and exterior of the building and ensure that it remains in a safe condition. Following a very detailed survey by specialist architects, British Rail is therefore shortly to embark on a major programme of remedial works.

Full consultation with the local authority and appropriate heritage bodies have commenced. Provision of the necessary funds for this work is already covered by the external finance provision made by the Government for British Rail. This work will take about two years to complete, and during that time British Rail will keep options for both short and long term under review.

Her Majesty's Coastguard

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will announce his decision on the proposed definition of the primary role of Her Majesty's Coastguard as recommended in the coastal review.

Mr. McLoughlin: Following consultations with the other authorities concerned, I have accepted the recommendation of the coastal review that the role of Her Majesty's coastguard need to be clearly defined and formally promulgated.

Accordingly, by the authority given to the Secretary of State by the Coastguard Act 1925 my right hon. and learned Friend has agreed that:

> "Her Majesty's Coastguard is responsible for the initiation and co-ordination of civil maritime search and rescue within the United Kingdom search and rescue region. This includes the mobilisation, organisation and tasking of adequate resources to respond to persons either in distress at sea, or to persons at risk of injury or death on the cliffs or shoreline of the United Kingdom."

In view of the importance of the cliff and shoreline task, particularly in holiday areas, I have instructed the Chief Coastguard to liaise with the police authorities to set up local coastal search and rescue committees to provide a consultative body to consider the co-ordination problems on the shoreline, improve liaison between the interested authorities concerned and to assess the availability and readiness of rescue resources. Additionally, coastguard sector officers are to be formally tasked to establish regular meetings with local community representatives to ensure that matters of concern involving marine or shoreline search and rescue are fully aired and brought to the attention of the search and rescue committee.

Drivers (Sleep)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his officials will hold discussions with Professor Jim Horne of Loughborough university on the dangers of sleep among drivers on motorways.

Mr. Chope: My officials were present on 3 March when Professor Horne gave a presentation of his work on this subject to the transport committee of the Medical Commission on Accident Prevention.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those parts of his Department, including executive agencies, carrying out reviews over the last 12 months into the pay and grading of staff, and the firm of consultants engaged, where appropriate.

Mr. Maples: There have been no pay and grading reviews of any part of my Department in the last 12 months.

Third-world Countries (Debt)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what extent he is prepared to cancel rather than reschedule debts of third-world countries.

Mr. Maples: The Government have consistently taken the lead in developing an international strategy to tackle the debt problems of the poorest countries. Many of the poorest countries with the heaviest debt burdens can never realistically be expected to pay back their debts, and in these cases the Government believe that a substantial degree of debt cancellation is the only way forward. The Prime Minister's Trinidad terms initiative, launched in September 1990, proposed cancellation by all creditors of around two thirds of the whole stock of debt of eligible countries. The Paris club of creditor countries began implementing Trinidad terms in December 1991, and the United Kingdom is continuing to press for their full implementation by all creditors.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make the Trinidad terms available to all low-income countries and all lower middle income countries with debt problems.

Mr. Maples: No. Trinidad terms are specifically designed to address the debt problems of the poorest and most heavily indebted countries.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take action to address the whole stock of debt of third-world countries.

Mr. Maples: In cases where a country's inability to meet its debt servicing obligations arises from a temporary liquidity problem, it is neither necessary nor appropriate to offer relief on the whole stock of that country's debt. In certain more difficult cases, however, the Government believe that restructuring the debt stock represents the best approach to resolving that country's debt problem once and for all. This applies in particular to the poorest and most heavily indebted countries, and the Government hope that, in accordance with the new Paris club agreements implementing Trinidad terms, stock of debt reductions can be agreed for these countries within the next few years.

Tax Yield (Benefits)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the tax yield from each of the taxable benefits, and the total, for each year from 1978-79 to the latest available at current and at 1991-92 prices.

Mr. Maude: Available estimates are published in table 9.6 of the 1989 and 1991 editions of the "United Kingdom National Accounts"—the CSO Blue Book, which provide calendar year estimates of total income tax on social security benefits, applying the recipients' average rate of income tax on the whole of their income to the amount of benefits received. These amounts are shown in the table at current and 1991-92 prices.

Tax yield on social security benefits

	Current prices £ million	*1991-92 prices £ million*
1978	383	1,035
1979	441	1,048
1980	537	1,082
1981	703	1,267
1982	936	1,554
1983	1,038	1,646
1984	1,070	1,617
1985	1,107	1,577
1986	1,206	1,662
1987	1,213	1,605
1988	1,143	1,441
1989	1,128	1,320
1990	1,167	1,248

Employment Statistics

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current ratio of women to men in senior civil service posts and the corresponding position in 1979.

Mr. Maples: At grade levels 1 to 7 in the home civil service the proportion of women has increased from 7 per cent. in 1984 to 12·1 per cent. in 1991. Because of the changes that have taken place in the grade structure of the civil service comparable data before 1984 are not available.

Trade Unions

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make it his policy to consult civil service trade unions where decisions are taken affecting the employment of civil servants.

Mr. Maples: The Government already have a longstanding policy of consulting recognised Civil Service trade unions on decisions directly affecting the employment of civil servants.

North Sea Oil and Gas

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the amount of revenue received from North sea oil and gas for each year since 1979; and if he will forecast the revenue for the next decade.

Mr. Maude: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) on 18 December 1991, at column *165*, for annual revenues from the North sea since 1979-80. Available forecasts of future revenues will be included in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" to be issued on Budget day.

Cross-border Transport

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what customs and excise arrangements for cross-border transport will prevail after 1 January 1993.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In the United Kingdom frontier formalities will be removed for EC traffic from 1 January 1993. Regulatory and fiscal controls such as import licensing and the collection of duties and taxes will not be conducted at the frontier. The extensive documentation required for commercial importations of goods will therefore be abolished. However, customs will continue to conduct sharply focused anti-smuggling spot checks to detect illicit drugs and other serious threats to society. These measures, conducted on the basis of risk assessment, intelligence and profiling, will remain an essential part of an integrated law enforcement effort throughout the United Kingdom. This will apply to the Northern Ireland land boundary as well as to all other intra-EC points of entry to and exit from the United Kingdom.

Customs Station, Newry

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has for the future use of the current customs station site at Carnbane industrial estate, Newry.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise have decided to relocate certain administrative VAT work to a new unit which will employ around 100 staff at the current customs station site at Damolly—Carnbane industrial estate—Newry.

Illicit Drugs

Mr. Gale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give, by volume and street value, the quantity of illicit drugs intercepted at United Kingdom *(a)* airports and *(b)* seaports by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise during the 12 months ended 29 February.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is as follows:

	Kilos		
	Airports	*Seaports*	*Value £ million*
Amphetamine	16·3	342·7	29·5
Cannabis (Herbal)	1,004·5	2,972·3	9·5
Cannabis (Resin)	168·5	12,499·6	38·0

	Kilos *Airports*	*Seaports*	*Value £ million*
Cocaine	322·6	139·7	60·3
Diamorphine (Heroin)	155·0	92·5	27·7
Total			165·0

Notes:

1. Figures are for main types of drug.
2. Figures in respect of the latest 2 months are provisional.
3. Amphetamine figure includes 283 kilos of MDA (a derivative of MDMA which is known colloquially as "Ecstasy").
4. Value of Cocaine is taken at 72·5 per cent. purity (the average at importation).
5. Value for Diamorphine (Heroin) is taken at 52·5 per cent. purity (the average at importation).
6. Figures include drugs detected at sea/airports but allowed to "run" and subsequently intercepted inland in follow up operations.

Business Registers

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to improve the business registers used for the collection of economic statistics.

Mr. Maples: Following the specific recommendation of the Armstrong/Rees review of DTI statistics in 1989 and the completion of a successful pilot study in 1991, a new interdepartmental business register is to be developed by the Central Statistical Office and the Department of Employment. This project is an integral part of the programme of measures designed to bring about improvements in economic statistics.

The new register will be more comprehensive in coverage and designed to eliminate the differences between the existing separate registers of the two Departments. Its use will lead to improvements in the quality of data obtained from businesses which form the basis of a wide range of economic statistics series. Most of these series should benefit, especially those concerned with employment and productivity estimates. In addition there will be indirect benefits to the national accounts, focusing on the output measure of gross domestic product.

The development cost of the project is expected to be £4·3 million and the new integrated register should come into use in 1993 for Northern Ireland inquiries and in 1994 for Great Britain inquiries.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the estimated cost of replacing the existing capital expenditure allowance rates by straight line rates of *(a)* year one-33⅓ per cent., year two-33⅓ per cent., year three-33⅓ per cent. and *(b)* year one-25 per cent., year two-25 per cent., year three-25 per cent., year four-25 per cent., if the levels of capital expenditure and business profits (1) stayed constant, (2) increased by 10 per cent. and (3) increased by 50 per cent.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* Maximum estimates of the annual Exchequer costs of the proposed rates for new capital expenditure on plant and machinery are:

£ billions

Assumed changed in capital expenditure and profits Percentage	*Straight line allowance at:* *33⅓ per cent.*	*25 per cent.*
0	2·7	2·0
+ 10	2·9	2·2
+ 50	4·0	3·0

Estimates are very approximate because the precise costs would depend on the interaction of several factors.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Scottish Grand Committee

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many official visits he has made to Scotland to examine and discuss the operation of the Scottish Grand Committee.

Mr. MacGregor: I have not made any official trips to Scotland about the specific matter of the Scottish Grand Committee, but I have frequent discussions with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland about the operation of that Committee. The hon. Gentleman will know that the Committee has met twice recently, once in Edinburgh on Monday 24 February and once in Westminster, just last Thursday.

Sittings of the House

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Lord President of the Council what action he proposes to take in the light of the debate on sittings of the House on 2 March.

Mr. MacGregor: As I said on Monday 2 March during the debate on the report by the Select Committee on Sittings of the House, I welcome much in the report, but I believe it best if further action was left to the new Parliament.

Press Car Parking Spaces

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what representations he has received about the number of car parking spaces allocated to members of the press in House of Commons car parks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Orme: None.

Communications Security

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what steps are taken to ensure that hon. Members' telephone and fax communications from the House are secure.

Mr. Orme: Apart from standard procedures for maintaining security within the Palace, I understand that no special arrangements are made to monitor the privacy of telecommunications equipment or messages within the House. The House authorities have no control over the public telecommunications network.

WALES

National Health Service Units (Day Cases)

Mr. Grist: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many day cases were dealt with in national health service units in Wales in 1978-79 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: In the financial year 1978-79 there were 26,456 day cases treated by the National Health Service in Wales. The equivalent figure for the financial year 1990-91—the latest available—was 100,765, an increase of 281 per cent.

National Health Service Employees

Mr. Grist: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* consultants, *(b)* senior registrars, *(c)* registrars, *(d)* general practitioners and *(e)* dental practitioners were employed in Wales by the national health service in 1978-79 and at latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The requested information is given in the table:

	1978	*1990*	*1991*	*Increase per cent.*
Consultants[1]	630·5	856·5	[4]—	36
Senior Registrars[1]	100·9	145·7	[4]—	44
Registrars[1]	329·5	370·1	[4]—	12
General Medical Practitioners[2]	1,323		1,634	24
General Dental Practitioners[3]	598		832	39

[1] Whole-time equivalent of hospital medical and dental staff in post as at 30 September.

[2] Number of unrestricted principles as at 1 October 1978 and 1 April 1991.

[3] Number of principals and assistants as at 30 September.

[4] Not available.

Mr. Rod Richards

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *34*, if he will specify the month in which Mr. Rod Richards commenced employment and the month in which he ceased employment as his political adviser..

Mr. David Hunt: Mr. Richards was employed as my special adviser between 5 November and 14 December 1990.

Helicopters (Ministerial Use)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the annual cost of the ministerial use of helicopters in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on 18 June 1991.

Mental Handicap Strategy

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is yet in a position to publish his firm proposals for the future of the all Wales mental handicap strategy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I am today publishing my firm decisions on the future of the all Wales strategy which will be re-launched at the end of its first 10-year term in April 1993. A copy of my decisions has been sent today to all Welsh MPs and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House. The special allocations that my Department makes to help support the strategy will total £41·5 million for 1992-93. This represents an increase of over 20 per cent. on the £34·2 million allocated in 1991-92, which in itself was almost double the 1989-90 allocation of £18·3 million.

The strategy has already helped to improve the lives of many people with mental handicaps and their families. For example, when the strategy was launched in 1983, only 41 families were receiving support in their own homes whereas today well over 3,000 receive these services; today over 1,000 adults with mental handicap live in homes of their own compared to 166 people in 1983. I am confident that my proposals for the future of the all Wales mental handicap strategy, as part of our wider "Caring for People" reforms, will provide the right foundation for the development of top quality services throughout Wales into the 21st century.

Unitary Authorities

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give an estimate of the savings that could be provided by moving to a single tier of unitary authorities in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: My proposal for a structure of 23 unitary authorities is estimated to be cost-neutral.

Welsh Assembly

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give a detailed estimate of the cost of setting up and running a Welsh assembly consisting of 76 members.

Mr. David Hunt: Current proposals for an elected assembly in Wales are unspecific. However, extrapolating from earlier figures in the 1975 White Paper, Cmnd. 6348, "Our Changing Democracy", I estimate that costs would be in order of £50 million.

Agricultural Investment

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give figures for the investment in agriculture in Wales in each of the last eight years.

Mr. David Hunt: Total identifiable public expenditure on agriculture in Wales since 1984 is

Year	*Total capital grants and livestock subsidies*	*Total Government contributions*	*Government contribution as percentage of total*
1984	59·9	31·2	52·1
1985	70·2	28·8	41·0
1986	62·4	29·6	47·4
1987	71·7	31·1	43·4
1988	73·0	31·5	43·2
1989	80·7	32·5	40·3
1990	101·2	34·6	34·2
1991	132·6	38·4	29·0

Departmental Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many residential properties owned by his Department are *(a)* empty, *(b)* for sale on the open market, *(c)* intended for sale on the open market and *(d)* for sale to housing associations, in terms of numbers and percentage of stock.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* The latest information available relates to 1 April 1991.

	Properties owned by the Welsh Office	*(Percentage of stock)*
Total number of properties	4,956	—
Total number empty	458	9·24
Total for sale on open market[1]	Not known	—
Total intended for sale on open market[1]	Not known	—
Total for sale to housing associations[1]	Not known	—

[1] This information is not available centrally.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pension Funds

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will bring forward legislation to ensure that pension funds do not have an accounting period in excess of 12 months.

Miss Widdecombe: Occupational pension scheme trustees have a statutory obligation to obtain annually, and to make available to members and beneficiaries, audited accounts in respect of each scheme year. The scheme year must be a period of 12 months, other than exceptionally where the scheme changes its accounting year. Draft regulations tightening the present arrangements have already been considered by the Occupational Pensions Board and will be introduced as quickly as possible.

Tax Withdrawal Rates

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the number of working heads, *(b)* dependants and *(c)* families with children facing marginal tax and benefit withdrawal rates in excess of 50 per cent. in the manner of his answer of 23 January, *Official Report*, column *248*, to the hon. Member for Hornchurch.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is in the table.

Numbers with marginal deduction rates within each range (thousands) Great Britain

Per cent.	*Families with children*	*Couples and single*	*Total*
100	0	0	0
90 to 99	55	0	55
80 to 89	130	20	150
70 to 79	140	55	195
60 to 69	0	5	5
50 to 59	0	0	0

Figures are based on pooled family expenditure survey data, uprated to 1991-92 prices, taxes and benefit levels.

Calculated for benefit units in receipt of income-related benefits where at least one partner works 24 hours a week of more. Figures are rounded to the nearest 5,000. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Earnings

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women in each region earn (i) above and (ii) below the national insurance lower earnings limit; and how many are between the lower earnings limits and the upper earnings limit, in Great Britain.

Mr. Jack: Figures are not available for each region in England. Such information as is available is in the table.

Numbers of people earning:[1]

	Less than the Lower Earnings Limit million	*Between the Lower and Upper Earnings Limit million*	*Above the Upper Earnings Limit million*
England			
Men	0·7	7·0	2·3
Women	2·0	6·6	0·4
Wales			
Men	Negligible[1]	0·4	0·1
Women	0·1	0·3	Negligible[1]
Scotland			
Men	0·1	0·8	0·2
Women	0·2	0·7	Negligible[1]
Great Britain			
Men	0·8	8·2	2·6
Women	2·3	7·6	0·4

[1] Figures shown in the table have been rounded.

Expenditure

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give, for the years 1979-80, and the latest available, in cash terms and at 1991-92 prices, social security spending on (1) elderly people, (2) sick and disabled people, (3) families, (4) unemployed people and (5) widows and orphans, indicating the numbers of claimants in each category, and dependants in the houshold, and the percentage increase in spending in real terms.

Miss Widdecombe: Details of expenditure as shown in the table.

Information on the numbers of claimants and their dependants in each category is not available, since claimants may receive more than one benefit at any one time.

	1979-80 cash (£ million)	*1979-80 at 1991-92 prices (£ million)*	*1991-92 cash (£ million)*	*Real terms percentage increase*
Elderly people	10,130	23,554	31,446	33·5
Sick and disabled people	2,779	6,460	13,333	106·4
—short-term sick	680	1,581	1,079	−31·8

	1979-80 cash (£ million)	*1979-80 at 1991-92 prices (£ million)*	*1991-92 cash (£ million)*	*Real terms percentage increase*
—long-term sick and disabled	2,099	4,879	12,254	151·2
Families	3,640	8,463	11,492	35·8
Unemployed people	1,470	3,418	7,362	115·4
Widows and others	760	1,767	1,364	−22·8

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the latest estimate of the cost of benefits to the unemployed, administration of unemployment benefit, and redundancy payments for 1991-92.

Mr. Jack: Benefit expenditure on unemployed people is expected to be £7,360 million in 1991-92. The cost of administering unemployment benefit in 1990-91, the latest year for which figures are available, was £182 million. For other benefits it is not possible to identify separately the administration costs attributable to unemployed people. The administration of redundancy fund payments is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, but I am advised that in 1991-92 they are expected to total £126·9 million.

Fraud Investigations

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many home visits, excluding specialist visits, including those for the purposes of investigating suspected fraud, were made per 1,000 claimants for the latest available year; and how many were made in 1978-79 in Great Britain.

Mr. Jack: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Local Offices

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of claimants for each individual benefit at each of his Department's office covering the Tooting constituency as of 31 January.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Ombudsman

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update the table given in his answer of 2 April 1990, *Official Report*, column *497*, to the hon. Member for Gower (Sir A. Meyer) about the number of complaints made against his Department to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration.

Miss Widdecombe: Information for the latest years for which figures are available is in the table.

Complaints against the Department of Social Security

	Complaints[1] made	*Complaints[1] upheld*
1990	200	38
1989	223	36

[1] *Source:* Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration annual reports 1989-90.

Claimants, Wandsworth

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest figures for the London borough of Wandsworth for the number of claims for *(a)* housing benefit, *(b)* income support and *(c)* family credit.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available, and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Claimant Welfare

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will introduce legislation to reinstate the requirement on his Department's officers to promote the welfare of claimants.

Miss Widdecombe: The welfare promotion requirement which was appropriate to the discretionary schemes which preceded it was not essential to income support which provides a clearer, more predictable method of directing extra help, through the award of premiums, to groups of people most likely to have extra needs. The Department was thus able to develop a prompt, accurate and effectively-run income maintenance system. The Benefits Agency includes customer care as the primary core value in its operations. At a local level, managers are committed to consulting their customers to establish their needs and expectations for service delivery and responding accordingly. We have no plans to alter the current provisions.

Departmental Offices (Interviews)

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what warning is given to clients by Department of Social Services offices and benefit agencies about the consequences of failure to attend an appointment; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of social security benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy on suspension of benefit for clients who are unable to attend interviews with Department of Social Services offices or benefit agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Under regulation 37 of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987, benefit may be suspended when a question arises as to whether the claimant continues to be entitled to benefit; whether the award should be revised; or whether an appeal to a higher appellate body ought to be brought against an award made by an appeal tribunal. The decision to suspend should always be made in the light of the circumstances of the individual case.

Suspension will not normally be appropriate when a claimant fails to attend an interview at an office of the Department. However, where facts are known that indicate that an award ought to be revised or terminated and the interview is intended to allow the claimant to provide evidence as to continuing entitlement, suspension of some or all of the award may be appropriate.

Pension Rebates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security pursuant to his statement on the contracting-out rebate on 27 February, *Official Report*, column 1131, if he will give, for men and women separately, the age at which it would be wise to opt back into the state earnings-related pension scheme after April 1993 assuming *(a)* a 4·8 per cent. rebate and *(b)* a 4·8 per cent. rebate and a one per cent. age related rebate for the over-30s.

Miss Widdecombe: The circumstances of the person concerned and the precise terms of the personal pension contract they are considering will vary from one individual to another. It is not possible to give the general advice requested. In the case of personal pension schemes which are investments as defined in the Financial Services Act 1986, persons regulated by bodies under that Act have a duty to provide best advice on such products. Anyone wishing to establish his or her own position should seek advice appropriate to their needs.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security pursuant to his statement on the contracting-out rebate for 1993 on 27 February, *Official Report*, column 1131, if he will give, for each year covered by the statement, the cost in reduced revenue to the national insurance fund on *(a)* the 4·8 per cent. rebate and *(b)* the age-related 1 per cent. incentive, at 1991-92 prices.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is given in the table which recognises the time-lag in the payment to providers of the amounts in respect of personal pensions and the cost to the national insurance fund appears in the year following that in which contributions are paid.

The information requested is given in 1991-92 prices.

£ billion

	1993-94	*1994-95*	*1995-96*	*1996-97*
4·8 per cent. rebate for occupational schemes	4·6	5·3	5·4	—
4·8 per cent. rebate for personal pensions	—	1·7	1·8	1·8
1 per cent. addition for personal pension holders	—	0·2	0·2	0·2

These estimates are based on the assumption of 5 million personal pension optants in each year and have been rounded to one decimal place.

Social Fund

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the amount of money so far paid to people in Wales from the social fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is available in the Library.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the amount of money which will be spent in Wales out of the increased sum allocated to the social fund.

Mr. Scott: Details of the 1992-93 social fund allocations were placed in the Library on 3 March 1992.

National Insurance

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) when the *(a)* 5·8 per cent. national insurance rebate and *(b)* 2 per cent. additional national insurance incentive for 1991-92 will be fully paid for everyone who makes a claim before the end of the current financial year; and when he anticipates the (i) rebates and (ii) incentives for 1992-93 will start to be paid;

(2) what is the latest payment period for which the *(a)* 5·8 per cent. national insurance rebate and *(b)* 2 per cent. additional national insurance incentive have been paid to any contributors opting-out of the state earnings related pension scheme into a personal pension.

Mr. Jack: Payment of the 5·8 per cent. national insurance rebate and the 2 per cent. additional incentive are paid to personal pension providers together. The latest year in respect of which payments are being made is 1990-91. We expect payments in respect of 1991-92 to commence in May 1992 and in respect of 1992-93 in May 1993. Such payments will continue to be made as long as late or corrected earnings and contributions information continues to be received.

Rent Arrears Scheme, Hackney

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the extra housing benefit paid to council tenants in Hackney during the operation of that borough's arrears-to-rents scheme.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 7 February at column *324*. We do not have the information to provide an estimate of the amount of housing benefit that may have already been paid.

DEFENCE

Suicides

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 27 January, *Official Report*, columns *454-58*, if he will list the names and home towns of the men who committed suicide in the Royal Engineers, the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and the Royal Signals in the years 1987 to 1991.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to the right hon. Member.

Teamwork

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the purpose of the NATO naval exercise, Teamwork, that began off Norway on 2 March; and what contribution was made to the exercise by the Royal Navy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Teamwork 92 began on 6 March, and will run until 25 March. It is a maritime, air, amphibious and field training exercise designed to maintain the professionalism and operational effectiveness of NATO forces. Nineteen Royal Navy ships and submarines, nine ships of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and approximately 4,000 Royal Marines are participating.

Service Pensions

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the percentage increases in service pensions for each of the years from 1975 to 1991; and on what date they were applied in each year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Percentage increases applicable to retired pay and pensions awarded under the terms of the armed forces pension scheme were, in the period 1975 to 1991, as follows:

Year	*Increase per cent.*	*Effective Date*
1975	26·10	1 December 1975
1976	13·80	1 December 1976
1977	17·70	1 December 1977
1978	7·40	1 December 1978
1979	16·00	12 November 1979
1980	16·50	24 November 1980
1981	9·06	23 November 1981
1982	11·00	22 November 1982
1983	3·70	21 November 1983
1984	5·10	26 November 1984
1985	7·00	25 November 1985
1986	1·10	28 July 1986
1987	2·10	6 April 1987
1988	4·20	11 April 1988
1989	5·90	10 April 1989
1990	7·60	9 April 1990
1991	10·90	8 April 1991

The first increase following the award of retired pay or pension would generally have been smaller than that shown, depending on the date of the award relative to the effective date of the next increase. In individual cases the first increase could also have been applicable from a different date than the effective date shown. All increases after the first would be at the full rate and have the effective date shown.

Where retirement occurs earlier than age 55, increases in retired pay or pension awarded on account of long service are accumulated and brought into payment from the 55th birthday.

Commonwealth of Independent States

(Nuclear Warheads)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what decisions have been taken by Her Majesty's Government to provide technical and financial support to the nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States to dismantle and transport nuclear warheads withdrawn from deployment; what will be the cost of this assistance; and under what budget head the cost will be borne.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government have agreed to provide 250 special containers to Russia for the secure transport of nuclear weapons and a number of special nuclear weapons transport vehicles. We will also provide consultancy assistance as required in the fields of nuclear weapons safety procedures; fissile material storage and vehicle design; environmental restoration; assessing the options for converting fissile material from weapons to civil nuclear use; and, if help is needed, implementation of IAEA safeguards.

Our preliminary estimate is that the eventual cost of supplying hardware could be up to about £30 million. It will be borne on class I, vote 2.

Nuclear Submarines

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are to use the Firth of Clyde as a site for the wet storage of nuclear submarines, pending decommissioning or otherwise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We do not currently expect such a requirement to arise.

Trident

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *402*, if he will give up-to-date details of money so far spent on the fourth Trident.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Expenditure on the fourth Vanguard class submarine to the latest available date (end January 1992) is £144 million.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 10 March 1992

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

French Guyana

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the letter from the Minister for Overseas Development of 18 February to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, what is the outcome of the inquiries by the British embassy in Paris about injury to the rain forest in French Guyana.

Mrs. Chalker *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* The French Ministry of the Environment has confirmed that the hydro-electric project at Petit Saut referred to in the *New Scientist* of 25 January 1992 has over some 10 years been the subject of extensive study, including a public inquiry, which looked at all the possible options for power generation. There had been a full environmental impact assessment undertaken on the project in which the Ministry of Environment had participated. The conclusion was that a hydro-electric dam was the best option. The scheme is intended to meet not only the electricity needs of the launch-site at Kourou, but also the wider need for electricity throughout French Guyana. I am writing to the hon. Member with further details provided by French officials.

WALES

Health Service

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) on how many days consultants have been paid, or are expected to be paid, more than £1,000 per day in total payments for operations designed to reduce waiting lists in Gwent during the current financial year;

(2) what is his estimate of the current weekly cost to the national health service of operations being undertaken on their behalf by the BUPA hospital at Pentwyn, near Newport.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Operational information of this kind is not held centrally. It is for district health authorities as commissioners of care to decide on and account for the benefits and costs of any health gain investment, including consultant fees and contracts with private sector health care providers.

Assisted Area Status, Monmouth

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the names of those people who met him regarding assisted area status for Monmouth on 2 March; and if he will provide details of the bodies that they represent.

Mr. David Hunt: On 2 March, I met Cllr. W. J. Parker, Cllr. W. G. A. Hathaway, Cllr. J. Lewis and Mr. J. Martin representing Monmouth borough council County Cllr. C. White, Mr. P. Smith, town clerk of Monmouth town council and Mr. Roger Evans.

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to announce his decision on assisted area status for the Monmouth travel-to-work area.

Mr. David Hunt: I am presently considering the issues put to me by local representatives at a meeting on 2 March and shall be responding in due course.

Surgical Operations

Mr. Grist: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the number of operations carried out in Wales in 1978-79 and at the latest available date for *(a)* hip replacements, *(b)* cataracts and *(c)* open heart surgery.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information on hipH-Sreplacements and cataracts is given for 1978, 1979 and 1989 (the latest available year) in the following table:

Principal operations in National Health Service hospitals in Wales[1]

	1978	*1979*	*1989*
Hip replacements[2]	1,372	1,501	2,407
Cataracts	2,232	2,330	5,019

[1] Figures may understate the true position in that not all hospitals provide complete clinical details relating to patient discharge and deaths.

[2] Includes replacement of head of femur for 1989.

Source: Hospital Activity Analysis.

Information available centrally prior to 1980 on open heart operations is derived from "Hospital Activity Analysis" and is likely to understate the true position in that not all hospitals provide complete clinical details relating to patient discharges and deaths. It is not directly comparable to later information. The numbers of open heart operations reported to have been carried out in national health service hospitals in Wales in 1978 and 1979 were 185 and 161 respectively. The latest available data, however, is provided by the centrally funded, regional cardiac centre at the University hospital of Wales and shows that the following number of operations were undertaken in 1991 and up to 29 February 1992.

	By pass	*Others*	*Total*
Adult			
1991	654	70	724
[1]1992	144	12	156
Paediatric[2]			
1991	23	14	37
[1]1992	9	1	10

[1] As at 29 February.

[2] Opened June 1991.

Hospitals (Car Parking)

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the hospitals in Wales which impose car parking charges.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This is a matter for individual district health authorities and this information is not held centrally.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the numbers of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in each county in Wales in 1992, to the latest available date.

Mr. David Hunt: The numbers of confirmed cases of BSE in each county in Wales during 1992 to 28 February are shown in the table:

County	*Number of confirmed cases*
Clwyd	62
Dyfed	288
Gwent	31
Gwynedd	13
Mid Glamorgan	9
Powys	47
South Glamorgan	17
West Glamorgan	2

Vehicle Watch Scheme

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the operation of the vehicle watch Wales scheme in Gwent.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: None. Vehicle watch is a police initiative and it is for the Gwent constabulary to assess its effectiveness in Gwent.

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to fund the vehicle watch Wales scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I have received representations from the Gwent police authority about the funding of vehicle watch and these are presently under consideration.

Dairy Farmers

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the implications of the MacSharry proposals for dairy farmers in Monmouthshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received a number of representations from industry bodies in Wales and individual farmers, including some dairy producers from Monmouthshire, on the implications for the industry of the EC reform proposals.

Senior Citizens (Security)

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to ensure that senior citizens are provided with access to suitable home security equipment to ensure the security of their homes and allay fears of crime.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Assistance for installing home security equipment for senior citizens is already being provided under specific crime prevention initiatives; as part of wider measures to improve conditions for the elderly; and as part of the action being undertaken to renovate dwellings.

Proposals for improving household security are eligible for consideration as crime prevention measures under the urban programme; any local authority in Wales may submit a bid. Projects that have received support recently include the "Cardiff Safe and Secure" initiative, and improvements to the security of the communal areas of flats on the Sandfields estate in Port Talbot. Funds made available to victim support schemes have also on occasion been used to improve household security. In undertaking such projects the needs of elderly people, especially those living alone, attract high priority. Under the Welsh Office elderly initiative scheme some £315,000 is being made available over a three-year period to support a project in Mid Glamorgan that is designed to improve the safety and well-being of senior citizens living in their own homes. In addition to providing improved door and window locks, and door viewers, the project entails the provision of advice to the elderly on how to deal with bogus officials and confidence tricksters.

Within the renovation grant arrangements those over 60 who receive income related benefits may be able to get help with home security installations in the form of minor works assistance.

Crime Prevention Panels

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement regarding the funding of crime prevention panels in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Crime prevention panels are an excellent means by which local communities can become involved through voluntary activity in the fight against crime. They are encouraged to be self-sufficient and to seek local funding arrangements. Many crime prevention panels obtain private sponsorship from local businesses. Possible sources of funding will vary from area to area. Crime Concern has published a booklet entitled "Attracting Business Sponsorship" which provides detailed advice for panels on how to obtain sponsorship for crime prevention projects. Some panels have been successful in obtaining charity status and any panels wishing to do this can contact the Charity Commission who will advise them on the necessary procedures.

Although central funding is not made available to support the panels themselves, individual projects that they propose may be eligible for consideration for support under the urban programme, provided that the bids are sponsored by the appropriate local authority.

HEALTH

Kettering RHA

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the revenue allocation to the Kettering regional health authority for *(a)* 1982-83 and *(b)* 1992-93 expressed in (i) absolute terms and (ii) 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Dorrell: Information about the funds allocated by regional health authorities to district health authorities is not held centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to contact Dr. Stuart Burgess, the chairman of Oxford regional health authority, for details.

Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nurses are employed by Mid Cheshire hospitals trust; and what was the number previously employed by the health authority responsible for staffing the equivalent hospitals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Richard F. Lawrence, the chairman of the Mid Cheshire hospitals trust for current nursing levels, and Sir Donald Wilson, the chairman of the Mersey regional health authority, who may be able to provide the historical data.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost per hour of consultants employed by Mid Cheshire hospitals trust; how many patients they see on average in one week's clinics; and what time is normally taken by consultants to visit NHS patients outside the hospital.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Richard F. Lawrence, the chairman of the Mid Cheshire hospitals NHS trust, for details.

Blood

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the average cost of collection per litre of blood from *(a)* recovered plasma and *(b)* plasmapheresis for each regional transfusion centre of the National Blood Transfusion Service.

Mr. Dorrell: Information on the regional cost of collecting plasma is not held centrally.

Newmarket Hospital

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give details of *(a)* the consideration given by his Department to the report by management consultants commissioned by the Committee for the Retention of Newmarket Hospital, before his recent decision on the future of the hospital and *(b)* the consultations between the regional health authority and the Committee for the Retention of Newmarket Hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: On 10 February 1992 I announced our decision to accept certain proposals put forward by West Suffolk health authority on the future of Newmarket hospital, subject to the health authority agreeing to undertake a further examination of the scope for provision of day surgery, minor accident and maternity services in the new hospital proposed for Newmarket.

In reaching this decision full consideration was given to the report commissioned by the Committee for the Retention of Newmarket Hospital. Several issues were thoroughly analysed including patient safety, medical staffing, size of catchment area, patient activity levels and effective use of resources.

The Committee for the Retention of Newmarket Hospital met East Anglian regional health authority members on 24 April 1991 to present their proposals for the future of the hospital. Additionally, the region's finance manager met the committee's management consultants, J. J. Thompson and Partners, on 29 October 1991 to go through their report.

Contact Lenses

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances contact lenses can be obtained under the national health service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All general opthalmic services patients may put any optical voucher to which they are entitled towards the cost of contact lenses. Under the hospital eye service patients who require contact lenses for clinical reasons will, if they are entitled to an optical voucher, get the lenses free; other patients can take advantage of the maximum charging arrangements.

Strategy and Objectives

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he plans to publish the goal strategy and objectives in the national health service management executive and the Department of Health priorities and key challenges for 1992-93 and beyond.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have agreed a statement of the aims, goals and priorities for my Department for 1992-93 and the following three years. It covers the whole range of the Department's work relating to health services, health promotion, public health, social services, EC and other international issues, and internal management. It includes our specific priorities for the NHS management executive, which are taken forward in more detail in the management executive's statement, "The Goal and Strategies of the Chief Executive and the Management Executive of the NHS and their Objectives for 1992-93", approved by the NHS policy board. Copies of both statements have been placed in the Library.

Nurse Education

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial support trust hospitals give to post-registration nurse education.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Post-registration training which is designed to provide nurses and midwives with specific professional skills is to be funded from a separate and protected budget held at regional level. Employers are expected to bear the cost of other post-registration nurse education and training because they are in the best position to determine need. Trusts are expected to play their full part in training the staff they employ, in the same way as other employers.

Mental Handicap Hospitals

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the mental handicap hospitals planned for closure over the next five years and the district health authority in which each is situated.

Mr. Dorrell: This is a matter for regional and district health authorities and the hospitals themselves. Government policies on the treatment of people with learning disabilities in the community are well known and understood.

Sight Test Fees

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what would be the gross cost of abolishing sight test fees for all people over 60 years old.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: NHS sight tests are already free to approximately 40 per cent. of the population, including those pensioners who qualify on medical or income grounds. The estimated additional cost at 1991-92 prices of extending eligibility to all those aged 60 and over would be between £30 million and £35 million in a full year.

Hospital Trusts

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been treated privately under the waiting list initiative from *(a)* Leeds united hospital trust and *(b)* the Bradford hospitals NHS trust.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Anthony Clegg, the chairman of the United Leeds hospitals trust and Mr. Rodney Walker, the chairman of the Bradford hospitals NHS trust, for details.

National Health Service Expenditure

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total level of expenditure on pay for general and senior managers in each year since 1985.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 18 February 1992]:* The grades of general and senior managers were introduced as part of the new arrangements recommended by the Griffiths report in 1983. The cost of staff employed in general management grades is shown in the table:

England (HCHS)
General managers

£ million (cash)

	Regional/district general managers	*Unit/other general managers*
1985-86	6·8	4·1
1986-87	8·6	17·1
1987-88	9·0	20·7
1988-89	9·7	20·8
1989-90	10·7	21·3
1990-91	12·8	25·3

Notes:

1. Figures for 1990-91 are as yet subject to audit.
2. The figures are gross pay costs including employer's national insurance and superannuation contributions.

Source: Annual accounts of regional and district health authorities in England together with those of the special health authorities for the London post-graduate teaching hospitals.

Other senior management costs were not separately identified until 1989-90. The cost of staff employed in senior management grades in 1989-90 was £126·9 million and in 1990-91 was £213·3 million.

Staff employed in general and senior management grades generally hold posts which were previously classified under administrative and clerical, works staff or senior nursing grades.

Immunisations

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give figures for the number of immunisations carried out in South Derbyshire district and Trent region in 1982 and the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* The numbers of two-year-olds vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, measles, mumps and rubella in South Derbyshire and Trent in 1982 and 1990-91 are given in the table.

The uptake rates are also given to allow comparisons between the years.

Vaccination and immunisation (2 year uptake[2])

	Year	*Diphtheria*	*Tetanus*	*Pertussis*	*Polio*	*Measles*	[1] *Mumps and Rubella*
South Derbyshire							
Number immunised	1982	6,333	6,339	5,042	6,342	5,042	—
Uptake rate		(90)	(90)	(63)	(91)	(74)	—
	1990-91	6,486	6,486	6,123	6,494	6,332	6,321
		(91)	(91)	(86)	(92)	(89)	(89)
Trent Region							
Number immunised	1982	52,833	52,925	34,880	52,594	36,904	—
Uptake rate		(88)	(88)	(58)	(88)	(62)	—
	1990-91	56,421	56,429	52,740	56,303	54,036	53,797
		(91)	(91)	(85)	(91)	(87)	(87)

Source: SBL 607.KC51. DH Statistics and Management Information (SMI2B), March 1992.

[1] Data was not collected before 1988-89.

[2] The two year uptake rate is the percentage of children immunised by their second birthday.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cyprus

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current negotiations by the United Nations Secretary-General on a united Cyprus and on the role Britain has played since 1979.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Representatives of the UN Secretary-General have recently ocmpleted another round of talks with all parties in the region. We have throughout given full and active support to the UN Secretary-General's efforts to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement.

Turkey (Miners)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what offers of assistance and expertise have been made to the Turkish Government in the search for the trapped coal miners near Zonguldak.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Government were not approached by the Turkish authorities for help in dealing with the disaster at Kozlu coal mine in Zonguldak on 5 March.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Denatured Wine

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 2 March, *Official Report,* column *29,* for what reasons Her Majesty's Customs and Excise did not charge excise duty on denatured wine products for culinary uses before 1 January, but did do so from that date onwards.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The excise duty liability of imported wine and made-wine, including denatured wine and made-wine, has not changed in recent years. Customs regret that an importer was incorrectly advised that if wine denatured with 2 per cent. salt was to be used as an ingredient in food manufacture it would not be liable to excise duty at importation. The correct liability has been applied since February 1991.

Taxation

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what higher rate of income tax would be necessary to raise the same revenue as would be raised by a higher rate of 50 per cent. and removing the ceiling on national insurance contributions.

Mr. Maude: At 1992-93 levels of income and assuming statutory indexation of allowances and thresholds, a higher rate of 59 per cent. would raise an approximately equivalent amount of revenue in a full year.

Taxation (Commercial Properties)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria he employs to determine whether a property with a paying guest or guests should be classified as a commercial property for Inland Revenue purposes.

Mr. Maude: Unless a paying guest or guests are using the property as their main or sole residence as defined in the Local Government and Finance Act 1988, any short-stay accommodation in excess of six bed spaces or which is not ancillary to the owners own domestic use will be treated as non-domestic property for uniform business rate purposes.

Share Ownership

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the level of share ownership in Great Britain.

Mr. Maude: A joint Treasury/ProShare survey carried out in January and February of this year shows that almost 10 million people, or more than 22 per cent. of the adult population in Great Britain, now own shares compared with 7 per cent. in 1979. I am placing copies of the survey report in the Libraries of both Houses.

Income Tax

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect on tax revenues *(a)* in the first year and *(b)* in a full year, assuming this is introduced in 1992-93 of the introduction of a 50 per cent. top rate of income tax on annual taxable incomes of (i) £31,555, (ii) £33,555, (iii) £36,555, (iv) £39,555 and (v) £42,555, in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 9 March 1992]:* The information is in the table.

Estimated yield in 1992-93 from a 50 per cent. tax rate

Threshold of taxable income at which 50 per cent. rate is charged (£)	*Yield in a full year*[1] *at 1992-93 levels of income (£ million)*
31,555	2,550
33,555	2,370
36,555	2,140
39,555	1,950
42,555	1,790

[1] About half of the yield would be collected in the first year.

These estimates do not allow for any behavioural effect that might result from such changes to the tax system and do not include capital gains tax.

Taxes and Benefits

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the table in his answer of 12 June 1991, *Official Report,* columns *547-50,* on taxes and benefits, to include information on 1989.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 9 March 1992]:* The information is as follows:

Taxes and benefits as percentage of income by quintile groups of households[1]*, 1989*

	per cent.
RETIRED HOUSEHOLDS	
Cash benefits as percentages of gross income	
Bottom quintile group	88
2nd quintile group	84
3rd quintile group	78
4th quintile group	54
Top quintile group	23
Average over all groups	51
Income tax, NIC, rates and community charge as percentages of gross income	
Bottom quintile group	17
2nd quintile group	12
3rd quintile group	12
4th quintile group	14
Top quintile group	20
Average over all groups	17
Indirect taxes as percentages of unadjusted disposable income	
Bottom quintile group	27
2nd quintile group	20
3rd quintile group	19
4th quintile group	21
Top quintile group	17
Average over all groups	20
Benefits in kind as percentages of final income	
Bottom quintile group	44
2nd quintile group	34
3rd quintile group	31

	per cent.
4th quintile group	24
Top quintile group	13
Average over all groups	25
NON-RETIRED HOUSEHOLDS	
Cash benefits as percentages of gross income	
Bottom quintile group	49
2nd quintile group	14
3rd quintile group	7
4th quintile group	3
Top quintile group	1
Average over all groups	8
Income tax, NIC, rates and community charge as percentages of gross income	
Bottom quintile group	15
2nd quintile group	19
3rd quintile group	20
4th quintile group	22
Top quintile group	22
Average over all groups	21
Indirect taxes as percentages of unadjusted disposable income	
Bottom quintile group	30
2nd quintile group	24
3rd quintile group	22
4th quintile group	20
Top quintile group	16
Average over all groups	20
Benefits in kind as percentages of final income	
Bottom quintile group	45
2nd quintile group	25
3rd quintile group	17
4th quintile group	11
Top quintile group	5
Average over all groups	16

[1] Ranked by equivalised disposable income.

Source: CSO, from Family Expenditure Survey.

Unearned Income

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the revenue raised from a 9 per cent. charge on unearned income for those below state retirement age with a *(a)* £3,000 exemption, *(b)* £3,500 exemption, *(c)* £4,000 exemption, *(d)* £4,500 exemption and *(e)* £5,000 exemption, giving both full year and first year revenues for 1991-92 and 1992-93, specifying the numbers affected in each case, for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 9 March 1992]:* Latest estimates for 1991-92 are as follows:

Threshold £	*Yield in a full year* £ *million*	*Numbers affected Thousands*
3,000	870	1,130
3,500	820	970
4,000	780	840
4,500	750	750
5,000	720	660

The amount of revenue collected in the first year would depend on the administrative arrangements for collecting such a charge. The yield in 1992-93 would depend on the levels of investment income for that year.

These estimates take no account of any possible behavioural changes following the introduction of such a charge.

Nicholas Young Fraud

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will institute proceedings, pursuant to section 48 of the Banking Act 1987, against Mr. Bengt Bangstad arising from the Nicholas Young Ponzi fraud; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 3 March 1992]:* My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has no powers to institute proceedings under section 48 of the Banking Act 1987. That is a matter for the Bank of England.

THE ARTS

Libraries

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give *(a)* the total number of books lent by and *(b)* the total amount of public spending on the library service in England and Wales, for each year since 1962.

Mr. Renton: Reliable and comparable information for England and Wales is available only from 1966-67 to 1989-90:

Public library service
England and Wales
Book issues and expenditure

Year	*Book issues* *Million*	*Total expenditure* Cash £ *million*	Real terms 1991-92 prices £ million
1989-90	501	553	642
1988-89	480	505	624·5
1987-88	525	450	596·5
1986-87	524	432	604
1985-86	566	404	582·5
1984-85	551	377·5	575
1983-84	576	361·5	578
1982-83	574	338	565
1981-82	578	310	556
1980-81	579	276	542·5
1979-80	582	239	556·5
1978-79	570	204·5	555
1977-78	566	184·5	555
1976-77	554	168	575
1975-76	571	149	578
1974-75	547	113	550
1973-74	—	87·5	551
1972-73	—	76·5	478·9
1971-72	579	66·5	448·9
1970-71	562	57	418·2
1969-70	594	49	392
1968-69	585	45	377
1967-68	559	41·5	364·5
1966-67	533	37	335·5

Sources: Municipal Year Book.
Public Library Statistics, published by the Institute of Municipal Treasurers and Accountants and in later years the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
Library and Information Service Council annual report.

ENERGY

Electricity

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received from pottery manufacturers about the effects of the regulatory regime established by the Electricity Act 1989 as it affects contract users.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To date my Department has received one representation—from a pottery manufacturer—about electricity contracts.

British Coal

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on British Coal's external financing limit for 1991-92.

Mr. Wakeham: British Coal's deep-mine and opencast operations have achieved much in the present financial year and the corporation is likely to record a substantial profit after interest for the second year running. Cost cutting through restructuring has, however, been making calls on British Coal's cash resources in the short-term and it has been agreed that the corporation's external financing limit for 1991-92 should be raised from £542 million to £622 million to provide more financial headroom. This increase will be funded out of the existing vote provision for the current financial year.

PRIME MINISTER

Official Visits

Q10. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Prime Minister if he has plans to make an official visit to Havering Atte Bower.

The Prime Minister: I am making plans for a series of visits to all parts of the country and hope to include Essex among them.

Interception of Communications

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister whether a successor has been chosen to Lord Justice Lloyd as commissioner appointed under the Interception of Communications Act 1985.

The Prime Minister: Lord Justice Lloyd's second term of appointment expires on 10 April. I am most grateful for his work in carrying out his duties as commissioner. I have decided to appoint Lord Justice Bingham as commissioner for a period of three years with effect from 11 April 1992.

ENVIRONMENT

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those parts of his Department, including executive agencies, carrying out reviews over the last 12 months into the pay and grading of staff and the firm of consultants engaged, where appropriate.

Mr. Heseltine: The only part of my Department yet to conduct a detailed review of pay and grading structures is the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre. That study was assisted by MCP Management Consultants.

Community Charge

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local authority associations or others, concerning exempting from the community charge those currently qualified to pay 20 per cent. of the full payment.

Mr. Key: Few local authorities have proposed exempting all people currently liable for 20 per cent. of the community charge. However, a number of authorities and others have supported bringing forward the principle of 100 per cent. council tax benefit to the last year of the comunity charge.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the cost for the collection of community charge for those on the minimum 20 per cent. rate.

Mr. Key: No separate information is held on collection of the community charge from those making the minimum 20 per cent. contribution. However, the average cost of collecting the community charge from all charge payers is about £14 compared to an average 20 per cent. payment of £45.

Fire Safety

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage figure of reliability for sprinkler systems he took into account when establishing the parameters for minimum periods of fire resistance in approved document B (fire safety) approved for the purposes of the Building Regulations 1991.

Mr. Yeo: Estimates of the reliability of sprinkler systems vary, and no one figure was used as the basis of the new guidance. However, the opinion of experts at the fire research station, and of the Fire Advisory Panel which the Department consulted while developing the guidance, was that a fire resistance reduction could be allowed over a wider range of cases than hitherto when a sprinkler system was installed.

Stop Notices

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) of 6 November 1991, *Official Report*, columns *160-61*, when the appropriate ministerial order will be made to implement section 9 of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 dealing with stop notices.

Sir George Young: My written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), *Official Report*, 16 December 1991, columns *68-69*, announced that the main enforcement provisions in part I of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 (including section 9) would be brought into force on 2 January this year. The Planning and Compensation Act 1991 (Commencement No. 5 and Transitional Provisions) Order 1991 (SI 1991 No. 2905 (C90)) implemented those provisions accordingly.

Shopping Centres

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish a working group including English Heritage, the Civic Trust and the Royal Institute of Town Planning to establish ways in which town and city shopping centres may achieve security from crime combined with good visual and aesthetic quality.

Mr. Yeo: The type of security measures required to protect shops and the visual and aesthetic qualities which would be appropriate are best considered locally, informed by local circumstance and need. The Town and Country Planning (Development Plan) Regulations, which came into force on 10 February, require local planning authorities to have regard to crime prevention when preparing development plans. Furthermore, my Department's circulars 1/84—issued jointly with the Home Office—and 22/88 provide guidance on the role of planning crime prevention. Local planning authorities should use this advice to establish local policies which combine the encouragement of effective security and good design.

Archive Services

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about county archive services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We have received a number of letters about local government restructuring and county archive services. The Local Government Commission to be established under the Local Government Act 1992 will review the structure of local government in the shire counties in England. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State intends to direct the commission to have regard to guidance which he will issue about the policy considerations which should underlie its reviews. This guidance will draw the commission's attention to the importance of satisfactory arrangements for existing archive services. Decisions about local government structure and arrangements for services will be for Parliament.

Liverpool (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the recent visit by the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities to the Liverpool, Riverside constituency.

Mr. Portillo: I visited the Liverpool Riverside constituency on 6 January 1992. At the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Hall I announced urban programme support of £3 million towards the hall's refurbishment along with city grant support of £4·5 million towards an office development at Exchange buildings. Later I visited the garden festival site to see work in progress on leisure developments, particularly at the Festival hall. I then met representatives of the Eldonian Development Trust.

I also visited the constituency on 6 March for a number of official engagements including the signing of Liverpool's city challenge implementation agreement, the launch of a civil service access training initiative for ethnic minorities in Liverpool, and a tour of the Duke street/Bold street areas with potential developers.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities awarded a higher standard spending assessment for 1992-93 per unit of population than the metropolitan borough of Rotherham together with their standard spending assessments per unit of population.

Mr. Key: The table shows 1992-93 standard spending assessments for those authorities with a higher amount per head of resident population than Rotherham.

Local authorities with a higher standard spending assessment per head of resident population than the metropolitan borough of Rotherham for 1992-93

Local authority	*1992-93 SSA (£/head)*
City of London	11,266
Tower Hamlets	1,445
Hackney	1,400
Lambeth	1,347
Isles of Scilly	1,321
Westminster	1,272
Newham	1,255
Islington	1,239
Haringey	1,154
Southwark	1,151
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,151
Brent	1,077
Camden	1,057
Kensington and Chelsea	1,043
Lewisham	1,035
Wandsworth	1,017
Waltham Forest	978
Manchester	963
Liverpool	937
Greenwich	937
Birmingham	910
Ealing	904
Knowsley	897
Hounslow	863
Bradford	850
Wolverhampton	849
Sandwell	806
Enfield	795
Oldham	793
Barking and Dagenham	789
Salford	779
Croydon	775
Coventry	775
South Tyneside	771
Newcastle upon Tyne	766
Cleveland	764
Harrow	761
Rochdale	757
Merton	750
Sunderland	743
Redbridge	739
Kirklees	735
Wirral	734
Bolton	734
North Tyneside	725
Walsall	724
Gateshead	723
St. Helens	717
Tameside	708
Hillingdon	705
Calderdale	699
Leeds	699
Barnet	696
Doncaster	694
Trafford	693
Sheffield	692
Bexley	689
Sutton	686
Kingston upon Thames	684
Rotherham	683

English Heritage

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made to date, with regard to the relocation of English Heritage to Nottingham; and what is the timetable for the various stages of the move, and the expected time and date for its completion.

Mr. Yeo: English Heritage is to relocate its headquarters to Nottingham in 1994. Two city centre sites are being examined in detail before a choice of site is made and submitted to the Secretary of State for approval.

East Thames Corridor

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the report of his working party on the east Thames corridor.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend has appointed consultants, Llewelyn-Davies Planning, to consider the potential of the East Thames Corridor for development and environmental enhancement. It is anticipated that their study will be completed by June 1992. We expect that the report of the study will be published in due course.

Housing Stock, Rochester

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the final report of the district auditor investigating the sale of housing stock of Rochester-upon-Medway city council to the Medway Housing Society will be available; and if he will indicate the reasons for the delay.

Sir George Young: The district auditor has been carrying out an investigation into the sale by Rochester upon Medway city council of its housing stock to Medway Housing Society in July 1990. The auditor is currently completing the consultation process in accordance with the statutory audit code of practice. He hope to issue his public interest report to the council shortly.

Derelict Land Grant

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the provisional allocations of the derelict land grant for 1992-93 in England and Wales in descending order according to the size of the grant, within the following categories *(a)* shire county councils, *(b)* metropolitan district councils, *(c)* other district councils, *(d)* planning boards and *(e)* others.

Mr. Yeo: The information requested for England is as shown in the table. Derelict land reclamation in Wales is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales.

Provisional Allocations of Derelict Land Grant—1992-93
(a) Shire County Councils

Region and Council		*Amount* £
EM	Nottinghamshire	2,631,000
EM	Derbyshire	2,597,000
NW	Cheshire	2,000,000
NR	Northumberland	1,700,000
NR	Durham	1,500,000
WM	Shropshire	1,257,000
EM	Leicestershire	873,000
WM	Staffordshire	601,000
SW	Cornwall	400,000
NW	Lancashire	300,000
NR	Cleveland	120,000
WM	Warwickshire	29,000
Total		14,008,000

(b) Metropolitan District Councils

Region and council		*Amount* *(£)*
YH	Rotherham	5,149,396
WM	Walsall	3,838,000
WM	Dudley	2,780,000
NW	Salford	2,680,000
YH	Doncaster	2,150,783
YH	Calderdale	2,000,000
WM	Wolverhampton	1,981,000
NR	Gateshead	1,700,000
NR	Sunderland	1,700,000
YH	Barnsley	1,646,964
NW	Wigan	1,500,000
YH	Wakefield	1,498,000
MT	Liverpool	1,450,000
WM	Sandwell	1,426,000
NW	Oldham	1,250,000
WM	Birmingham	1,224,000
MT	Sefton	1,200,000
NW	Tameside	1,200,000
NW	Manchester	1,200,000
YH	Kirklees	980,000
MT	St. Helens	975,000
NR	North Tyneside	750,000
NW	Bolton	660,000
NW	Bury	660,000
MT	Knowsley	650,000
YH	Sheffield	559,929
NW	Stockport	500,000
NR	Newcastle upon Tyne	450,000
MT	Wirral	400,000
YH	Bradford	396,000
NW	Rochdale	310,000
YH	Leeds	250,000
NR	South Tyneside	200,000
NW	Trafford	150,000
LR	Tower Hamlets	110,000
LR	Barking and Dagenham	70,000
LR	Newham	55,838
LR	Lewisham	51,475
LR	Waltham Forest	47,157
LR	Greenwich	35,000
WM	Coventry	25,000
Total		45,858,542

(c) Other District Councils

Region and Council		*Amount* *(£)*
YH	Glandford	3,000,000
NW	Barrow-in-Furness	2,000,000
SW	Kerrier	2,000,000
EM	Corby	1,927,000
MT	Ellesmere Port and Neston	1,650,000
WM	Newcastle-under-Lyme	1,614,000
MT	Halton	1,275,000
EM	Mansfield	1,168,000
EM	Erewash	1,000,000
NW	Carlisle	900,000
NW	Copeland	900,000
WM	The Wrekin	773,000
NR	Darlington	700,000
WM	Stoke-on-Trent	695,000
NW	Bury	660,000
EM	Nottingham	600,000
NR	Middlesbrough	550,000
SW	Bath	530,000
WM	Cannock Chase	511,000
NR	Stockton-on-Tees	500,000
NR	Hartlepool	500,000
NW	Lancaster	500,000
NR	Wear Valley	350,000
EM	Lincoln	334,000
NR	Easington	325,000
NW	Preston	300,000
EM	Derbyshire Dales	260,000

Region and Council		*Amount (£)*
NR	Langbaurgh	250,000
SW	Carrick	250,000
SW	Restormel	250,000
EM	Amber Valley	235,000
EM	North East Derbyshire	204,000
NW	Pendle	200,000
NW	Blackburn	200,000
NW	West Lancashire	200,000
NW	Hyndburn	200,000
NW	Burnley	200,000
NW	Ribble Valley	200,000
NW	Vale Royal	200,000
NW	Warrington	200,000
NW	Chorley	200,000
NR	Sedgefield	160,000
NW	Macclesfield	150,000
YH	Boothferry	140,000
NR	Derwentside	135,000
NW	Eden	130,000
EM	Chesterfield	122,000
YH	Great Grimsby	106,383
EM	Leicester	106,000
WM	Lichfield	103,000
NR	Blyth Valley	100,000
NW	Congleton	100,000
NW	South Lakeland	100,000
SW	Caradon	100,000
SW	Plymouth	100,000
EM	Bolsover	80,000
EM	Newark and Sherwood	77,000
YH	Kingston upon Hull	62,386
NW	Chester	60,000
SW	Penwith	60,000
WM	Staffordshire Moorlands	51,000
EM	Daventry	50,000
NW	Crewe and Nantwich	50,000
YH	Richmondshire	40,000
WM	Oswestry	33,000
EM	Gedling	27,000
EM	Derby	25,000
EM	Rushcliffe	25,000
EM	Ashfield	24,000
SW	North Cornwall	20,000
SW	Thamesdown	20,000
NW	Blackpool	18,000
NR	Durham	10,000
YH	York	10,000
SW	Torbay	8,000
EM	South Derbyshire	7,000
WM	Tamworth	6,000
EM	North West Leicestershire	5,000
SW	Woodspring	1,200
WM	South Staffordshire	1,000
SW	Teignbridge	400
Total		30,934,369

(d) Planning Boards

Region/Board		*Amount (£)*
EM	Peak National Park Joint Planning Board	71,000
YH	North York Moors National Park	10,060
Total		81,060

(e) Others

Provisional allocations are not made other than to local authorities and planning boards.

Defective Housing

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government have completed their consultations on the proposed new expenditure limits for grant eligible reinstatement works under the housing defects legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I am most grateful to all those who have responded to our consultation proposals; we have, as a result, been able to settle the final figures for each designated house type. Our suggestion that the limits should be revised within a structure of six main cost bands was widely welcomed, as indeed were most of the individual proposals. Some concern was expressed as to whether £32,000 would be sufficient for repairs to Airey and Schindler and Hawksley SGS houses, and we have therefore decided instead to place these types within the £36,000 cost band.

The new limits will therefore be as follows:

New limit house type	*Present limit £*
£20,000	
Cornish unit (1 storey PRC)	17,000
Gregory	17,000
Unity and Butterley (1 storey PRC)	17,000
£24,000	
Dorran (1 storey PRC)	17,000
Myton (1 storey PRC)	17,000
Newland (1 storey PRC)	17,000
Tarran (1 storey PRC)	17,000
Wessex (1 storey PRC)	17,000
£28,000	
Cornish unit (2 storey PRC)	23,000
Stent	23,000
Unity and Butterley (2 storey PRC)	23,000
£32,000	
Boswell	27,000
Dorran (2 storey PRC)	27,000
Dyke	27,000
Myton (2 storey PRC)	27,000
Newland (2 storey PRC)	27,000
Stonecrete	27,000
Tarran (2 storey PRC)	27,000
Underdown	27,000
Waller	27,000
Wates	27,000
Winget	27,000
£36,000	
Airey	27,000
Schindler and Hawksley SGS	27,000
Smith	27,000
£40,000	
Boot Pier and Panel	31,000
Orlit	31,000
Parkinson	31,000
Reema Hollow Panel	31,000
Wessex (2 storey PRC)	31,000
Woolaway	31,000
£14,000	
All locally designated types	14,000

These new limits should enable local authorities themselves to decide the appropriate level of grant, in the majority of cases, without further reference to the Department.

The parliamentary order implementing these new limits has now been made by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales and, provided that Parliament is content, will come into operation on Tuesday 31 March. My officials will be writing to local authorities, home owners groups, repairers and the professional bodies, to make sure that all those with an interest are fully aware of all the changes.

Big Ben

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what maintenance work is planned on Big Ben this year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The mechanism of the great clock is subject to regular expert inspections and routine maintenance. Included in this year's programme is the replacement of the chime main wheel. The work is expected to start in April and to last about eight weeks. During the period the quarter hour chimes will be silent. The clock itself and the hour strike will not be affected.

Milton Keynes

Mr. Benyon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what use he intends to make of his sanction powers under part III of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 in relation to Milton Keynes borough council.

Mr. Key: On 15 October 1991, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State served a notice under section 19A of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 on Milton Keynes borough council, setting out his view that in 1989-90 the authority has failed to achieve the required rate of return in carrying out the work described in section 10(2)(d) of the Act—maintenance work, other than such works of maintenance in connection with highways or the maintenance of a sewer.

He has now considered the response which the authority has made to the section 19A notice, and which has acknowledged the failure to achieve the rate of return in 1989-90 and also for 1990-91. The authority has also indicated that performance in the current financial year may culminate in losses between £100,000 and £150,000.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has concluded that the record of financial failure by the authority's direct service organisation is such as to justify further use of his sanction powers. He has therefore today made a direction under section 19B of the 1980 Act, prohibiting the authority from carrying out the work described in section 10(2)(d) of the Act after 1 October 1992, with the exception of emergency work.

London Borough of Haringey

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has yet considered the London borough of Haringey's response to the notice served on the authority on 12 November 1991 under section 13 of the Local Government Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has given careful consideration to the response which the London borough of Haringey has made to the notice served on the authority on 12 November 1991, and has today given the authority a direction under section 14 of the 1988 Act. The effect of the direction is that after 1 January 1993 the authority will cease to have the power to carry out refuse collection work itself.

Direct Labour Organisations

Sir Philip Goodhart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take against those local authorities whose direct labour organisations made significant financial losses in 1989-90, and on which notices were served on 31 July and 28 October 1991.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend has now considered carefully the responses of the 14 local authorities on whom notices were served under either section 19A of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 or section 13 of the Local Government Act 1988 on 31 July and 28 October 1991. He has today given a direction under section 19B of the 1980 Act to the royal London borough of Kingston upon Thames which prevents it carrying out building maintenance work other than emergency work as from 31 October 1992. He is looking further at the responses of the London borough of Waltham Forest and Portsmouth city council (both building maintenance work).

He has decided to take no further action in respect of financial failure in 1989-90 against the London borough of Bromley (building maintenance), Worthing district council (building maintenance), Wychavon district council (building maintenance), Warrington borough council (building maintenance), Gosport borough council (other cleaning), Gloucester city council (refuse collection), Lewes district council (refuse collection), Shropshire county council (other catering), Surrey county council (other cleaning), and Waverley district council (refuse collection). He has already announced that no further action will be taken against Crawley district council (other catering).

My right hon. Friend has also decided to serve notices on the royal London borough of Kingston upon Thames in respect of financial failure in 1989-90 on highway maintenance work, and on the London borough of Bromley in respect of possible anti-competitive behaviour in awarding building maintenance work to its DLO where it was not the lowest tender.

He is also considering what further action to take in respect of financial failure in 1990-91 following the receipt of local authorities' annual reports for that year.

Acid Rain

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has yet received the final report by London Economics on the possible use of market mechanisms in the control of acid rain emissions.

Mr. Trippier: The report "The Potential Role of Market Mechanisms in the Control of Acid Rain" is being published today. I am placing copies of the report in the Library.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further measures he intends to take to encourage recycling of CFCs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: We are today issuing a consultation paper, which contains proposals to ban the import and supply to the United Kingdom market of refrigerant in disposable containers. These containers impede recycling because they cannot be refilled with refrigerant. They are also particularly damaging to the ozone layer, because the heel of CFCs which remains is usually vented to the atmosphere before the container is disposed of. Copies of the consultation paper have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

We are also intending to issue a consumer leaflet towards the end of March. This will make consumers aware which products contain CFCs and how they can help to improve their environment by encouraging industry and local authorities to provide more recycling services.

Planning Policy

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will revise planning policy guidance note No. 1 to withdraw the general presumption in favour of development as it relates to the preparation of development plans.

Sir George Young *[pursuant to his answer, 4 February 1992, c. 134]:* We have today published a revised planning policy guidance note 1 "General Policy and Principles" (PPG1) which replaces the 1988 version and advice in earlier circulars. The new document sets out the broad principles within which development plans are to be prepared and the basis on which planning permissions should be given or refused.

PPG1 reiterates the Government's commitment to sustainable growth and to reconciling development with conservation of the environment. The aim is to secure economy, efficiency and amenity in the use of land. Among other matters highlighted in the guidance note we have drawn to the attention of local planning authorities:

- the enhanced role of development plans in setting the framework for planning decisions;
- the need to eliminate unnecessary delay in determining planning applications;
- the particular categories of development proposals that require a full environmental assessment;
- the importance of design, crime prevention, noise considerations and access requirements, particularly for disabled people, in securing quality of environment.

Some of these matters will be the subject of more detailed guidance in forthcoming circulars. In the meantime, the new document replaces PPG1 of January 1988 and much of DOE circular 22/80.

We are also publishing today a revised planning policy guidance note No. 3 "Housing" (PPG3) which replaces the 1988 version of the PPG and advice in various earlier circulars.

The PPG reiterates the message that the planning system must provide an adequate and continuous supply of land for housing, taking into account market demand and the Government's policies for encouraging home ownership and the provision of rented housing. But in doing so it must also maintain the Government's established policies for the protection of the countryside, the conservation of natural habitats and of the built heritage, and the protection of the best and most versatile agricultural land.

The main changes to previous policy are:

- increased emphasis on re-using urban land, particularly derelict or under-used land, for housing as a means of relieving pressure on the countryside;
- encouragement for housing development on sites with permission for other development, but where there is no realistic prospect of that other development taking place;
- greater emphasis on the importance of local choice, through the local and unitary development plan process, in deciding how to meet the needs for new housing development;
- encouragement of closer co-operation between local authorities' planning and housing functions;
- withdrawal, because it is not consistent with a plan-led system, of the special presumption in favour of releasing land for housing where there is less than a five year supply;
- clearer policy on the circumstances in which new settlements may be considered as an alternative to expanding existing towns and villages; on this issue the essential message is the need to respect local choice.

The PPG also incorporates the Government's planning policies for the provision of affordable housing set out in circular 7/91, "Planning and Affordable Housing", which is now cancelled.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Meat Inspection

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the current charges levied in EC member states for meat inspection.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gave on 9 March 1992, *Official Report,* column *403.*

The position regarding levels of meat inspection charges in other member states remains unclear. It appears that some have yet to introduce national legislation to bring them into line with the EC decision on harmonisation of charges. Certain others, such as Spain and Germany, have legislated at a regional, rather than a national, level. Detailed national information is currently only available with regard to France and Denmark. In France, the published charges in francs per kilogramme for 1991 were as follows:

	Slaughterhouses	*Cutting premises*
Adult bovines	0·086	0·011
Calves	0·101	0·011
Horses	0·072	0·011
Sheep and Goats	0·063	0·011
Pigs	0·075	0·011
Chickens	0·022	0·0012
Turkeys	0·022	0·007
Ducks	0·022	0·0079
Guinea Fowl	0·022	0·0004

In Denmark we believe that charges at exporting slaughterhouses are based on following:

For pigs— the actual cost of inspection.

For cattle—the "EC Standard" charge.

For poultry—approximately 250 per cent. of the "EC Standard" charge (two thirds of the actual cost).

Bananas

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what steps the Government are taking to ensure that bananas are removed from the GATT Uruguay round of negotiations;

(2) how commitments under the Lomé convention towards African, Caribbean and Pacific banana suppliers would be honoured under a GATT agreement based on the Dunkel text of 20 December.

Mr. Curry: The European Commission has made no proposals on bananas in the GATT Round context. It is continuing to study the question. Tariffication, if it simply followed the method set out in the Dunkel paper as we understand it, would not appear to provide sufficient protection for traditional ACP suppliers of the United Kingdom market. We remain committed to fulfilling our obligations under the Lomé convention and to bringing the GATT round to an early and successful conclusion; the Government have made representations to the Commission to urge it to ensure that our Lomé commitments are not overlooked in the GATT negotiations.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the numbers of confirmed cases of BSE in each county in England in 1992, to the latest available date.

Mr. Gummer: For the reasons given in the answer to the hon. Member on 23 May 1991, *Official Report,* column *559,* these figures are currently unavailable.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information is available concerning the range of species of mammals to which bovine spongiform encephalopathy has not been transferred by experimental injection.

Mr. Maclean: In my answer to the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) on 4 March I gave details of the species which had been experimentally infected with BSE. No other species has succumbed to experimental infection.

Central Science Laboratory

Sir Michael Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made towards establishing the central science laboratory as an executive agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I am pleased to confirm that the central science laboratory will become an executive agency with effect from 1 April 1992.

Cost recovery will provide us with an important means of judging the efficiency of this agency. Additional performance measures relating to the objectives of the agency will also be used to measure operating efficiency and quality of service.

The financial and efficiency targets for the central science laboratory for 1992-93 will be:

100 per cent. recovery of full costs;

an overall efficiency gain of 2 per cent.;

a reduction of 1·5 per cent. in real terms of representative unit costs for services.

The targets for delivery of services by the central science laboratory will be:

at least 90 per cent. of work completed to time and within budget;

at least 95 per cent. of contracts delivered to the customer's satisfaction.

The central science laboratory will implement during 1992-93 arrangements for the independent assessment of the quality of the scientific work and publications.

The measures of performance for the agency are set out in the framework document, copies of which will be placed in the Library of the House by 1 April.

ADAS

Mr. Harris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made towards establishing the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service as an executive agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I are pleased to confirm that ADAS will become an executive agency with effect from 1 April 1992.

Cost recovery will provide us with an important means of judging the efficiency of this agency. Additional performance measures relating to the objectives of the agency will also be used to measure operating efficiency and quality of service.

The financial and efficiency targets for ADAS for 1992-93 will be:

recovery of its full economic costs, through charges to its customers, including the Departments (MAFF and Welsh Office). In the case of certain charged advisory services, ADAS will recover 41 per cent. of the costs from charges to the ultimate beneficiaries and the remainder will be met by the Departments. In other cases ADAS will recover the full costs from the customer;

an overall efficiency improvement of a 2 per cent. reduction in average total cost per direct hour charged to contracts;

at least a 6 per cent. reduction in average time taken to collect debts due to ADAS from non-Departmental customers;

The targets for delivery of services by ADAS will be:

achieving improvements in customer satisfaction, as evidenced in ADAS surveys, the procedures for which will be developed by 30 June 1992;

at least 80 per cent. of Research and Development project milestones to be met.

The measures for performance for the agency are set out in the framework document, copies of which will be placed in the Library of the House by 1 April.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Market Testing Programme

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list each private sector consultancy firm which has been retained by each agency within his Department, and for his Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme; and whether the appointment in each case was the result of competitive tendering.

Dr. Mawhinney: Two experienced private sector consultants are currently retained to advise on the market testing programmes of the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments. As their work involves them in the security field I do not wish to identify them by name but I can confirm that they were appointed after competitive tendering.

Coastal Erosion

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how much money has been spent on dealing with the effects of coastal erosion *(a)* along the County Down coast and *(b)* in all of Northern Ireland, in each of the last five years;

(2) if he will list the schemes which have been undertaken to prevent coastal erosion within Northern Ireland; and if he will list each of the proposed schemes, with planned commencement dates and costs in each case.

Mr. Needham: It is extremely difficult to distinguish between works intended to prevent coastal erosion and works to deal with its effects. The objective is usually the same and the actual works can often coincide.

The following amounts have been spent by the Department of the Environment's roads service on dealing with coastal erosion in the last five financial years:

County Down coast

Financial year	*Amount £'000*
1987-88	51
1988-89	41
1989-90	33
1990-91	156
1991-92	152

Northern Ireland

Financial year	*Amount £'000*
1987-88	159
1988-89	167
1989-90	122
1990-91	241
1991-92	221

In the last five financial years, the following schemes have been undertaken by the roads service to deal with coastal erosion in areas where the stability of a road was threatened:

Year and scheme

1987-88

Barrhall road, Portaferry—new sea wall.

A2 North of Ballyhalbert—rock armouring.

Cushendun/Waterfoot/Murlough bay—general routine repairs.

A2 between Larne/Garron Point—general routine repairs.

1988-89

A20 Newtownards/Greyabbey—reconstruction of sea wall.

Magilligan Point, Londonderry—general routine repairs.

Cushendun/Waterfoot/Murlough bay—general routine repairs.

A2 between Larne/Garron Point—general routine repairs.

1989-90

Seafront road, Cultra—strengthening of existing sea wall.

Minerstown, County Down—rock armouring.

Magilligan Point, Londonderry—general routine repairs.

Cushendun/Waterfoot/Murlough bay—general routine repairs.

A2 between Larne/Garron Point—general routine repairs.

1990-91

A20 Newtownards-Greyabbey, A20 Greyabbey-Kircubbin, Loughshore road-Portaferry—storm repair work and provision of rock armouring.

Culmore Point, Londonderry, Benone, Limavady, Cushendun/Waterfoot/Murlough bay, A2 between Larne/Garron Point—general routine repairs.

1991-92

Minerstown, County Down, Killard, County Down, Kilclief, County Down—general routine repairs.

Kinnegar, Holywood—replacement of gabions.

A20 Newtownards/Cunningburn road—rock armouring and sea wall repairs.

Shore road, Portaferry—sea wall repairs.

Culmore Point, Londonderry, Cushendun/Waterfoot/Murlough bay, A2 between Larne/Garron Point—general routine repairs.

The following schemes are proposed for the 1992-93 financial year:

	£
Portballintrae	6,000
Garron Point	20,000
Seacliffe Road, Bangor	1,000
Killard, Co. Down	20,000-40,000

Other routine maintenance work will be carried out as requested.

Waste Recycling

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been taken in relation to the introduction of waste recycling schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Legislation for Northern Ireland containing provisions for waste management similar to those in part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 is in preparation. It will require district councils to include recycling as part of their waste management arrangements and to provide a recycling plan for the district.

In the interim, the Government will encourage the growing interest in recycling in Northern Ireland and support the many district councils, businesses and voluntary groups who are participating in recycling materials such as glass and paper.

Housing Estates

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is the age of housing estates built at *(a)* Shantallow, *(b)* Bogside, *(c)* Creggan, *(d)* Ardcarn, *(e)* Cregagh and *(f)* Moat View; and if he will state the number of houses in each estate;

(2) which of the estates at Shantallow, Bogside, Creggan, Ardcarn, Cregagh and Moat View had metal windows when constructed and which of them have had window replacements; and if he will indicate how many dwellings have had all window frames replaced and set out the cost.

Mr. Needham: These are matters for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chairman that the information requested is as follows:

NIHE Estate	*Date of construction*	*Number of dwellings constructed*	*With metal window frames*	*Metal window frames replaced*	*Estimated costs of window replacement £*
Shantallow	Pre 1945	1	—	—	
	1945-1960	9	9	9	
	1961-1971	531	304	304	
	Total	541	313	313	316,000
Bogside	Pre 1945	8	—	—	
	1945-1960	37	37	37	
	1961-1971	448	419	318	
	Post 1971	228	166	41	
	Total	721	622	396	326,000
Creggan	1945-1960	1,385	1,385	885	
	1961-1971	317	240	77	
	Post 1971	41	29	—	
	Total	1,743	1,654	962	876,000
Ardcarn	1945-1960	152	152	[1]36	46,000
Cregagh	1945-1960	709	622	—	
	1961-1971	157	157	157	
	Total	866	779	157	157,000
Moatview	1945-1960	55	55	—	—

[1] Scheme is currently in progress.

Youth Training Programme

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent by each of the education and library boards on YTP provision in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The amounts are as follows:

Education and library boards	*Financial years* 1986-87 £ million	1987-88 £ million	1988-89 £ million	1989-90 £ million	1990-91 £ million
Belfast	1·264	1·161	1·467	1·415	2·524
North-Eastern	1·099	1·054	1·462	1·304	2·189
South-Eastern	1·116	1·081	1·285	1·284	2·287
Western	1·237	1·224	1·230	1·007	1·485
Southern	1·391	1·034	1·080	1·203	1·256

Notes:

1. The figures represent recurrent and capital expenditure. For the years 1986-87 to 1989-90 they are taken from the boards' audited accounts and for 1990-91 from the unaudited accounts.
2. The figures do not include expenditure on the salaries of full-time teachers engaged on YTP. For the years in question these were paid directly by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many young people have been employed on youth training programmes organised by further education colleges in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of trainees fluctuates during the year but the average number of full-time trainees involved on YT programmes in further education colleges was as follows:

Academic year	*Average occupancy*
1986-87	1,906
1987-88	1,886
1988-89	1,812
1989-90	1,730
1990-91	3,455

Right of Way, Carrivemoragh

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to ensure that Banbridge district council assert the right of way in the constituency of South Down known as the Carrivemoragh mass pad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: I understand that following research by its own officers, Banbridge district council obtained senior counsel's advice in the matter of the alleged right of way known as Carrivemoragh mass pad. After considering that advice, the council decided not to assert a right of way on this path.

There is no reason for me to intervene.

Correspondence

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he intends to answer the letter of the hon. Member for Upper Bann of 5 February.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have written to the hon. Gentleman.

Dentists

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent changes have been proposed for charges by dentists in Northern Ireland; how this relates to the increase awarded by the salary review body; how many dentists withdrew from the national health service in Northern Ireland in the most recent 12 months for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The maximum charge payable by a patient for a course of dental treatment will be increased from £200 to £225 with effect from 1 April 1992. There will be no change in the proportional charge payable by patients, which will remain at 75 per cent. of the cost up to the maximum charge.

The increase in the maximum charge is not related to the increase recently recommended by the doctors and dentists review body.

No dentists in Northern Ireland withdrew from providing health service treatment in the 12 months prior to 1 March 1992.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the numbers of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in each county in Northern Ireland in 1992, to the latest available date.

Mr. Hanley: As of 5 March 1992 the information is as follows:

County	*Numbers*
Antrim	15
Armagh	2
Down	10
Fermanagh	0
Londonderry	7
Tyrone	5
Total	39

There are 1·5 million cattle in Northern Ireland and there have been a total of 342 confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in Northern Ireland to date (5 March 1992).

Water and Sewerage Services

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in re-organising water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: It is planned to transfer the water and sewerage functions of the Department of the Environment to a Government-owned company on 1 April 1993. The necessary arrangements for this, including the preparation of a draft order, are being taken forward as a matter of priority.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he is yet in a position to respond to the second report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights "Religious and Political Discrimination and Equality of Opportunity in Northern Ireland" (Cm 1107); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have today written to the chairman of the commission responding to its second report. A copy of my letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

I welcomed the report when it was laid before Parliament and published in June 1990. It is a valuable report which, as I made clear at that time, has required careful study by the Government. The Government will continue to examine the recommendations in consultation with the commission and other interested parties.

Mr. Peter Duggan

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the RUC on the progress of police inquiries into the identification of the person alleged to have attempted to murder Mr. Peter Duggan in Downpatrick in January 1985.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 3 March 1992]:* There is no record of an attempt to murder Mr. Peter Duggan in Downpatrick in January 1985. The circumstances surrounding the attack on him in January 1988 in the Downpatrick area have been investigated by the RUC, and two women were convicted in September 1988 of the false imprisonment of Mr. Duggan. Apart from this, the Director of Public Prosecutions has considered police reports of their investigations into this incident and has directed no prosecution.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Court of Appeal

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the convictions quashed by the Court of Appeal since 1982 and give the reason in each case.

The Attorney-General: The information requested on the reasons for quashing individual appeals could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the number of convictions quashed by the Court of Appeal are available but only from 1987. They are as follows:

Year	*Number*
1987	192
1988	223
1989	211
1990	256
1991	269

Consolidation Legislation

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Attorney-General what areas of statute law are currently being considered for consolidation legislation; and if he will indicate at what stage the procedures are in each case.

The Attorney-General: During the current Session, 11 consolidation Bills have been introduced into Parliament.

Seven of these Bills have already received Royal Assent and have become the Social Security Administration Act 1992, the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992, the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, the Social Security Contributions and Benefits (Northern Ireland) Act 1992, the Social Security (Consequential Provisions) Act 1992, the Social Security (Consequential Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 and the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992. Of the other four Bills, the Protection of Badgers Bill, the Radioactive Substances Bill and the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Bill are awaiting their Second Reading in this House, while the Tribunals and Inquiries Bill is awaiting its Committee stage in another place.

Work is continuing at the Law Commission to prepare consolidation Bills on clean air, education, stamp duties, the armed forces, merchant shipping, the powers of criminal courts and solicitors. Work is continuing at the Scottish Law Commission to prepare consolidation Bills on crofters, the Scottish Land Court, the national health service, criminal procedure, lands clauses and town and country planning. In Northern Ireland, work is continuing on a consolidation Bill on pension schemes.

Central Taxation Units

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Attorney-General how many claims for taxation at the central taxation units are still awaiting taxing; what is the change over the last six months; and when it is expected they will be dealt with.

The Attorney-General: At the end of February 1992, there were 1,545 claims awaiting determination by the central taxing teams. At the end of August 1991, there were 2,201 claims outstanding. Targets have now been established that 75 per cent. of claims should be determined within three months of the claim becoming ready to tax—when all related claims have been lodged —and that all claims should be determined within six months of becoming ready to tax. At the end of January 1992 three out of five teams were meeting this target. All the teams are expected to be meeting their targets by the end of July 1992.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Attorney-General what estimate he has made of the effect on public expenditure of the setting up of the central taxation units for barristers and solicitors' fees; and how much of this is due to notional interest saved to the Treasury by reason of changes in the timing of payments.

The Attorney-General: The central taxing teams were established last year in order to group together those officials most experienced in the assessment of bills submitted for the most complex and weighty claims for work done by solicitors and barristers in Crown court cases. The purpose of the establishment of these teams was to ensure that these assessments are dealt with in a consistent and proper way, in accordance with the legal aid regulations. No estimate has been made as to how those bills might have been assessed if the teams had not been in existence.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Attorney-General how many claims, which will be dealt with by the central taxation unit, have been submitted to the local court and are waiting to be called for from those courts by the central taxation units.

The Attorney-General: It is not possible to give the information requested. When a claim is submitted which may be for the central taxing team to determine, it is held until all other claims in relation to that case have been lodged. It is not until that stage that a decision can be taken about whether the claim is to be determined by the team or within the court. Under the regulations, practitioners have three months after the completion of the trial in which to lodge their claims.

Asil Nadir

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Attorney-General what evidence the Director of Public Prosecutions has received in connection with breaches of company law by companies formerly controlled by Asil Nadir, concerning political donations; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: None.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the amendments made to the code for Crown prosecution since the publication of the annual report of the Crown prosecution service for 1990-91.

The Attorney-General: Five amendments have been made to the code for Crown prosecutors since the publication of the Crown prosecution service's annual report for 1990-91. These amendments were issued to Crown prosecutors in January 1992 and may be summarised as follows:

> The public interest criteria
> The public interest criteria will only arise for consideration once the Crown Prosecutor is satisfied that the evidence itself can justify proceedings.
>
> (i) Paragraph 8
> The first amendment to this paragraph emphasises that the interests of the victim are an important factor to be taken into account in determining whether or not a prosecution is required, whilst re-affirming the primacy of overall public interest considerations.
>
> (ii) Paragraph 8
> This paragraph has been further amended by the identification of "racial motivation" as an aggravating feature when considering whether the public interest requires the institution of proceedings.
>
> (iii) Paragraph 8 (v)—Mental illness or stress
> This part of the code has been re-written. It now clearly sets out that there is a rebuttable presumption that a person suffering from a mental disorder should not be prosecuted unless there is a wider public interest requirement for such action.
>
> Mode of trial
> (iv) Paragraph 18
> This paragraph has been revised as a result of the Mode of Trial Guidelines contained within the Practice Note issued by the Lord Chief Justice [1990] 1 WLR 1439.
>
> (v) Paragraph 19
> The decision of the House of Lords in R *v.* Brentwood Justices, ex parte Nicholls means that the guidance formerly contained in this paragraph concerning the position of the co-accused in mode of trial decisions is no longer accurate. The paragraph has accordingly been deleted and other paragraphs renumbered.

Arrangements have been made for these and previous amendments to be consolidated and printed in a new booklet containing the code, which is now available for distribution. I will cause a copy to be placed in the Library of both Houses. I commend the code in its amended form to all prosecuting authorities and to those, such as the police, who are responsible for the institution of criminal proceedings.

SCOTLAND

Crime, Glasgow

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what police powers Acts remain available within the boundaries of the city of Glasgow to combat crime.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The powers vested in the police in Glasgow are the same as elsewhere in Scotland and are found in the common law of Scotland and in relevant statutes. Questions about local legislation and byelaws should be addressed to the relevant local authority.

Electoral Registers

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the electorate for each parliamentary constituency in Scotland according to the new electoral registers published on 15 February.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The total electorate for each parliamentary constituency in Scotland, as at 16 February 1992, is as follows:

Parliamentary electors: 1992 register: by constituency (alphabetical order)

Constituency	*Total*
Scotland	3,929,112
Aberdeen, North	60,623
Aberdeen, South	59,230
Angus, East	63,637
Argyll and Bute	48,436
Ayr	66,284
Banff and Buchan	65,631
Caithness and Sutherland	31,173
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	56,024
Central Fife	56,543
Clackmannan	49,441
Clydebank and Milngavie	47,773
Clydesdale	62,684
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	47,155
Cunninghame, North	55,490
Cunninghame, South	49,745
Dumbarton	57,894
Dumfries	61,773
Dundee, East	59,328
Dundee, West	60,386
Dunfermline, East	50,452
Dunfermline, West	51,310
East Kilbride	64,824
East Lothian	67,588
Eastwood	64,560
Edinburgh, Central	56,839
Edinburgh, East	46,157
Edinburgh, Leith	57,073
Edinburgh, Pentlands	56,433
Edinburgh, South	61,999
Edinburgh, West	59,702
Falkirk, East	52,387
Falkirk, West	50,631
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	54,977
Glasgow, Cathcart	45,149
Glasgow, Central	48,383
Glasgow, Garscadden	41,675
Glasgow, Govan	46,199
Glasgow, Hillhead	57,586
Glasgow, Maryhill	48,791
Glasgow, Pollok	46,655
Glasgow, Provan	36,986
Glasgow, Rutherglen	53,325
Glasgow, Shettleston	52,381
Glasgow, Springburn	46,216
Gordon	81,097
Greenock and Port Glasgow	52,661
Hamilton	62,347
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	70,164
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	62,777
Kincardine and Deeside	67,216
Kirkcaldy	52,191
Linlithgow	61,979
Livingston	62,122
Midlothian	61,178
Monklands, East	49,059
Monklands, West	49,935
Moray	63,944
Motherwell, North	58,106
Motherwell, South	50,674
North East Fife	54,196
North Tayside	56,353
Orkney and Shetland	31,837
Paisley, North	46,867
Paisley, South	48,385
Perth and Kinross	65,826
Renfrew, West and Inverclyde	58,897
Ross, Cromarty and Skye	56,112
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	44,001
Stirling	58,814
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	61,924
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	39,907
Western Isles	23,015

Strathclyde Structure Plan

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the source of estimated needs for land he inserted in the Strathclyde regional council structure plan.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend took account of information provided by Strathclyde regional council in its structure plan as submitted, of representations received and of evidence from a range of sources, before reaching his decision to propose the modifications to the Strathclyde structure plan update 1990, announced on 6 February 1992.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to include estimates of land needs from groups other than the Scottish House Builders Association in the modified Strathclyde regional council structure plan.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend will be prepared to consider representations from any interested parties before reaching his decision on whether or not to approve the Strathclyde structure plan update 1990.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the numbers of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in each region of Scotland in 1992, to the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: For the reasons given in the reply by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the hon. Member on 23 May 1991, *Official Report*, column 559, these figures are not available.

Child Care Policy Inquiry

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give an estimate of (a) the total costs incurred to date by the inquiry into child care policy in Fife and *(b)* of the costs of the chairman, the adviser and the clerk with appropriate office support for a period of three years;

(2) if he will give an estimate of the costs incurred by *(a)* Fife regional council and *(b)* the other principal parties represented at the inquiry into child care policy in Fife.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The estimated total costs incurred to date by the Scottish Office in relation to the inquiry is £792,000. This includes £500,000 in respect of the costs of the chairman, the adviser and the clerk with appropriate office support. I have no information on the costs incurred by others who are parties to the inquiry.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland is he will list those inquiries into child care policy in Scotland which have taken more than two years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Three inquiries have been established under section 99 of the Childrens Act 1975. Of these only the Fife inquiry has extended beyond two years of the date of establishment.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the inquiry into child care policy in Fife will be completed; when the report will be submitted; and whether it will be published.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend has been advised by the chairman of the inquiry that he expects to submit his report at the end of April. As soon as he has considered the report my right hon. Friend will make a decision about publication.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will exercise the powers available to him under section 210(8) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to meet the costs incurred by Fife regional council and the other parties to the inquiry into child care policies in Fife from central Government funds;

(2) if he will exercise the powers available to him under section 210(7) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to meet the total costs incurred by the inquiry into child care policy in Fife from central Government funds.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Once my right hon. Friend receives the report of the inquiry into child care services in Fife, he will consider whether and in what way to exercise the powers contained in section 210 sub-sections (7) and (8) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

Drinking Water

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish a report on drinking water quality in Scotland in 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A report has been published today by the Scottish Office Environment Department giving a national overview of drinking water quality in Scotland in the period 1 July to 31 December 1990, the first six months of monitoring under the Water Supply (Water Quality) (Scotland) Regulations 1990. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library. The report shows that the overall level of compliance with the quality standards was high, some 97 per cent. of all analytical results having met the requirements. For 48 of the 55 numerical standards in the regulations, 99·6 per cent. of all analytical results complied. The failures to meet quality standards fully did not represent a risk to public health.

Roads Directorate

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he proposes to publish the report of the efficiency scrutiny into the Scottish Office roads directorate carried out in 1990.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A copy of the efficiency scrutiny report and of the action plan on implementation of the report's recommendations have been lodged in the House Libraries. Copies of both are available for purchase from the library in New St. Andrew's house.

Assisted Places Scheme

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce the income scale which will apply to the assisted places scheme in Scotland in school session 1992-93.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: For school session 1992-93, I propose to lay regulations before the House in due course providing for progressive parental contribution for one assisted pupil in relation to family income as follows:

Part of relevant income to which the specified percentage applies

	Parental Contribution (percentage)
That part (if any) which exceeds £9,218 but which does not exceed £10,023	9
That part (if any) which exceeds £10,023 but does not exceed £10,842	12
That part (if any) which exceeds £10,842 but does not exceed £12,467	15
That part (if any) which exceeds £12,467 but does not exceed £14,965	21
That part (if any) which exceeds £14,965 but does not exceed £18,227	24
That part (if any) which exceeds £18,227	33

The relevant income scale is open ended, but the remission can, of course, be given only where the parental contribution is less than the school tuition fee.

Training, Scotland

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were in training through *(a)* youth training and *(b)* employment training in each month from January 1991 to January 1992 inclusive in each of (i) Scotland, (ii) Renfrew, Dunbarton and Argyll, (iii) Lothian and Borders, (iv) Lanarkshire, (v) Highlands and Islands, (vi) Grampian and Tayside, (vii) Glasgow city, (viii) Central and Fife and (ix) Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* The information sought is not available for the period from January 1991 to March 1991 inclusive, nor is it available thereafter in the format requested.

The information shown in the tables gives the number of youth training and employment training participants for each month from April 1991 to January 1992 inclusive in each of the local enterprise company areas served by Scottish Enterprise and for Highlands and Islands and Scotland as a whole.

Youth training: Numbers in training
April 1991 to January 1992

Local enterprise company	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*	*January*
Enterprise Ayrshire	3,744	3,602	3,742	3,838	3,701	3,740	3,659	3,980	3,326	3,657
Scottish Borders Enterprise	669	595	621	595	603	601	672	657	642	643
Dumfries and Galloway Enterprise	1,141	1,094	1,105	1,056	1,105	1,061	1,036	926	1,064	1,016
Dunbartonshire Enterprise	1,974	1,[illegible]9	1,955	1,932	1,946	1,922	1,805	1,802	1,535	1,796
Fife Enterprise	3,010	3,016	3,295	3,269	3,363	3,373	3,393	3,330	3,263	3,422
Forth Valley Enterprise	2,706	2,613	2,638	2,707	2,621	2,628	2,637	2,629	2,618	2,720
Glasgow Development Agency	5,856	5,561	5,604	5,664	5,733	5,841	5,753	5,587	5,794	5,800
Grampian Enterprise	1,693	1,419	1,446	1,404	1,439	1,716	1,703	1,748	1,817	1,920
Lanarkshire Development Agency	3,669	3,719	3,891	3,566	3,679	3,579	3,933	4,023	4,089	4,441
Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise	4,257	4,087	4,370	4,180	4,402	4,373	4,359	4,325	4,321	4,173
Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise	617	613	638	589	617	578	590	530	565	604
Renfrewshire Enterprise	2,432	2,339	2,552	2,501	2,395	2,325	2,301	2,262	2,272	2,334
Scottish Enterprise Tayside	2,927	2,804	2,840	2,736	2,767	2,763	2,736	2,751	2,717	2,872
Highlands and Islands Total[1]	2,370	2,396	2,511	2,248	2,345	2,478	2,375	2,437	2,496	2,519
SCOTLAND TOTAL	37,065	35,797	37,208	36,285	36,716	36,978	36,952	36,987	36,519	37,917

[1] The Highlands and Islands total includes Argyll but excludes Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey.

Employment training: Numbers in training
April 1991 to January 1992

Local enterprise company	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*	*January*
Enterprise Ayrshire	2,160	1,891	1,543	1,483	1,472	1,497	1,563	1,772	1,575	1,474
Scottish Borders Enterprise	191	213	196	183	183	195	194	199	176	198
Dumfries and Galloway Enterprise	550	556	563	533	561	625	630	602	638	617
Dunbartonshire Enterprise	856	890	955	907	919	889	878	836	839	842
Fife Enterprise	1,176	1,041	895	880	904	960	1,043	1,062	1,111	1,127
Forth Valley Enterprise	786	716	664	673	667	674	730	759	738	814
Glasgow Development Agency	6,264	5,640	5,160	4,780	4,611	4,289	4,272	4,198	4,071	4,100
Grampian Enterprise	800	770	750	750	730	750	780	750	730	728
Lanarkshire Development Agency	1,768	1,696	1,748	1,769	1,708	1,727	1,828	1,798	1,736	1,706
Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise	2,174	2,050	2,022	2,028	2,006	2,090	2,301	2,400	2,457	2,381
Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise	337	315	284	236	213	212	222	237	220	234
Renfrewshire Enterprise	1,307	1,240	1,164	1,168	1,144	1,118	1,064	1,115	1,025	984
Scottish Enterprise Tayside	1,202	1,155	1,153	1,119	1,138	1,166	1,254	1,313	1,323	1,334
Highlands and Islands Total[1]	1,122	1,069	988	988	1,018	1,052	1,077	1,113	999	1,248
SCOTLAND TOTAL	20,693	19,242	18,085	17,497	17,274	17,244	17,836	18,154	17,638	17,787

[1] The Highlands and Islands total includes Argyll but excludes Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey.

Air Pollution

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the most recent figures on air pollution levels in Scotland in each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* The most recent published information on air pollution can be found at section 3 of "The Scottish Environment—Statistics" Issue No. 2 (1989). The next issue will be published shortly.

Warren Spring Laboratory also compiles data on the atmospheric concentrations of a number of substances from a United Kingdom-wide network of monitoring stations. The available data from the Scottish sites are set out in tables 1 to 5. All data are expressed as average hourly readings for each month for the available years.

Table 1—Nitrogen Dioxide

	Jan.	*Feb.*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*Aug.*	*Sept.*	*Oct.*	*Nov.*	*Dec.*
(a) Glasgow												
1987	34	38	35	35	28	30	24	23	24	33	35	38
1988	31	33	34	38	32	26	22	24	25	31	36	28
1989	23	23	25	32	24	24	26	20	24	29	35	38
1990	19	21	21	30	32	27	24	21	26	26	30	27
1991	24	29	29	26	26	25	24	21	27	27	26	30
(b) Strath Vaich—Ross and Cromarty												
1990	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·9	0·9	0·6
1991	2·1	2·3	3·8	1·4	0·9	1·3	2·1	1·3	0·5	1·7	0·7	1·5

Note: All measurements expressed as parts per billion (ppb).

Table 2—Nitric Oxide

	Jan.	*Feb.*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*Aug.*	*Sept.*	*Oct.*	*Nov.*	*Dec.*
(a) Glasgow												
1987	84	104	38	21	19	25	23	33	33	80	92	122
1988	68	38	43	47	34	36	30	29	37	86	108	42
1989	24	28	36	46	25	31	31	25	48	38	126	195
1990	33	27	24	37	43	31	31	26	44	60	157	104
1991	83	97	65	32	32	35	34	32	47	78	76	135
(b) Strath Vaich												
1990	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·1	0·1	0·1
1991	0·2	0·4	0·5	0·3	0·1	0·3	1·1	0·8	0·1	0·2	0·3	0·3

Note: All measurements are expressed as parts per billion (ppb).

Table 3—Carbon Monoxide

	Jan.	*Feb.*	*Mar.*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*Aug.*	*Sept.*	*Oct.*	*Nov.*	*Dec.*
Glasgow												
1989	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·6	0·7	1·0	1·1	2·2	3·1
1990	0·9	0·8	0·7	0·8	0·9	0·8	0·7	0·7	0·9	1·2	2·5	1·8
1991	1·2	1·5	1·3	1·0	1·1	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·4	1·6	1·9	2·4

Note: All measurements expressed as parts per million.

Table 4—Sulphur Dioxide

	Jan.	*Feb.*	*Mar.*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*Aug.*	*Sept.*	*Oct.*	*Nov.*	*Dec.*
Strath Vaich												
1990	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·7	0·3	0·2
1991	1·4	1·7	1·2	0·6	0·1	0·2	0·5	0·2	n.a.	1·2	0·3	0·6

Note: All measurements expressed as parts per billion (ppb).

Table 5—Ozone

	Jan	*Feb*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*Aug*	*Sept*	*Oct*	*Nov*	*Dec*
(a) Penicuik												
1987	16	18	27	36	34	24	23	20	20	17	17	17
1988	22	29	28	28	37	30	29	25	26	22	22	28
1989	29	32	35	33	35	29	28	24	22	24	18	15
1990	28	34	36	35	31	29	26	22	23	23	19	24
1991	20	20	20	28	22	25	27	26	24	20	22	17
(b) Eskdalemuir												
1987	16	19	21	31	30	21	21	19	15	17	17	18
1988	20	25	30	26	34	30	28	24	24	22	18	26
1989	26	30	34	35	34	31	31	25	23	24	18	19
1990	26	35	35	35	36	30	28	22	22	23	19	23
1991	19	25	25	33	27	27	31	28	27	22	22	15
(c) Strath Vaich												
1987	—	—	41	42	29	34	29	29	30	28	26	28
1988	28	36	36	37	44	31	32	28	34	32	33	36
1989	36	38	33	35	42	33	27	25	28	32	28	27
1990	30	36	38	40	40	36	30	27	30	31	27	31
1991	31	32	32	43	39	34	35	32	27	25	25	20

Note: All measurements expressed as parts per billion (ppb).

Food Industry

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of people employed in the food industry in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 9 March 1992]*: The latest figure available, showing the number of people employed in the food industry in Scotland, comes from the 1989 Employment Department census of employment. The figure is 49,400.

Scottish Economy

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish an index of production and construction for Scotland by market sector, indicating an annual figure for each year from 1974 up to and including 1990; and if he will give the figures for the first three quarters of 1991.

Mr. Allan Stewart: *[holding answer 9 March 1992]:* An index of production and construction for Scotland (1985 = 100) by market sector, with annual figures for each year from 1974 up to and including 1990, and quarterly figures for the first three quarters of 1991, is set out in the table.

	Production Industries	*Consumer Goods*			*Investment Goods*	*Intermediate Goods*	*Construction*
		Total	*Durable*	*Non-durable*			
1974	103·3	111·8	176	105	92·1	105·1	113·9
1975	99·7	106·5	158	102	94·8	98·8	119·0
1976	100·1	109·5	165	104	89·9	100·6	115·6
1977	99·8	111·8	160	107	88·6	99·3	120·3
1978	100·5	115·7	162	111	85·1	100·8	119·9
1979	101·1	113·9	149	110	88·2	101·3	113·8
1980	95·0	106·6	124	105	86·3	93·4	107·5
1981	93·0	101·0	109	100	87·7	91·3	93·6
1982	93·5	99·0	114	98	91·6	91·3	96·4
1983	93·2	95·9	88	97	90·7	93·1	98·6
1984	97·2	98·1	93	99	95·0	97·9	98·2
1985	100·0	100·0	100	100	100·0	100·0	100·0
1986	97·8	99·5	93	100	96·5	97·5	98·4
1987	99·7	102·0	93	103	98·0	99·3	96·3
1988	107·1	106·5	104	107	108·2	106·9	101·9
1989	111·7	109·1	114	109	115·4	111·1	101·6
1990	114·1	112·5	111	113	114·1	115·1	107·0
[illegible]91[1]	109·6	105·8	108	106	110·4	111·4	105·5
1[illegible]91[2]	109·5	106·1	110	106	109·9	111·3	107·5
1991[3]	110·2	107·2	112	107	112·5	110·6	110·7

Source: Index of Industrial Production and Construction for Scotland

[1] 1st qtr

[2] 2nd qtr

[3] 3rd qtr

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the annual average change in *(a)* total output and *(b)* manufacturing output in real terms between (i) 1974 and 1979 and (ii) 1979 and 1990 in (1) Scotland and (2) the United Kingdom.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 9 March 1992]:* The annual average changes in *(a)* total output and *(b)* manufacturing output in real terms between (i) 1974 and 1979 and (ii) 1979 and 1989, the latest year for which all figures are available, in (1) Scotland and (2) the United Kingdom are set out in the table:

	Annual average change	
	Scotland	*United Kingdom*
1974-79		
Total output	+1·1[1]	+2·0[2]
Manufacturing output	−1·2[3]	−0·6[4]
1979-89		
Total output	+1·8[1]	+2·2[2]
Manufacturing output	+1·1[3]	+1·3[4]

Note: The Scottish and United Kingdom measures of total output are on a different basis and are therefore not directly comparable. Scottish data are output-based GDP and United Kingdom data are average GDP.

Sources:

[1] The Scottish Office Industry Department.

[2] Central Statistical Office.

[3] Index of Production and Construction for Scotland.

[4] Index of Production and Construction for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish an updated table of Scotland's share of United Kingdom gross domestic product per head of population excluding the continental shelf for each year since 1961.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 9 March 1992]:* The information requested is available on a consistent basis only from 1971 onward. The table gives the requested information up to 1990 the latest year for which figures are available.

Year	*Scottish gross domestic product per head as a percentage of the United Kingdom (excluding continental shelf)*
1971	93·8
1972	93·6
1973	95·4
1974	95·9
1975	96·9
1976	98·4
1977	97·1
1978	94·9
1979	94·8
1980	94·4
1981	96·7
1982	97·3
1983	97·5
1984	96·1
1985	95·6
1986	94·7
1987	93·9
1988	92·9
1989	92·7
[1]1990	92·6

[1] Provisional.

Source: Central Statistical Office regional accounts.

Note: A full set of regional accounts figures is available in the House of Commons Library.

Brussels (Secondees)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were seconded from the Scottish Office to the United Kingdom's permanent representation to the European Community in Brussels, in 1990 and 1991; and if he will break these figures down by Scottish Office department.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* A Scottish Office official with a background in the Agriculture and Fisheries Department was seconded to the office of the United Kingdom's permanent representative to the European Communities between April 1987 and

September 1990; a Scottish Office official with experience in a number of Scottish Office departments was seconded in October 1990 and continues in post.

ScotRail

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the director or representatives of ScotRail; what issues were discussed; what future meetings are scheduled; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* Regular contact is maintained with British Rail by Scottish Office Ministers and officials. Such contacts cover a wide range of topics relating to rail services in Scotland.

Homelessness

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total in each district council area of households applying as homeless, by household type, for 1990-91.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 March 1992]:* The table gives the available information for the 31,709 applicant households in 1990-91 for whom case returns have been received from local authorities. It is estimated that in 1990-91 there were 34,600 applicant households under the homeless persons legislation in Scotland.

Applicant households under the homeless persons legislation 1990-91, by type of household

Area	*All applicants housholds*[1]	*Under 18*	*One person households* 18-24	25 and over and under retirement	*retirement age and over*	*One parent households* Parent aged under 25	Parent aged 25 and over	*Couple* Without children	With children	*Other household type*
SCOTLAND	31,709	2,735	4,398	5,539	940	3,774	7,670	1,829	4,325	499
Borders										
Berwickshire	16	—	—	2	—	2	3	—	7	2
Ettrick and Lauderdale	17	2	—	2	1	4	5	—	3	—
Roxburgh	109	5	10	22	1	25	13	8	21	4
Tweeddale	49	—	8	4	—	4	13	9	11	—
Central										
Clackmannan	517	54	79	94	8	43	94	54	74	17
Falkirk	1,300	66	217	201	26	134	291	112	201	52
Stirling	566	50	83	98	13	58	134	31	92	7
Dumfries and Galloway										
Annandale and Eskdale	97	2	2	12	6	5	27	14	27	2
Nithsdale	600	26	89	119	17	58	111	73	102	5
Stewartry	90	—	2	2	8	8	34	14	19	3
Wigtown	105	1	7	3	5	31	23	6	27	2
Fife										
Dunfermline	308	7	19	31	12	61	96	16	61	5
Kirkcaldy	1,325	77	163	183	29	185	298	128	248	14
North East Fife	476	14	68	76	19	37	91	71	94	6
Grampian										
Aberdeen	1,482	121	144	240	66	162	380	104	247	18
Banff and Buchan	225	11	8	25	10	19	70	16	60	6
Gordon	279	7	24	33	8	13	67	21	94	12
Kincardine and Deeside	45	—	—	—	—	2	22	1	17	3
Moray	194	4	10	19	13	14	58	16	59	1
Highland										
Badenoch and Strathspey	11	—	—	—	—	1	4	—	6	—
Caithness	7	—	2	—	—	2	1	—	1	1
Inverness	319	5	27	35	16	38	87	24	78	9
Lochaber	75	2	12	8	1	13	14	3	21	1
Nairn	40	1	1	2	1	6	12	4	12	1
Ross and Cromarty	105	10	9	7	6	12	25	9	24	3
Skye and Lochalsh	68	1	4	14	3	7	13	8	17	1
Sutherland	10	—	—	—	—	3	3	—	4	—
Lothian										
East Lothian	948	40	101	162	28	88	222	126	174	7
Edinburgh	2,253	271	207	226	68	476	667	76	236	26
Midlothian	143	5	7	21	3	32	32	10	26	7
West Lothian	532	50	101	94	4	47	120	45	64	7
Strathclyde										
Argyll and Bute	330	17	26	46	13	21	76	45	76	10
Bearsden and Milngavie	81	2	8	9	5	8	19	1	28	1
Clydebank	655	82	96	83	14	52	224	32	70	2
Clydesdale	446	30	57	89	15	28	98	44	80	5
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	420	13	44	34	4	58	142	23	98	4
Cumnock and Doon Valley	67	4	8	14	1	11	14	2	13	—
Cunninghame	445	36	54	36	13	93	116	26	64	7
Dumbarton	1,703	152	308	368	56	156	345	112	169	37
East Kilbride	521	47	88	94	19	38	144	22	65	4
Eastwood	10	—	—	—	—	2	3	1	3	1
Glasgow	8,459	1,074	1,409	2,277	231	893	1,762	166	552	95
Hamilton	329	18	18	36	13	52	113	15	63	1
Inverclyde	359	54	27	38	15	59	111	5	39	11
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	440	23	72	69	12	53	110	26	71	4
Kyle and Carrick	599	90	72	80	26	93	108	32	84	14
Monklands	309	30	55	79	12	21	74	14	20	4
Motherwell	983	41	173	182	30	90	188	111	150	18
Renfrew	937	45	225	101	28	139	217	35	102	45
Strathkelvin	313	2	10	19	16	53	104	20	89	—
Tayside										
Angus	467	48	30	47	10	57	173	15	84	3
Dundee	924	79	171	65	4	137	354	22	91	1
Perth and Kinross	431	9	11	9	24	48	103	54	167	6

Area	*All applicants housholds*[1]	*One person households*				*One parent households*		*Couple*		
		Under 18	*18-24*	*25 and over and under retirement*	*retirement age and over*	*Parent aged under 25*	*Parent aged 25 and over*	*Without children*	*With children*	*Other household type*
Islands Councils										
Orkney Islands	19	—	—	2	1	8	5	—	3	—
Shetland Islands	98	5	28	16	3	11	19	6	10	—
Western Isles	53	2	4	11	3	3	18	1	7	4

Sources: Case returns supplied to Scottish Office by district councils.

[1] All applicant households in 1990-91 for whom case returns have been supplied.

Child Care Law

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he intends to take to implement the recommendations of the Scottish Office review of child care law in Scotland; and what the timetable is for this.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 9 March 1992]:* Having consulted extensively on the recommendations of the child care law review, we shall take them into account along with the recommendations of the Orkney and Fife inquiries and the review of residential child care, when we come to prepare a White Paper later this year. The White Paper will set out our proposals for a range of reforms in the field of child care.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Auction Market Preferred Stock

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has referred the accountancy valuation status and practice of auction market preferred stock to the Accounting Standards Board.

Mr. Redwood: No. The Accounting Standards Board raised the question of auction market preferred shares in its recent discussion paper on accounting for capital instruments.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has had about the status of auction market preferred stock.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Bickershaw Colliery

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the communities affected by the closure of Bickershaw colliery will be eligible for EC RECHAR funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: Bickershaw colliery is within an area eligible for RECHAR grants. The allocation of grants to individual projects within eligible areas is a matter for the programme committees.

Applications for grants under the Lancashire RECHAR programme should be sent to the office of the Department of Trade and Industry in Manchester.

Inspectors' Reports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he published his Department's inspectors' report on the Animal Defence Society Ltd.

Mr. Redwood: On 17 April 1991.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 22 November 1991, *Official Report*, column *345*, if he will propose legislation under which any hon. Members may examine copies of the inspectors' reports given to trade associations but not yet published.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Financial Reporting Review Panel

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will launch an independent investigation of the operations of the financial reporting review panel.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Ramor Investigation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *347*, if he will provide a breakdown of the total cost of the Ramor investigation, showing fees paid to the inspector from the auditing firm.

Mr. Redwood: The accountant inspector was paid a total of £651,609 as follows:

	£
Inspector and accountancy support staff from his firm	568,762
Disbursements including VAT	82,847
	651,609

Pre-fitted Plugs

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list all the bodies he *(a)* has consulted and *(b)* intends to consult on regulations to require that all new electrical appliances are sold with a pre-fitted plug.

Mr. Leigh: My Department is currently drawing up a consultative list from industry, trade associations, the enforcement authorities and consumer bodies, including those representing the disabled, who have an interest in the proposed regulations.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which groups representing disabled groups he is consulting on his proposed regulations to require that all new electrical appliances are sold with a pre-fitted plug.

Mr. Leigh: My Department is currently drawing up a list of consultees with an interest in the proposed regulations, which will include representatives of the disabled.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 3 March, *Official*

Report, column *130*, on fitted plugs, what consideration he has given to drafting the regulations in such a way as to make it a requirement for pre-fitted plugs on electrical appliances to meet the requirements of disabled people including those with wasting muscles and other difficulties in manipulating appliances.

Mr. Leigh: The proposed regulations will not prevent manufacturers fitting approved plugs to their appliances which are adapted to meet the requirements of the disabled, although it must be expected that manufacturers will in the main fit the standard design 13 amp plug because this is most commonly used in the majority of households.

Moreover the type of plug and devices which assist the disabled will still be available for people who wish to continue to fit them to their appliances.

Eco-labelling

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has for amending the trade description legislation to take into account eco-labelling; and if he will propose that it should be an offence to claim a product is environmentally friendly if it has not been awarded an eco-label.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 9 March 1992]*: Many environmental claims are clearly within the scope of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968. We intend to amend the Act to put it beyond doubt that all such claims are covered as soon as parliamentary time permits. We do not think it would be right to outlaw environmental claims for goods not eligible to bear the eco-label but these claims will be subject to the Trade Descriptions Act.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

UNCED

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals his Department is developing on *(a)* extending literacy and *(b)* sharing scientific research costs and results for submission to the United Nations conference on environment and development in June.

Mr. Eggar: The Government give high priority to basic skills—that is literacy and numeracy—education for adults. The Further and Higher Education Act will strengthen the position of basic skills. The Further Education Funding Councils will be under a specific duty to secure adequate provision of basic skills education for adults.

The Government also support the sharing of scientific research costs when it is an appropriate and cost effective approach to a particular problem.

Data Protection

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether school governors and heads who use a computer to perform statutory duties are required to make a separate registration under the Data Protection Act 1984; what steps he is taking to indemnify them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: Guidance to schools on the implications of the Data Protection Act, issued last November, was prepared in consultation with the Data Protection Registrar. The guidance contained advice that school governing bodies and head teachers should register if, in connection with their statutory duties, they keep information containing personal data (as defined in the Act) that can be automatically processed. The guidance identified those duties which fall to either the governing body or head teacher.

The cost of registration under the Act was one of a range of pressures on LEAs which the Government took into account in fixing education standard spending at a level 7 per cent. higher than in 1991-92. Registration lasts for three years, and may cover as many purposes as appropriate, for a single fee.

School Leavers

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of young people in the Durham local education authority who have left school without any qualifications, the number going into further education and the numbers achieving higher education for each year since 1981; and if he will give the figures for each group in percentage terms from the total of young people leaving school.

Mr. Eggar: The table shows the estimated proportions of school leavers from maintained schools in the Durham local education authority area who had gained no graded examination results, or whose intended destination was further or higher education for the academic years 1980-81 to 1989-90. Information for further and higher education is not available separately at local education authority area level.

Durham school leavers maintained schools only

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
All leavers (000s)	10·04	9·46	9·42	9·93	9·79	8·73	9·34	8·40	8·06	7·76
FE/HE (000s)	1·65	1·77	1·71	2·20	2·16	2·02	2·26	2·32	1·94	2·72
Percentage	16·40	18·70	18·20	22·20	22·10	23·10	24·20	27·60	24·10	35·10
No qualification (000s)	1·41	1·10	1·29	1·20	1·31	0·84	1·08	0·81	0·92	0·74
Percentage	14·00	11·60	13·70	12·10	13·40	9·60	11·60	9·60	11·40	9·50

Source: School examinations survey.

Infant Education

Sir John Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will now take the necessary steps to impose upon local education authorities an obligation to provide nine terms' infant, or pro-rata first school education for all children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so. The existing statutory framework enables LEAs to respond flexibly to local needs and priorities.

Teachers of Deaf Children

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consideration he has given to the need for mandatory qualifications for peripatetic teachers of children with a hearing impairment.

Mr. Fallon: Part IV of the Education (Teachers) Regulations 1989 applies only to the employment of teachers at schools. The regulations do not apply to part-time teachers, not to peripatetic teachers. The aim of the regulations is to ensure that teachers of classes of hearing impaired children have a mandatory qualification.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase the number of training places in higher education establishments for practising and trainee teachers to become teachers of deaf pupils.

Mr. Fallon: Trainee teachers cannot become teachers of the deaf, since a period of post-training experience is required of all teachers who wish to undertake specialist training. The number of practising teachers who might be supported under the grants for education support and training (GEST) programme for training to become teachers of the deaf is currently under review.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consideration he has given to reviewing the procedure for the training of teachers of deaf children.

Mr. Fallon; The Department has been carefully reviewing the procedures for this and other training in special educational needs. We have now identified a number of technical improvements to the mechanisms for supporting such training, about which we will be writing shortly to the bodies most directly concerned.

Parents Charter

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the total cost to public funds of the parents charter, listing separately costs to date for *(a)* preparation, *(b)* production, *(c)* launch, *(d)* all forms of distribution, *(e)* advertising and *(f)* total cost.

Mr. Eggar: The costs of the parents charter, broken down as requested, are as follows: *(a)* preparation, £21,000; *(b)* production, £491,000; *(c)* launch, £36,500; *(d)* distribution, £696,000; *(e)* advertising, £713,000; *(f)* total cost, £1,957,500.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many copies of the parents charter have been printed.

Mr. Eggar: Some 6·[illegible] million copies of the parents charter have been printed. In addition, a total of 326,000 have been printed in eight ethnic minority languages.

Teachers Pensions Agency

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what performance targets he has set the new Teachers Pensions Agency in 1992-93.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have set the following key targets for the Teachers Pensions Agency in 1992-93 which together cover its main activities comprehensively and focus on the principles of improving the quality of public services embodied in the citizens charter:

1. The implementation of a new computerised pensions administration system by the third quarter of 1992-93.
2. To process 95 per cent. of applications for retirement awards by the payable date or, if later than the payable date, within 30 calendar days of receipt of the application form.
3. To collect on time 95 per cent. of the total sum of superannuation contributions due to be paid by employers.
4. To demonstrate that there is a 95 per cent. probability that the error on individual pension-related calculations did not exceed 2 per cent. of the value of each calculation.
5. Following the introduction of the new computer system, to provide a substantive answer to 95 per cent. of written inquiries within 15 working days of receipt (excluding time waiting for essential information from third parties).

Special Needs

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is now able to issue the addendum to circular 22/89 on special educational needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: In September 1989 my Department and the Department of Health issued circular 22/89 giving guidance to education, health and social services authorities on the procedures for assessments and statements under the Education Act 1981. Recent developments, in particular the implications of several legal cases, have made it necessary to provide further advice to authorities on certain aspects of those procedures. A draft addendum to circular 22/89 was issued last autumn for comment.

We have considered all of the comments received during the consultation period and today issued a final version of the addendum. The addendum includes guidance on the form and content of statements and makes clear that, where speech therapy is specified as special educational provision in a statement, the local education authority has a duty to ensure that it is arranged.

Copies of the addendum have been placed in the Library.

Swimming

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the findings of the surveys undertaken by his Department of provision made for swimming by maintained schools are now available.

Mr. Atkins: Copies of the findings from the surveys of primary schools and local education authorities in England have been placed in the Library. Over 95 per cent. of the primary schools and all the local education authorities consulted responded to the surveys. Of the schools responding, over 80 per cent. indicated that they already provide swimming as part of the physical education curriculum. Of those not providing swimming, only 28 schools (2·3 per cent. of the schools responding) said that they were more than five miles from the nearest swimming pool. The survey of local education authorities revealed that 2,385 primary schools (9·5 per cent.), 855 secondary schools (21·4 per cent.) and 11 tertiary colleges (11 per cent.) currently have a pool on site in working order.

Music

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the teaching of music in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[pursuant to his reply, 24 January 1992, Official Report, columns 344-45]:* I have today laid the final orders with associated documents setting out attainment targets and programmes of study for art and music in the national curriculum for pupils aged five to 14. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Physical Education

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to publish a draft order setting out the requirements for physical education in the national curriculum.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[pursuant to his reply, 27 January 1992, Official Report, column 423]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have today laid before the House an order for physical education in the national curriculum.

TRANSPORT

Light Dues

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on light dues.

Mr. Rifkind: My responsibility for ensuring that the finances of the general lighthouse fund are maintained on a satisfactory basis compels me to increase the level of light dues. Now that the objective of reducing the fund's liquid reserves to a minimum necessary level has been substantially achieved, as the payers of light dues have wanted, it is essential to restore the dues tariff closer to the level required to cover the general lighthouse authorities' operating expenses and depreciation charges. The alternative would be an unacceptably high cash outflow which could be corrected only by exceptionally large dues increases at a later stage.

I am accordingly laying regulations today to increase the light dues voyage tariff by 6·5p to 41·5p per tonne with effect from 1 April; I am also increasing the tariff for periodical payments, including those for fishing vessels, from £192 per annum plus £19 a metre (for 10 metres and over) to £205 plus £21 respectively, with consequential increases in related rates.

The lower increase for fishing vessels takes account of the continuing special restrictions on the level of the industry's activities. These include the quota management system, the requirement on some vessels to tie up in port for specified periods each year, and the closure of certain fisheries to specific boats to meet conservation requirements.

I share the concern expressed by the shipping and ports industries over the periodic need for sharp changes in the light dues tariff and over certain other features of the system. I propose to take a number of steps to improve the position. First, I am inviting the Irish Government to join with the United Kingdom in an approach to the European Commission over the distortion to competition currently caused by the different methods of financing marine navigational aids within the Community. Secondly, I wish to review with the Irish Government the arrangements for financing the lights service in the Republic with the aim of securing a substantially increased contribution to the fund from sources within the Republic. Thirdly, I am asking the general lighthouse authorities to make cuts of about £1·5 million in their planned expenditure for 1992-93. Fourthly, I am asking my Department to consider, with the general lighthouse authorities and the payers of light dues, whether improvements can be made in forecasting light dues income. Fifthly, I am examining the difficult task of light dues for pleasure craft, but on this I am not yet in a position to make any announcement.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Andrew MacKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further progress he has made towards establishing executive agencies in his Department under the Government's "next steps" initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am pleased to announce that I shall be establishing two new executive agencies on 1 April Drivers, Vehicles and Operators Information Technology —DVOIT—and the Transport Research Laboratory— TRL. I will delegate to the chief executives clear responsibilities for improvements in efficiency, effectiveness and quality of service. These delegations will be set out in the agencies' framework documents which will be published on 1 April; I shall place copies in the Library.

Each year, I shall set both agencies challenging targets, which will form part of the agencies' annual business plans. DVOIT's business plan for 1992-93 will be commercial in confidence and will not therefore be published. However, the agency's key targets will be published on 1 April, and I shall then place a copy in the Library. TRL's business plan will be published on 1 April, and I shall place a copy in the Library. Both agencies will also publish annual reports; again copies will be put in the Library.

DVOIT was formerly the information technology arm of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. It has about 500 staff based in Swansea. It will continue to provide IT services to DVLA and to other parts of the Department of Transport, but on a more commercial basis. It will have to compete with external suppliers of IT services for new contracts within my Department. It will also be able to bid for contracts in other parts of the public sector and in the private sector. Agency status will allow DVOIT to develop a more commercial style of operation and, in particular, establish more formal contractual relationships with its customers. I hope this will pave the way for eventual privatisation in a few years' time.

Following an open competition, I have appointed Mr. David Evans, formerly PSA's director of information technology, to be DVOIT's first chief executive.

DVOIT's key targets for 1992-93 are to: fulfil service level agreements with its customers; cover full costs with income from customers; reduce prices for existing services to current customers by RPI-3 per cent.; increase revenue per employee by 10 per cent. a year; achieve an annual rate of return of 6 per cent. on total assets employed.

TRL has about 640 staff based in Crowthorne, Berkshire. It will offer research services to the Department of Transport and to other customers, both in the public and private sectors. From 1 April, TRL will be untied from the Department, with responsibility for commissioning and funding research work passing to customers in policy divisions within the Department who will increasingly place contracts for new work by competitive tender.

Following an open competition, I have appointed Mr. John Wootton, formerly chairman of Wootton Jeffreys Consultants Ltd., to be TRL's first chief executive.

TRL's key targets for 1992-93 are: 90 per cent. of projects to be completed to customer satisfaction; net revenue per person year to be a minimum of £40,000; production costs as a percentage of total costs to be greater than 55 per cent.; to recover full economic costs from revenue, while meeting the net control total in supply estimates.

This will increase to six the number of executive agencies in my Department. Nearly 70 per cent. of the staff employed by my Department will be working in executive agencies, which is good news for taxpayers, customers and the staff themselves.

I wish the chief executives and their staff every success for the future.

Pacific Crane

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what procedures are in place for consultation with his Department about crew changes on the United Kingdom-registered ship Pacific Crane, following its arrival in Japan in connection with a cargo of plutonium; and if he will give details of the proposed crew changes.

Mr. McLoughlin: None. There is no requirement for shipowners-managers to consult my Department when changing the crews of their ships, this is an operational matter for the owners-managers provided that the legal requirements are met.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the proposed crew changes on the British registered ship Pacific Crane following its arrival in Japan are compatible with the officer nationality requirements of the United Kingdom Register of Shipping.

Mr. McLoughlin: It would be premature to consider whether a future unidentified crew would comply with the Department's manning requirements, but steps can be taken to ensure that United Kingdom law is observed in this respect.

Tilbury

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy, upon receiving a recommendation from the Port of London authority as to a buyer for the Port of Tilbury, to consider the credit rating of the recommended bidder before making his decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. and learned Friend announced yesterday in a statement to the House that he has given his consent to the sale of the Port of Tilbury to International Transport Ltd., as recommended by the board of the Port of London authority. My right hon. and learned Friend explained that, in reaching this decision, he was satisfied that the recommended bid met the agreed objectives of sale.

PNTL Fleet

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the safety record of the PNTL fleet in carrying radioactive materials.

Mr. McLoughlin: The PNTL fleet has been used to carry spent nuclear fuel from Japan to reprocessing facilities in Europe for almost 20 years, without any release of radioactive material.

Rail Fares

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a real fares index for *(a)* British Rail and *(b)* Network SouthEast, for each year since 1971, with 1971 G = G100.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 6 March 1992]*: The information is in the table:

Real fares index and real passenger receipts per passenger kilometre: British Rail and Network SouthEast: 1971-91

	Real fare index		*Real passenger receipts per passenger kilometre*[1]	
	BR	*NSE*[2]	*BR*	*NSE*
1971	100·0	100·0	n/a	n/a
1972	103·6	103·8	100·0	100·0
1973	103·7	104·7	97·1	99·5
1974	97·4	98·3	89·3	89·7
1975	107·2	108·4	95·5	88·8
1976	117·2	120·2	102·8	95·1
1977	116·7	123·2	101·2	97·8
1978	123·2	131·8	107·8	105·9
1979	116·1	127·3	106·0	103·9
1980	122·4	131·9	108·8	104·7
1981	129·0	139·4	106·1	106·6
1982	128·8	139·3	96·4	102·9
1983	132·6	143·0	103·8	109·1
1984	134·3	145·3	103·9	113·1
1985	135·0	146·9	105·6	111·2
1986	141·2	152·7	107·2	109·8
1987	142·5	153·9	107·8	110·3
1988	144·6	155·8	109·9	112·8
1989	146·2	157·8	111·0	112·1
1990	144·6	156·5	109·5	108·7
1991	151·3	163·9	111·3	112·1

[1] The real fares index reflects changes in ticket prices. However, the index of receipts per passenger kilometre, which takes account of the increased use of discounted tickets and travelcards, is a better indicator of the costs of rail travel, and it has remained relatively flat during the 1980s.

[2] Network SouthEast was formed in 1986. The pre-1986 figures apply to the current sector definition.

Rail Safety

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list *(a)* the total number of passenger fatalities, *(b)* the total number of serious injuries to passengers and *(c)* the total number of minor injuries to passengers on (i) British Rail and (ii) Network SouthEast (1) in each month since April 1989 and (2) in each year since 1962 and for each category the number which occurred in (A) train accidents, (B) accidents through the movement of railway vehicles, (C) accidents on railway premises and (D) trespassers and suicides;

(2) how many notifiable train accidents have occurred on *(a)* British Rail and *(b)* Network SouthEast (i) in each

month since April 1989 and (ii) in each year since 1962; and how many of these were the result of (1) collisions, (2) derailments, (3) running into level crossing gates and other obstructions, (4) fires, (5) falling from trains and (6) other accidents;

(3) if he will list *(a)* the total number of staff and contractor fatalities, *(b)* the total number of serious injuries to staff and contractors and *(c)* the total number of minor injuries to staff and contractors on (i) British Rail and (ii) Network SouthEast (1) in each month since April 1989 and (2) in each year since 1962 and for each category, the number which occurred in (A) train accidents, (B) accidents through the movement of railway vehicles, (C) accidents on railway premises and (D) trespassers and suicides;

(4) if he will list *(a)* the total number of staff and contractor fatalities, *(b)* the total number of serious injuries to staff and contractors and *(c)* the total number of minor injuries to staff and contractors on London Underground (i) in each month since April 1989 and (ii) in each year since 1962 and for each category above, the number which occurred in (1) train accidents, (2) accidents through the movement of railway vehicles, (3) accidents on railway premises and (4) trespassers and suicides;

(5) if he will list *(a)* the total number of passenger fatalities, *(b)* the total number of serious injuries to passengers and *(c)* the total number of minor injuries to passengers on London Underground (i) in each month since April 1989 and (ii) in each year since 1962;

(6) how many notifiable train accidents have occurred on London's underground (i) in each month since April 1989 and (ii) in each year since 1962; and how many of these were the result of *(a)* collisions with buffer stops, *(b)* derailments of passenger trains, *(c)* derailments of non-passenger trains, *(d)* running into obstructions, *(e)* fires on trains and *(f)* other accidents;

(7) if he will publish the total number of fires which have occurred on London Underground and list the number which occurred *(a)* on rolling stock, *(b)* at stations, *(c)* on tracks in tunnels, *(d)* on open tracks *(e)* on escalators, *(f)* on lifts and *(g)* other locations, (i) in each month since April 1989 and (ii) in each year since 1962;

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* The information requested for the years 1962-90 is contained in Her Majesty's railway inspectorate's annual reports on railway safety, copies of which are in the House Library.

Computer derived figures for information which is readily available for the years 1984-90 are set out in tables subject to the following points:

(i) Separate statistics relating to Network SouthEast are not available;

(ii) Statistics relating to London Underground have been shown separately since 1988; for the period 1984-1987, they are included with BR and other railways.

(iii) Statistics for 1991 will be published in the report for the 15 month period to March 1992.

Copies of the tables have been placed in the Library and I have written to the hon. Lady with a copy.

Rail Crimes

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the total number of *(a)* crimes, *(b)* assaults on staff, *(c)* assaults on passengers, *(d)* indecent assaults, *(e)* rapes and *(f)* violent robberies which have occurred on (i) British Rail and (ii) Network SouthEast; (1) in each month since April 1989 and (2) in each year since 1971.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* This information is only available at a disproportionate cost. The tables show figures for crimes reported in 1990 and the first nine months of 1991, for British Rail as a whole and for Network SouthEast alone; and total crimes reported for British Rail from 1982 to 1990.

	1 January 1991 to 30 September 1991		*1990*	
	BR	*NSE*	*BR*	*NSE*
Total crimes	54,702	12,440	68,946	23,764
Of which:				
Assaults on staff	249	132	374	181
Assaults on passengers	632	276	884	379
Indecent assault	170	116	240	136
Rape	8	4	15	6
Violent robberies	638	428	624	457

Total crimes reported on British Rail

Year	*Totals*
1990	68,946
1989	70,266
1988	65,697
1987	63,644
1986	65,450
1985	64,185
1984	65,299
1983	56,152
1982	51,779

Note. From 1 January 1990 the BTP force brought its crime reporting into line with Home Office counting rules. This change means that exact comparisons with previous years are not always possible.

British Rail

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what responsibility his Department has in relation to the finance, policy and operations of British Rail.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 9 March 1992]:* The Secretary of State's main responsibilities in relation to British Rail are:

to appoint the chairman and board members, and determine their pay;

to set overall policy and objectives for safety, quality and financial performance;

to discharge various responsibilities on safety through Her Majesty's railway inspectorate;

to set the external finance limit;

to set an investment ceiling, and to approve major investment projects;

to issue a public service obligation and to set an annual grant ceiling;

to control borrowing;

to decide on opposed proposals for the closure of stations and services; and

to exercise various statutory controls on procedure and finance.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Hotels (Fire Regulations)

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what European Community regulations come into force in January requiring self-employed hoteliers with premises of under six bed spaces to conform to fire regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: European Community Directives 89/391/EEC and 89/654/EEC relate to the health and safety of workers at work and contain fire safety requirements for which we must make legislative provision by 31 December 1992.

We plan to give effect to those requirements by regulations made under section 12 of the Fire Precautions Act 1971. Those regulations will generally apply to every place in which one or more persons work and come into force on 1 January 1993. There will, however, be an extensive public consultation exercise before they are made.

Ecstasy

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been made in connection with *(a)* the use, *(b)* the selling of, *(c)* the possession and *(d)* the importation of the drug Ecstasy (MDMA), in each of the last 12 months.

Mr. John Patten: The number of prosecutions for drugs offences involving ecstasy (MDMA) in each month of 1990 were as follows:

Prosecutions for drugs offences involving ecstasy (MDMA). 1990

United Kingdom *Number of prosecutions*

Month	*Unlawful possession*	*Possession with intent to supply unlawfully*	*Unlawful supply*	*Unlawful import*
January	19	8	5	1
February	25	5	2	—
March	33	6	3	1
April	34	8	3	2
May	44	13	7	—
June	27	12	2	1
July	14	5	3	—
August	22	7	3	—
September	9	7	1	2
October	13	5	2	1
November	10	7	4	4
December	19	4	5	2

Court of Appeal

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the cases he has referred to the Court of Appeal under section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 since 1982 and the outcome in each case.

Mr. John Patten: Since 1982 to 31 December 1991 the following cases have been referred to the Court of Appeal under Section 17(1)(a) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 with the result as indicated.

In respect of conviction:

Year and name	*Result*
1982	
Saltman, Bernard Brian	Allowed
Tarrant, Edward Charles	Allowed
Wakefield, Ian Ferguson	Allowed
Neal, John Stephen	
Woods, Bernard John	
Cousins, Alverstone Edmond	Allowed
Todd, Percival George	
1983	
Bhaskar, Vinod Kumar	Allowed
Russell, Mervyn John Scott	Allowed
Abrol, Kewal Krishan	Allowed
1984	
McDonagh, Michael	Dismissed
McDonagh, Patrick	
Harrison, Melvyn	Dismissed
Copeland, William Ian	Dismissed
Mycock, Geoffrey	Allowed
Gilfellan, Ian Charles	Allowed
Hartley, Hugo	Dismissed
North, Norman Berry	Dismissed
Sample, Alan John	
Szpythma, Michael	Allowed
Gordon, Keith	Dismissed
Schnepel, Dieter	Abandoned
Asquith, Adrian	Abandoned
Harold, Roy	Abandoned
1985	
Fellows, Keith Noel	Allowed
Clarke, Ernest Adolphus	Dismissed
Mycock, Anthony	Allowed
Willis, Alan Anthony	Dismissed
1986	
Jarrom, Rodney Robert	Allowed
Mapstone, Kerry Andrew	Dismissed
Livesey, Margaret	Dismissed
Edwards, Derek Goronwy	Dismissed
1987	
Andrews, Aurilius Benedict	Allowed
Hickey, Michael Joseph	Dismissed
Hickey, Vincent	
Robinson, James	Dismissed
Cahill, Michael Peter	Dismissed
Devaney, Phillip	Allowed
Callaghan, Hugh	Dismissed
Hill, Patrick	
Hunter, Robert	
McIlkenny, Noel	
Power, William	
Walker, John	
Bargh, Patrick Joseph	Allowed
1988	
O'Callaghan, Daniel	Abandoned

Year and name	*Result*
Lacy, Gerard Francis	Dismissed
1989	
Howard, Mark William	Allowed
Oliwiecki, Ronald	Allowed
Armstrong, Patrick	Allowed
Conlon, Gerard Patrick	
Hill, Paul Michael	
Richardson, Carole Margaret	
1990	
Bateman, Andrew	Allowed
Cooper, Mark Simon	
Davis, Anthony John	
McGranaghan, John	Allowed
Maguire, Anne Rita	Allowed
Maguire, Patrick Joseph	
Maguire, Vincent John Patrick	
Maguire, Patrick Joseph Paul	
Smyth, William John	
O'Neill, Patrick Joseph	
Conlon, Patrick Joseph	
Callaghan, Hugh	Allowed
Hill, Patrick	
Hunter, Robert Gerard	
McIlkenny, Richard	
Power, William	
Walker, John	
Parfitt, Raymond Kenneth	Allowed
Modhwadia, Malde Mepa	Re-trial ordered
Raghip, Engin	Allowed
1991	
Darvell, Paul Gary	No result
Darvell, Phillip Wayne	
Bromell, Michael Thomas	
Jones-Walters, Myles	Allowed
Kiszko, Stefan	Allowed
Bower, Stuart Nicholas	No result
Haughton, Robert Percival	
Ward, Judith Theresa	
Braithwaite, Mark	Allowed
Silcott, Winston	
Hare, Delroy	No result
Lewis, George Glen	
In respect of sentence:	
1982	
Moore, Peter Damien John	Allowed
Watts, Richard David	Allowed
1983	
Cooper, Leonard William	Allowed
1984	
Harper, Andrew	Allowed
Bown, Paul John	Dismissed
Butler, James Edward	Allowed
1985	
Lunnon, Khaliq Hossain	Allowed
James, Irene Ingrid	Allowed
Showell, John Joseph	Allowed
McKenna, Dean Robert	Allowed
1986	
Jenkinson, Karl	Allowed
Lawrence, Roy	Allowed
Fountain, Peter	Allowed
Bovis, John Edward	Dismissed
Celisse, Paul Arthur	Allowed
Buck, Kevin John	Allowed
Cain, Douglas Roy	Allowed
Critchlow, Janine Patricia	Allowed
Phelan, Michael	Allowed
Chamberlaine, Sharal	Allowed
Limb, Martin Ernest	Allowed
Meah, Farouk	Allowed

Year and name	*Result*
Creary, Shirley Elaine	Allowed
1987	
Price, Gareth David	Allowed
Valentine, Jason Richard	Allowed
Clayton, Shane Stanley	Allowed
Lyons, James	Allowed
Teal, Graham	Allowed
Kite, Christopher Joseph	Allowed
Jones, Frederick	Allowed
Curtis, Mark Lawrence	Allowed
Whitworth, George Edward	Allowed
Buswell, David	Allowed
Lincoln, Timothy William	Allowed
Parsons, Royston Michael	Allowed
Tourie, Albert Saidu	Allowed
Curtis, Anthony Dean	Allowed
Gibbon, Christopher	Allowed
Cade, Gary Michael	Allowed
Blanco, Leopoldo	Allowed
Findley, Raymond	
Hayden, Darren Earl	
Heal, Kevin John	
Sheehan, Michael	
Wlodarczyk, Jan	
Wood, Jeffrey	
Walker, Gerald Francis	Allowed
Camponi, Christina	Allowed
Ellington, Clare	
Hardie, John James	Allowed
Coaten, Glynn	Abandoned
1988	
Rowley, David Alan	Allowed
Rathbone, Gary Michael	Allowed
Lynas, Gerrard	Allowed
Demicol, John	Allowed
Seafield, Susan Elizabeth	Allowed
Patrick, Robert John	Dismissed
Hart, Lesley Jane	Allowed
Hudd, Nigel Paul	Allowed
Prince, Michael	Allowed
Brumwell, Michael	Allowed
Seagar, Jeremy Hugh	Allowed
Morrison, Everton	Dismissed
Brown, Ivan Michael	Allowed
Baker, Norman Russell	Allowed
McGrath, Marie Ann	Allowed
McDonald, Scott William	Allowed
McRea, Angus	Allowed
Benham, Robert Steven	Allowed
Grant, Alan Adam	Allowed
Beevers, William	Allowed
Stevens, Susanagh Marie	Allowed
Clayton, Andrew Albert	Allowed
Ward, Darren Ernest	Allowed
1989	
Tolladay, Vincent James	Allowed
Steed, Gareth	Dismissed
Atkinson, John Peter	Allowed
Smith, Robert Brian	Allowed
Buttimer, Michael Anthony	Allowed
Franklin, John Francis	Allowed
1990	
Harris, John Andrew	Allowed
Clayton, Kenneth John	Allowed
Quentin, Mark Vernon	Allowed
1991	
Afzal, Mohammed	Allowed
Arshad, Mohammed	
Baker, Alan	Allowed
Baker, George	
Cooper, Lee	
Friis, Kirk	

Year and name	*Result*
McAleny, Alan Bernard Simons, Leslie Lionel	Allowed

Merseyside Police

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 3 March, *Official Report,* column *101,* if he will now request the chief constable of Merseyside to make a special study on the number of officers engaged in obtaining admissions from convicted criminals.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. It is for the chief constable of Merseyside to decide whether to make a special study of the number of officers engaged in obtaining admissions from convicted criminals. I understand that the chief constable does not intend to carry out such a study at the moment.

Central European Time

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his policy in respect of moving to central European time.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) on 18 November 1991, *Official Report,* column *15.*

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women being held on remand in police cells in England and Wales on 29 February.

Mrs. Rumbold: The figures given are for 28 February, data is not collected on Saturdays or Sundays.

On Friday 28 February there were 1,593 males and 33 females held in police cells in England and Wales. It is not possible, from the information available, to distinguish between remand and sentenced prisoners, but most would have been held on remand.

Mr. Ian Borovikov

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what legal grounds Mr. Ian Borovikov (xc1225) is currently being detained at Her Majesty's prison, Pentonville.

Mrs. Rumbold: Mr. Borovikov was released on 13 February 1992 when the Court of Appeal quashed the recommendation for his deportation which had been made by Winchester Crown court.

Magistrates Courts, Cheshire

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost of administration of Cheshire magistrates courts in each year since 1982.

Mr. John Patten: The information available centrally about net revenue expenditure (excluding loan charges and revenue contributions to capital outlay) by Cheshire magistrates courts committee is as follows:

	£
[1]1982-83	2,162,794
[1]1983-84	2,282,496
[2]1984-85	2,647,932
[2]1985-86	2,671,620
[2]1986-87	2,845,720
[2]1987-88	3,283,036
[2]1988-89	3,022,014
[2]1989-90	3,437,294
[2]1990-91	3,756,143
[3]1991-92	4,741,000

[1] Information from county council's revenue outturn return to the Department of the Environment.

[2] Information from county council's audited specific grant claim to the Home Office.

[3] Committee's forecast outturn.

Horserace Betting Levy

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce the determination under section 1 of the Horserace Betting Levy Act 1969 of the horserace betting levy scheme beginning 1 April.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have today sent the following letter to the Chairman of the Horserace Betting Levy Board and written similarly to the chairman of the Bookmakers' Committee. A copy of the scheme has been placed in the Library of the House. The letter reads:

> In your letter of 1 November 1991 you reported to me that the Board and the Bookmakers' Committee had failed to agree the Scheme to have effect for the 31st levy period and that the Scheme accordingly fell to be determined by me. I have now reached my decision and enclose a copy of the Scheme which I have determined.
>
> In reaching my decision, I have taken into account all the submissions made to me by the Government-appointed members of the Levy Board and by the Bookmakers' Committee, together with other submissions and representations, including from the Jockey Club and the Horseracing Advisory Council, on which the Board members and the Committee were afforded the opportunity to comment. I have also taken fully into account the reduction in General Betting Duty announced by the Chancellor today in his budget.
>
> The cash yield from the Scheme will depend upon the level of leviable betting turnover in the 31st Levy period. Assuming turnover of £4,300 million, I have determined a scheme which aims to produce a total estimated levy yield of about £48 million.
>
> This yield is higher than would have been the case if General Betting Duty had not been reduced, but in determining the Scheme I have only taken account of the reduction in duty on horseracing bets. In all the circumstances, I am satisfied that the bookmakers can make their levy payments under the Scheme without any increase in their deductions from punters.
>
> As a result of the reduction in Betting Duty, it has been possible to achieve a substantial increase in the levy yield. I believe that this creates a new opportunity for bookmaking and racing to work more closely together for their mutual long-term benefit. In order to inform that process of closer co-operation, I will be inviting the Levy Board to consider ways in which improved value for money can be obtained from how the levy is spent and, separately, to advise on what steps racing might take to achieve a sound long-term basis for the improved level of levy contribution from bookmakers.
>
> As part of that general process of closer co-operation, I hope that the two industries will explore further together the alternatives to the present scheme. The process of determining an annual levy scheme is not the vehicle for seeking changes to the basic principles of the levy. The levy was never intended to provide a price for product. Indeed, it is difficult to see how it could do so. But if racing and

bookmaking can agree changes to the present arrangements, which were originally introduced with their joint agreement, I should certainly be prepared to consider their proposals. In the meantime, the levy must continue to be determined in the normal way and in accordance with the established criteria.

Crime

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the number of crimes reported and the crime detection rate in each police force area in each of the last seven years.

Mr. John Patten: Information for 1985-89 is published in tables 2.4 and 2.21 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1989". Figures for 1990 are published in Home Office statistical bulletin 4/91. They are annotated as provisional in the bulletin, but only the south Wales figure has since been revised, to 36 per cent. Figures for the number of offences recorded in 1991 were published yesterday in Home Office statistical bulletin 2/92. This includes an estimate of the clear-up rate for England and Wales but this information is not yet available by police force area. Copies of all these publications are available in the Library.

Correspondence

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to reply to the letter of the hon. Member for Upper Bann of 28 January to the Minister of State.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have now written to the hon. Member.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to answer the letter of the hon. Member for Upper Bann of 5 February.

Mrs. Rumbold: A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 2 March, explaining that since the matters raised in his letter related to the electoral registration system in Northern Ireland, they were the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Civil Debt

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been imprisoned for civil debt each year since 1979 in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* the Leeds metropolitan district.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information for England and Wales is published annually in Prison Statistics England and Wales (table 6.3 of the latest volume, for 1990, Cm 1800), a copy of which is in the Library.

The home address of inmates of prison service establishments is not recorded centrally. The table gives details of debtors known to have been committed by courts in the Leeds district.

Prisoners[1] received into prison service establishments in England and Wales following committal for non-payment of civil debts[2] by courts in the Leeds metropolitan district 1979 to 1990

	Debtors received
1979	58
1980	45
1981	18
1982	35
1983	19
1984	6
1985	18
1986	8
1987	8
1988	9
1989	3
1990	3

---

[1] The data may be under recorded to some extent, reflecting detailed court data.

[2] Wife or child maintenance, arrears under an affiliation order, rates, community charge and other debts.

Movement within the EC

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the United Kingdom legislation which imposes limitations and conditions, as referred to in article 8A of the Maastricht treaty, to the right of every citizen of the Union to move and reside freely within the territory of the member states.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The new article 8A which the treaty on European union inserts into the treaty of Rome provides that every citizen of the union shall have the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the member states, subject to the limitations and conditions laid down in the treaty—the treaty of Rome—and by the measures adopted to give it effect. At present the right of free movement, and the limitations and conditions applicable, are contained in the following directives and regulations:

Already in force

Council regulations	161/68 EEC, 1251/70 EEC;
Council directives	64/221 EEC, 68/360 EEC, 72/194 EEC, 72/148 EEC, 75/34 EEC, 75/35 EEC;

Due to take effect on 30 June 1992

Council directives	90/364/EEC, 90/365/EEC, 90/366/EEC

These provisions have overriding legal effect in the United Kingdom.

Crime Prevention Panels

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement regarding the funding of crime prevention panels.

Mr. John Patten: Crime prevention panels are an excellent means by which local communities can become involved through voluntary activity in the fight against crime. They are encouraged to be self-sufficient and to seek local funding arrangements. Many crime prevention panels obtain sponsorship from local businesses. Possible sources of funding will vary from area to area but Crime Concern has published a booklet entitled "Attracting Business Sponsorship" which provides detailed advice for panels on how to obtain sponsorship for crime prevention. A few police forces are known to have given financial support for specific initiatives run by panels. In support of the work of crime prevention panels in the areas concerned, grants have also been made under the safer cities programme which brings extra crime prevention resources to 20 selected high crime areas in England. Some panels have been successful in obtaining charity status and any panel wishing to do this may contact the Charity Commission which will advise it on the necessary procedures.

Usk Prison

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has plans to privatise Usk prison.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are no present plans to contract out the management of Her Majesty's prison Usk.

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next proposes to visit Her Majesty's prison, Usk.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit Her Majesty's prison, Usk, in the near future.

Vehicle Watch

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce a vehicle watch scheme following the pilot project undertaken in Wales.

Mr. John Patten: The introduction of vehicle watch schemes is a matter for individual chief police officers. A decision on whether the Home Office should advise the police to extend such schemes throughout the country will be made after the evaluation has been completed later this year.

DNA Register

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the introduction of a national DNA register; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have not had any recent representations about the introduction of a national DNA register. As I said in my reply to the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 7 February, I have sought the advice of the Royal Commission on criminal justice about this delicate issue.

Reunite

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will announce his decision in respect of the grant application submitted by Reunite, the National Council for Abducted Children.

Mr. John Patten: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Ronald Loco

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reasons he has failed to answer the letters to him from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton dated 15 October and 20 December 1991 and 23 January with regard to Mr. Ronald Loco, 18 Cheston road; if he will now send a reply without any further delay; and if he will apologise for the failure to reply to correspondence over this period.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend replied on 7 November 1991 to the right hon. Gentleman's letter of 15 October. We have not been able to trace any record of having received the letters of 20 December 1991 and 23 January 1992. If the right hon. Member would care to let me have copies of them, I will look into the matters that he wishes to raise and let him have a further reply as soon as possible.

Prisons (Privatisation)

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the privatisation of prisons.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from hon. Members, organisations and members of the public.

Prison Population

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the latest figures for the number of inmates accommodated in *(a)* Her Majesty's prison, Durham and *(b)* Her Majesty's prison, Belmarsh.

Mrs. Rumbold: On 9 March, the populations of the two establishments were as follows:

	Number
Her Majesty's prison Durham	922
Her Majesty's prison Belmarsh	798

Voters

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce emergency legislation with regard to the qualifying date for registration for the vote in a parliamentary election to equalise the position between people living abroad and those living on the streets.

Mrs. Rumbold: The qualifying date for registration as an elector is already the same both for overseas electors and for electors living in this country.

Police Manpower

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications there have been in each police force in England and Wales for increased police manpower; and what are the numbers involved and the numbers agreed to, for the current year and each of the two previous years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Details of applications received and posts approved are set out in the table for the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93. These figures include posts whose costs are fully reimbursed by a third party, for example at major airports.

Force	1990-91 Posts applied for	1990-91 Posts approved	1991-92 Posts applied for	1991-92 Posts approved	1992-93 Posts applied for	1992-93 Posts approved
Avon and Somerset	50	10	9	4	7	2
Bedfordshire	38	38	71	32	76	61
Cambridgeshire	10	7	30	22	10	10
Cheshire	20	20	20	11	20	20
Cleveland	19	13	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cumbria	50	19	35	8	24	4
Derbyshire	34	19	15	13	56	25
Devon and Cornwall	48	17	31	15	70	48
Dorset	27	14	14	15	26	15
Durham	Nil	Nil	20	11	20	Nil
Dyfed Powys	8	8	Nil	Nil	50	25
Essex	79	69	32	17	58	58
Gloucestershire	Nil	Nil	36	19	48	1
Greater Manchester	248	31	123	36	140	20
Gwent	11	2	9	Nil	10	1
Hampshire	77	25	69	27	69	67
Hertfordshire	35	18	42	11	34	4
Humberside	20	15	40	18	22	9
Kent	50	50	63	34	82	82
Lancashire	81	28	54	22	32	4
Leicestershire	75	53	25	13	27	26
Lincolnshire	20	14	21	8	Nil	Nil
Merseyside	Nil	Nil	49	5	88	Nil
Norfolk	66	46	22	12	25	25
Northamptonshire	29	20	33	25	23	23
Northumbria	243	38	82	26	92	27
North Wales	10	21	Nil	Nil	30	17
North Yorkshire	35	25	15	6	25	4
Nottinghamshire	63	26	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
South Wales	67	31	Nil	Nil	44	Nil
South Yorkshire	50	20	50	18	16	15
Staffordshire	20	14	20	8	20	4
Suffolk	26	18	30	11	30	17
Surrey	50	10	41	11	30	3
Sussex	54	23	49	18	35	32
Thames Valley	158	65	156	40	132	87
Warwickshire	35	15	23	8	15	4
West Mercia	32	32	Nil	Nil	30	29
West Midlands	350	63	148	63	121	19
West Yorkshire	47	20	73	14	79	Nil
Wiltshire	19	13	44	15	77	67
City of London	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Metropolitan	350	150	Nil	100	22	22
Total	2,704	1,120	1,594	716	1,815	877

National Transcommunication Limited

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total paid in consultancy fees by his Department during the sale of National Transcommunication Ltd., previously the research and engineering wing of the Independent Broadcasting Authority.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Total costs for the sale, completed on 24 October 1991, were £2·2 million. The initial proceeds were £70 million and the Government will receive further proceeds under certain conditions, if the company is floated successfully.

Community Relations

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make available the report of the community relations project of the Council of Europe.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have arranged for a copy of the report, "Community and Ethnic Relations in Europe", to be placed in the Library of the House.

The committee of experts which produced the report is to be congratulated on its penetrating analysis of the issues faced by multi-racial societies, and of the possible policy responses to these issues.

Safer Cities Programme

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future of the safer cities programme.

Mr. John Patten: The programme is making good progress. Four new local projects began operating late last year, and the 16 longer-established ones have between them started or planned a total of 2,205 local crime prevention schemes since 1989, supported by £13·8 million of Home Office grant funding.

The programme's evaluation should be completed in the first half of 1993, but at present I am satisfied that the safer cities programme is working well, and should continue in its present form. I have recently informed chairmen of local steering committees for the 16 longer-established projects that they may plan action and commit grant money for an extended period to March 1994.

Remand Prisoners

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what length of time the current longest serving prisoner has been held on remand awaiting trial.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* According to the records held centrally, which are approximate, on 29 February 1992, the longest period for which a person had been held in custody awaiting or during trial was almost two years.

Assaults on Police

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what conclusions he has reached as a result of the Home Office survey of sentences awarded to persons convicted of assaulting police officers.

Mr. John Patten *[pursuant to his reply, 23 January 1992, col. 322]:* I have published the results of the survey, which covered the last six months of 1991 and was conducted with the assistance of the Crown prosecution service, in the Home Office bulletin issue 3/92 "Sentencing for Assault on Police Officers", copies of which have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The survey demonstrates that the courts clearly recognise that assaults on police officers are despicable and deserve to be punished more severely, immediate custody being imposed for a significantly higher proportion of the assaults on the police covered in the survey than for assaults on all victims in 1990.

The Government are committed to protecting our protectors who have a difficult job to do on our behalf.

I am setting up a working group to review the physical protection of the police. I am sure that the group, which will involve police representatives, will have a valuable contribution to make to improving still further the protection from attack available to the police, the need for which has been recognised by the Government and the courts.

DEFENCE

Surplus Army Tents

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated number of surplus Army tents as at 31 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On 31 January there were no surplus Army tents.

TRIGAT

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about long-range TRIGAT.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Last autumn we decided that the United Kingdom should not continue in the collaborative long-range TRIGAT programme unless we could do so on a basis that was consistent with our future priorities. Negotiations with our collaborative partners have now reached a successful conclusion. As a result, we shall be continuing with the development programme on a revised basis.

Army Training

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in restructuring the Army's training base in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Command Paper 1595 referred to proposals to restructure the Army's training organisation and, in particular, to our intention to improve basic training for adults and young soldiers, juniors and apprentices at a reduced number of larger and more efficient establishments. The first part of the review is nearing completion, and we now need to begin detailed planning. Starting later this year, we propose to concentrate junior leader training at Bramcote, Harrogate and Winchester and all adult and young soldier training in new Army training regiments to be formed at Glencorse, Lichfield, Bassingbourne, Pirbright and Winchester. To permit these changes to take place, specialist infantry training which now takes place at divisional depots will in future be conducted at Strensall, Ouston and Crickhowell though further reorganisation may follow later. Recognising the importance of the regimental system, we will ensure that training will continue to be organised on a capbadge basis.

Final decisions on the future use of the establishments concerned have still to be taken, and a number of establishments will be required for use by units of the field Army. It is too early to say what the detailed implications will be for the staff of the establishments affected. With the exception of the WRAC training centre at Guildford, we do not expect any to close as a result of this announcement. Full consultation with the trade unions will take place in the normal way before final decisions are taken.

Decisions on the future rationalisation of apprentice training have not yet been taken, but from September onwards we shall introduce a one-year standard foundation course at each of the existing Army apprentice colleges in place of the current two-year course. Apprentices will then go on to complete their technical training elsewhere within the Army.

Work is continuing to develop proposals for the rationalisation of other areas in specialist training and further proposals will be announced in due course.

Defence Contractors

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the major changes between the basis of calculations used to produce the list of contractors which appear on page 15 of the "Statement of the Defence Estimates Volume 2", and those of similar, previously published, lists which relate to the six years to 31 March 1989.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There have been no major changes.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the total amounts paid by his Department to United Kingdom-based contractors in each of the five years to 31 March 1988.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Ministry of Defence paid the following total amounts to United Kingdom-based contractors for the financial years 1983-84 to 1987-88:

	£ million
1983-84	6,609·33
1984-85	7,012·56
1985-86	7,458·92
1986-87	7,366·12
1987-88	7,836·89

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the precise amounts paid to each of the 10 contractors which received the largest share of contracts awarded by his Department in each of the five years to 31 March 1988.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The 10 contractors who received the largest payments from my Department in each of the years specified were:

	£ million
1983-84	
British Aerospace plc	952·07
The General Electric Co. plc	688·77
Rolls-Royce Ltd.	484·28
British Shipbuilders	399·56
The Plessey Co. plc	363·98
Royal Ordnance	338·89
Ferranti plc	177·73
The British Petroleum Co. plc	168·46
Westland plc	153·23
Esso Petroleum Co. plc	143·58
1984-85	
British Aerospace plc	1,004·66
The General Electric Co. plc	806·87
British Shipbuilders	535·50
The Plessey Co. plc	415.43
Royal Ordnance	409·51
Rolls-Royce Ltd.	408·12
Ferranti plc	213·51
Esso UK plc	204·59
The British Petroleum Co. plc	174·29
Westland plc	169·53
1985-86	
British Aerospace plc	1,011·00
The General Electric Co. plc	799·68
British Shipbuilders	590·26
The Plessey Co. plc	438·54
Rolls-Royce Ltd.	435·78
Royal Ordnance plc	369·87
Ferranti plc	223·71
Westland plc	178·02
Hunting Associated Industries plc	161·95
Thorn EMI plc	149·97
1986-87	
British Aerospace plc	927·05
The General Electric Co. plc	850·99
Rolls-Royce plc	424·57
The Plessey Co. plc	366·12
Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd.	343·65
Royal Ordnance plc	245·50
Hunting Associated Industries plc	203·71
Ferranti plc	198·31
Thorn EMI plc	157·10
Westland plc	134·81
1987-88	
The General Electric Co. plc	1,035·07
British Aerospace plc	875·88
Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd.	462·64
Rolls-Royce plc	418·26
The Plessey Co. plc	307·41
Royal Ordnance plc	223·06
Devonport Management Ltd.	222·61
Ferranti plc	200·95
Hunting Associated Industries plc	193·87
Thorn EMI plc	143·54

Job Losses

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 3 March, *Official Report*, column *139*, whether he has established how workers at Trecwn heard the news of closure and job losses via the media in advance of the announcement to staff; and what steps he intends to take to ensure that, in future, such decisions are first communicated to the work force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The rundown and closure of Royal Navy Armaments Depot—RNAD—Trecwn was part of a package of measures for the restructuring of the fleet support area proposed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 16 July 1991, *Official Report*, columns *148-49* and confirmed, following extensive consultation on 24 January 1992 *Official Report*, column *377*. Details of the final decision were provided to the work force at each establishment affected through a series of management briefings timed to coincide with the answering of the parliamentary question on 24 January. In the case of RNAD Trecwn, it was unfortunate that media speculation anticipated these announcements.

Falkland Islands (Flights)

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reason civilian passengers have to bear the loss of seats on flights to and from the Falkland Islands when a change of aircraft results in reduction in the total number of seats.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence has agreed with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that capacity will be provided for civilian passengers on flights to the Falkland Islands, subject to overriding military requirements. When a change of aircraft is necessary which entails a reduction in the total number of seats, military requirements may dictate that civilian passengers should be off-loaded.

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the delayed or diverted flights on which seats were for sale to civilians to and from the Falkland Islands in 1991 and to date, in 1992.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Flights to the Falkland Islands on which seats were for sale to civilians from 1 January 1991 to 28 February 1992 and which arrived more than two hours late at RAF Mount Pleasant, or were diverted, are listed.

Year and Month	*Dates of Departure from United Kingdom*
1991	
February	7th
March	4th, 13th
April	29th
May	6th, 9th, 23rd
June	10th
July	4th, 8th, 18th, 29th
August	1st, 12th, 26th
September	9th, 16th

Year and Month	*Dates of Departure from United Kingdom*
October	7th, 21st
December	9th, 13th
1992	
January	27th, 30th
February	10th, 13th

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reason 27 civilian fare passengers were removed from the Falklands bound flight on Monday 24 February.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The aircraft earmarked for the Falkland Islands flight on 24 February became unserviceable shortly prior to the scheduled departure time. It had to be replaced with an aircraft offering less capacity and, consequently, some passengers and all freight had to be re-booked to the next flight.

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what account is taken of the effect on civilian morale when civilian passengers only are delayed for 24 hours or more on flights to and from the Falkland Islands; and if he will make it his policy to ensure such passengers are kept informed about progress on their flight.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Any delays on flights to the Falkland Islands are regretted whether they affect civilian or military passengers. In such circumstances the staff do all that they can to mitigate the impact of the delay. When the time permits, civilian passengers are notified of delays via the Falkland Islands Government office. Otherwise they are briefed by the RAF movements staff at the reporting airfield, or en route, as appropriate.

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what increase in total costs was incurred by the use of Britannia Airways to provide flights to and from the Falkland Islands during the Gulf war.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is commercially confidential.

Service Children's Education Authority

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names of those schools which have been approved by the Service Children's education authority; how often representatives from the authority pay visits to the schools; what criteria are used for deciding whether schools are listed; and whether on the change of ownership of a school it is required to re-apply for approval.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to my hon. Friend.

Boarding School Allowance

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service and Foreign Office families are currently benefiting from the boarding school allowance.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: For the spring term 1992, the numbers are as follows:

Service	*Families*	*Number of children*
Royal Navy	1,955	3,076
Army	5,318	7,998
Royal Air Force	3,236	4,875
Foreign Office	580	830
Totals	11,089	16,779

EMPLOYMENT

Minimum Wage

18. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what response he has made to the representations recently made to him by industrialists on the subject of a statutory minimum wage.

Mr. Howard: I have assured business leades that I shall continue to take every opportunity to point out the damage which the statutory minimum wage would cause. Labour's plans could cost up to 2 million jobs in Britain.

Unemployment

19. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to arrest the increase in unemployment.

Mr. Howard: The Government's main role is to ensure a sound and stable economic framework within which enterprise can flourish and the battle against inflation can be won. There are in fact more people in work today in Scotland than there were in 1979. We also have in place the most comprehensive range of help ever made available to unemployed people.

20. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement concerning the current levels of unemployment.

Mr. Howard: The present level of unemployment clearly reflects the fact that recovery is being affected by world economic circumstances. But the battle against inflation is being won, the foundations are in place for recovery and we are uniquely well placed to take advantage of the opportunities that will increasingly become available as we emerge from recession.

25. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number of people who would have been counted as unemployed if the methods of calculation had remained the same as those in use 12 years ago.

Mr. Howard: The information requested is not available. Consistent comparisons can be made over a period from the seasonally adjusted figures maintained by the Department's statisticians.

Manufacturing Industry

21. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently employed in the manufacturing sector of the United Kingdom economy; and what were the figures in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jackson: In September 1991 there were 4,780,000 employees in employment in manufacturing industries in the United Kingdom. Over the previous five years, the numbers were 5,200,000 in 1986, followed by 5,176,000, 5,217,000, 5,214,000 and 5,136,000 respectively.

Unemployment, Bolton and Bury

22. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the measures he intends to introduce in order to ameliorate the conditions caused by the loss of manufacturing jobs in the Bolton and Bury travel-to-work area.

Mr. Jackson: The local Employment Service and the Bolton/Bury training and enterprise council, deliver a wide range of employment, enterprise and training programmes to help unemployed people in the Bolton and Bury travel-to-work area.

Terms of Employment (Written Statement)

23. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department is taking to enforce section 1 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978.

Mr. Forth: It is for individual employees who have not received the statement to which they are entitled under this provision to seek redress by making a complaint to an industrial tribunal.

Training Credits

24. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the progress so far of the training credits scheme.

Mr. Howard: By January, more than 15,500 young people were in training using training credits in the 11 pilot areas. Nine more training credit schemes will come into operation in April of next year, offering a further 10 per cent. of school leavers the opportunity to obtain high quality training of their choice.

Unemployment (Greater London)

26. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the percentage increase in unemployment in Greater London during the last 12 months.

Mr. Jackson: In the Greater London region, seasonally adjusted unemployed rose by 53 per cent. in the 12 months to January 1992.

Unemployment, South Yorkshire

27. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the figures for manufacturing job losses in the South Yorkshire area in the last 12 months.

Mr. Jackson: The number of employees in employment in manufacturing industries in Yorkshire and Humberside fell by 25,000 between September 1990 and September 1991. The most recent figures for areas within standard regions relate to 1989.

Construction Industry

28. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his latest estimate of the number of persons employed in the construction industry.

Mr. Jackson: In September 1991, there were 932,000 employees in employment in the construction industry in the United Kingdom.

Part-time Workers

29. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to introduce statutory rights for people working less than eight hours a week.

Mr. Forth: Employees working fewer than eight hours a week already enjoy important statutory rights, including rights relating to health and safety, sex and race discrimination and trade union membership and non-membership. All union members also have certain statutory protections against misues of union powers.

Additional protection will be given to safety representatives and others in particular circumstances under the Offshore Safety (Protection against Victimisation) Bill, which has just completed its passage through Parliament, and when the EC health and safety framework directive is implemented at the earliest legislative opportunity.

Labour Statistics, Durham

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to his answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column 452, he will give the names and addresses of the three unemployed claimants in the City of Durham under 18 years of age.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of registered unemployed in the City of Durham constituency who have been unemployed for *(a)* up to three months, *(b)* six months, *(c)* one year, *(d)* two years and *(e)* more than two years respectively.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested, for unemployed claimants in the City of Durham parliamentary constituency, is contained in the following table and can also be obtained from the NOMIS database system in the Library.

Unemployed claimants in the City of Durham January 1992

Duration	[1] *Total*
Up to three months	1,029
Over three months and up to six months	702
Over six months and up to one year	674
Over one year and up to two years	541
Over two years	445

[1] The figures are on the unadjusted basis.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* the total number of the work force in the City of Durham constituency, *(b)* those in full-time employment and *(c)* those in part-time employment.

Mr. Jackson: Figures for the total work force are not available by constituency. The latest available information about employment in parliamentary constituencies is from the September 1989 census of employment and relates to employees in employment only. The figures for the City of Durham are as follows:

Employees in employment: September 1989

	Number
Full-time	29,500
Part-time	8,200
All	37,700

Nuclear Material

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the transportation of all nuclear material, whether for civil or military purposes, is covered by EC directive 89/618; and what guidance is to be given to the emergency services and the general public about such transport consequent upon the directive.

Mr. Forth: The European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) treaty is concerned only with the peaceful application of nuclear materials. Thus European Council directive 89/618/EURATOM is not applicable to the military use of nuclear materials. Transport of civil nuclear material is covered by article 2 of the directive. The Health and Safety Commission consultative document (CD37) setting out proposals for new regulations to implement this directive outlines the intention to publish Health and Safety Executive guidance. A copy of the consultation document is in the Library.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken or proposes to take to implement European Community directive 89/618.

Mr. Forth: The Health and Safety Commission's public consultation on proposals to implement EC directive 89/618 EURATOM ended on 28 February 1992. New legislation will be brought forward as soon as comments have been considered by the Health and Safety Commission and proposals scrutinised by the European Commission under the procedure set down in article 33 of the EURATOM treaty.

Coach Parking

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he will next meet the chairman of the London tourist board to discuss arrangements for coach parking.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has no current plans for such a meeting.

Employment Service Posts

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what level and nature of criminal convictions over the past five years automatically debar an otherwise successful applicant from being offered a post in the Employment Service as an administrative officer.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service Executive Agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Benefit Recipients (Interviews)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what instructions are issued to interviewing officers examining recipients of benefits on the basis of checking that they are actively seeking work; and whether a code of conduct is followed.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Palace of Westminster (Day Nursery)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee (1) what progress has been made in implementing the 1987 recommendation of the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee in favour of a day nursery in the Palace of Westminster; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what provision will be made for a day nursery for children of hon. Members and staff in the new parliamentary buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Orme: Further progress towards the establishment of child care facilities in the parliamentary estate are dependent in the first instance on suitable accommodation being found. In its recent report on the phase 2 sketch plan, the Accommodation and Works Committee advised that, in common with certain other facilities, it had not been possible to include a creche in plans for the new building. The Committee was confident, however, that more appropriately located space could be found elsewhere in the parliamentary estate without undue delay. The Commission is understood to have invited the Accommodation and Works Committee to continue its search for appropriate space; and until that has been done the Administration Committee is unable to take the matter further. In the meantime, the Establishments Office continues to arrange for Members and staff to be informed of suitable offers of day care facilities elsewhere.

European Standing Committees

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to respond to the first report from the Select Committee on Procedure of Session 1991-92 on the review of European Standing Committees (HC 31).

Mr. MacGregor: As my hon. Friend is aware, I have recently sent the Government's reply to the report to him, as Chairman of the Procedure Committee. I am placing copies in the Library of the House.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Expenditure

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update his answer of 15 March 1990, *Official Report*, columns *335-36*, concerning administration costs as a percentage of benefit expenditure.

Miss. Widdecombe: Administration costs as a percentage of benefit expenditure for each year from 1978-79 to 1991-92 are in the table:

	Per cent.
1978-79	5·0
1979-80	4·9
1980-81	5·0
1981-82	4·9
1982-83	4·8
1983-84	4·7
1984-85	4·4
1985-86	4·4
1986-87	4·6
1987-88	5·0
1988-89	5·3
1989-90	5·6
1990-91	5·7
1991-92	[1]5·5

[1] Estimated.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list, for each year since 1978-79 the total amount spent on social security, excluding expenditure on the unemployed, at current prices and in 1991-92 prices, showing the real terms percentage increase or decrease.

Miss Widdecombe: Details of total social security spending from 1978-79 to 1991-92, excluding the amount spent on unemployed people, are given in the table.

	Expenditure £ million Cash	*1991-92 prices*	*Percentage change in real terms over previous year*
1978-79	15,228	41,310	—
1979-80	18,146	42,190	2·1
1980-81	21,221	41,695	−1·2
1981-82	24,941	44,690	7·2
1982-83	27,989	46,816	4·8
1983-84	31,180	49,844	6·5
1984-85	33,638	51,211	2·7
1985-86	36,539	52,719	2·9
1986-87	39,549	55,245	4·8
1987-88	42,284	56,019	1·4
1988-89	44,505	55,011	−1·8
1989-90	48,539	56,343	2·4
1990-91	54,143	57,933	2·8
1991-92[1]	61,133	61,133	5·5

[1] 1991-92 figures are estimated outturn.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total amount spent on social security in Great Britain, in current and in 1991-92 prices, for each year since 1978-79; and what was the percentage real terms decrease or increase in each year.

Miss Widdecombe: Details of total social security spending from 1978-79 to 1991-92 are given in the table.

	Expenditure £ million Cash	*1991-92 prices*	*Percentage change in real terms over previous year*
1978-79	16,602	45,037	
1979-80	19,616	45,608	1·3
1980-81	23,751	46,666	2·3
1981-82	28,963	51,896	11·2
1982-83	33,000	55,198	6·4
1983-84	36,881	58,958	6·8
1984-85	39,957	60,831	3·2
1985-86	43,502	62,765	3·2
1986-87	46,859	65,456	4·3
1987-88	48,934	64,829	−1·0
1988-89	49,745	61,488	−5·2
1989-90	52,849	61,346	−0·2
1990-91	59,183	63,326	3·2
1991-92	68,493	68,493	8·2

Notes:

(1) 1991-92 figures are estimated outturn.

(2) The real terms decrease over the period 1987-88 to 1989-90 is largely attributable to the fall in unemployment since 1986.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update his answer of 15 December 1989, *Official Report*, column *852*, concerning social security spending, to include 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is given in the table.

Year	*Expenditure £ million* Cash	*1978-79 prices*	*Per 100,000 population £ million* Cash	*1978-79 prices*	*Percentage of GDP*
1978-79	16,437	16,437	30·1	30·1	9·63
1979-80	19,416	16,641	35·5	30·4	9·48
1980-81	23,483	17,008	42·9	31·0	10·06
1981-82	28,582	18,879	52·1	34·4	11·16
1982-83	32,451	20,009	59·3	36·5	11·57
1983-84	35,159	20,719	64·2	37·8	11·56
1984-85	39,716	22,289	72·3	40·6	12·20
1985-86	43,237	22,996	78·5	41·8	12·13
1986-87	46,611	24,001	84·4	43·5	12·15
1987-88	48,771	23,818	88·1	43·0	11·49
1988-89	49,419	22,518	89·1	40·6	10·46
1989-90	52,182	22,328	93·8	40·1	10·18
1990-91	56,077	22,118	100·5	39·6	10·10
1991-92	65,116	24,003	116·3	42·9	11·07

Notes:

1. 1991-92 figures are estimated outturn.
2. Expenditure figures from 1978-79 to 1983-84 are based on the old planning total; those for 1984-85 onwards are based on the new planning total, with statutory sick pay, statutory maternity pay, and further housing benefit elements included for the first time.

Claimant Numbers

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give, for each year from 1978-79 to the latest available, the total number of households claiming a social security benefit, excluding the national insurance retirement pension and child benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: Reliable information is not available for the period and in the form requested.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the average percentage rise in the number of claimants receiving the main social security benefits and expected to claim in the years 1978-79 to 1992-93 in Great Britain.

Miss Widdecombe: The available information on estimated average numbers receiving the main social security benefits at any one time is shown in the tables. Percentage increases are given where appropriate.

Benefit	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*Percentage increase from 1978-79*	*1980-81*	*Percentage increase from 1978-79*	*1981-82*	*Percentage increase from 1978-79*
Retirement Pension	8,530	8,680	1·8	8,880	4·1	9,015	5·7
Widows Benefit	495	490	−1·0	475	−4·0	460	−7·1
Unemployment Benefit	570	550	−3·5	960	68·4	1,220	114·0
Sickness Benefit/SSP	560	490	−12·5	435	−22·3	445	−20·5
Invalidity Benefit	600	620	3·3	620	3·3	660	10·0
Industrial Disablement Benefit	270	270	0·0	265	−1·9	260	−3·7
Maternity Allowances/SMP	100	115	15·0	120	20·0	125	25·0
War Pension	385	370	−3·9	360	−6·5	345	−10·4
Attendance Allowance (1)	265	285	7·5	315	18·9	350	32·1
Invalid Care Allowance	5	5	0·0	5	0·0	5	0·0
Severe Disablement Allowance	150	165	10·0	175	16·7	180	20·0
Mobility Allowance (1)	95	140	47·4	185	94·7	210	121·1
Disability Living Allowance	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Disability Working Allowance	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Income Support/Supplementary Benefit	3,020	2,920	−3·3	3,110	3·0	3,725	23·3
Child Benefit (Children)	13,480	13,330	−1·1	13,160	−2·4	13,145	−2·5
One Parent Benefit	290	370	27·6	430	48·3	470	62·1
Family Credit/Family Income Supplement	85	80	−5·9	95	11·8	125	47·1
Rate Rebate	3,055	3,065	0·3	3,350	9·7	3,700	21·1
Rent Allowance	225	220	−2·2	240	6·7	250	11·1
Rent Rebate	1,210	1,205	−0·4	1,330	9·9	1,590	31·4
Community Charge Benefit	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Benefit	*1982-83*	*Percentage increase from 1978-89*	*1983-84*	*Percentage increase from 1978-79*	*1984-85*	*Percentage increase from 1978-79*	*1985-86*	*Percentage increase from 1978-79*
Retirement Pension	9,115	6·9	9,210	8·0	9,350	9·6	9,400	10·2
Widows Benefit	445	−10·1	440	−11·1	425	−14·1	410	−17·2
Unemployment Benefit	1,090	91·2	1,020	78·9	1,020	78·9	955	67·5
Sickness Benefit/SSP	395	−29·5	410	−26·8	420	−25·0	405	−27·7
Invalidity Benefit	700	16·7	760	26·7	825	37·5	865	44·2
Industrial Disablement Benefit	265	−1·9	265	−1·9	260	−3·7	265	−1·9
Maternity Allowances/SMP	125	25·0	110	10·0	120	20·0	115	15·0
War Pension	330	−14·3	315	−18·2	305	−20·8	295	−23·4
Attendance Allowance (1)	390	47·2	445	67·9	490	84·9	555	109·4
Invalid Care Allowance	10	100·0	10	100·0	10	100·0	10	100·0
Severe Disablement Allowance	195	30·0	210	40·0	245	63·3	245	63·3
Mobility Allowance (1)	265	178·9	315	231·6	390	310·5	420	342·1
Disability Living Allowance	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Disability Working Allowance	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Income Support/Supplementary Benefit	4,165	37·9	4,435	46·9	4,665	54·5	4,765	57·8
Child Benefit (Children)	12,890	−4·4	12,660	−6·1	12,430	−7·8	12,375	−8·2
One Parent Benefit	510	75·9	540	86·2	565	94·8	590	103·4
Family Credit/Family Income Supplement	165	94·1	200	135·3	205	141·2	205	141·2
Rate Rebate	5,320	74·1	7,020	129·8	7,230	136·7	7,020	129·8
Rent Allowance	260	15·6	1,015	351·1	1,080	380·0	1,150	411·1
Rent Rebate	3,050	152·1	3.735	208·7	3,745	209·5	3,710	206·6
Community Charge Benefit	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	

Benefit	*1986-87*	*Percentage increase from 1978-79*	*1987-88*	*Percentage increase from 1978-79*	*1988-89*	*Percentage increase from 1978-79*	*1989-90*	*Percentage increase from 1978-79*
Retirement Pension	9,575	12·3	9,685	13·5	9,710	13·8	9,795	14·8
Widows Benefit	400	−19·2	385	−22·2	370	−25·3	375	−24·2
Unemployment Benefit	1,005	76·3	815	43·0	600	5·3	375	−34·2
Sickness Benefit/SSP	420	−25·0	450	−19·6	470	−16·1	465	−17·0
Invalidity Benefit	935	55·8	1,010	68·3	1,100	83·3	1,190	98·3
Industrial Disablement Benefit	285	5·6	290	7·4	295	9·3	295	9·3
Maternity Allowances/SMP	110	10·0	110	10·0	95	−5·0	110	10·0
War Pension	280	−27·3	270	−29·9	265	−31·2	265	−31·2
Attendance Allowance (1)	605	128·3	670	152·8	730	175·5	795	200·0
Invalid Care Allowance	25	400·0	80	1,500·0	100	1,900·0	115	2,200·0
Severe Disablement Allowance	265	76·7	265	76·7	270	80·0	280	86·7
Mobility Allowance (1)	460	384·2	515	442·1	560	489·5	585	515·8
Disability Living Allowance	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Disability Working Allowance	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Income Support/ Supplementary Benefit	5,095	68·7	5,020	66·2	4,310	42·7	4,155	37·6
Child Benefit (Children)	12,175	−9·7	12,040	−10·7	12,010	−10·9	12,000	−11·0
One Parent Benefit	615	112·1	660	127·6	705	143·1	735	153·4

Benefit	*1986-87*	*Percentage increase from 1978-79*	*1987-88*	*Percentage increase from 1978-79*	*1988-89*	*Percentage increase from 1978-79*	*1989-90*	*Percentage increase from 1978-79*
Family Credit/Family Income Supplement	215	152·9	220	158·8	280	229·4	305	258·8
Rate Rebate	7,050	130·8	6,875	125·0	5,150	68·6	4,320	41·4
Rent Allowance	1,180	424·4	1,195	431·1	965	328·9	955	324·4
Rent Rebate	3,720	207·4	3,665	202·9	3,125	158·3	2,950	143·8
Community Charge Benefit	—	—	—	—	—	—	865	—

Thousands

Benefit	*1990-91*	*Percentage increase from 1978-79*	*1991-92*	*Percentage increase from 1978-79*	*1992-93*	*Percentage increase from 1978-79*
Retirement Pension	9,895	16·0	9,920	16·3	9,945	16·6
Widows Benefit	350	−29·3	350	−29·3	340	−31·3
Unemployment Benefit	425	−25·4	650	14·0	605	6·1
Sickness Benefit/SSP	460	−17·9	465	−17·0	465	−17·0
Invalidity Benefit	1,265	110·8	1,325	120·8	1,380	130·0
Industrial Disablement Benefit	305	13·0	330	22·2	335	24·1
Maternity Allowance/SMP	100	0·0	105	5·0	105	5·0
War Pension	255	−33·8	260	−32·5	255	−33·8
Attendance Allowance (1)	875	230·2	970	266·0	655	—
Invalid Care Allowance	135	2,600·0	155	3,000·0	170	3,300·0
Severe Disablement Allowance	290	93·3	300	100·0	315	110·0
Mobility Allowance	620	552·6	660	594·7	0	—
Disability Living Allowance	—	—	—	—	1,255	—
Disability Working Allowance	—	—	—	—	50	—
Income Support/Supplementary Benefit	4,190	38·7	4,820	59·6	5,105	69·0
Child Benefit (Children)	12,135	−10·0	12,185	−9·6	12,340	−8·5
One Parent Benefit	760	162·1	835	187·9	880	203·4
Family Credit/Family Income Supplement	320	276·5	350	311·8	420	394·1
Rate Rebate	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rent Allowance	1,030	357·8	1,115	395·6	1,205	435·6
Rent Rebate	2,925	141·7	3,085	155·0	3,295	172·3
Community Charge Benefit	6,740	—	6,570	—	6,865	—

National Insurance

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when Mrs. Yvonne Syme of 5 Barber close, Bartestree, Hereford applied for a refund of class 2 national insurance contributions for the period June 1988 to December 1990; and when she can expect payment to be made.

Mr. Jack: Operational aspects of the collection and refund of national insurance contributions are matters for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive of the Contributions Agency. She will write to my hon. Friend and copies will be place in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Benefits Agency

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the business plans for all Benefits Agency districts.

Miss Widdecombe: The publication of Benefits Agency business plans is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Income Support

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements are made to allow a person receiving income support who is participating in a training course provided by a voluntary organisation, local authority, or training and enterprise council or local enterprise company and which is funded by the European social fund, to be paid a weekly voluntary or charitable payment by his or her training provider without it being deducted from his or her income support; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Charitable or voluntary payments can be made to recipients of income support in a wide variety of ways without affecting their benefit. For example, regular charitable or voluntary payments which are intended and used for items other than food, ordinary clothing or footwear, household fuel, housing costs covered by benefit, community charge or water charges are fully disregarded. Regular charitable or voluntary payments of up to £10 a week are also ignored, provided that the recipient has no other income which attracts a £10 disregard. In addition, regular payments in kind are disregarded.

Care Homes

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what level of benefits will be payable to those in independent residential care and nursing homes on the introduction of the new community care arrangements.

Mr. Newton: The Government's policy, set out in the White Paper "Caring for People"—Cmnd. 849, November 1989—is that people already in residential care or nursing homes on 31 March 1993 should continue to be eligible for help under the current special income support arrangements which include help towards the costs of care, but that those entering such homes thereafter should receive social security benefits on a basis comparable with what would be available in their own homes. Thus from April 1993, for residents entering such homes, there would be eligibility for income support under the normal rules and for a payment towards housing costs; while care costs would, where appropriate, be met directly by the relevant local authority.

Having carefully considered how the proposed payments towards housing costs should be made, I have concluded, in consultation with my right hon. Friends, the Secretaries of State for Health, for the Environment, for Scotland, for Wales and for Northern Ireland, that the most practicable, convenient and sensible arrangement will be a residential allowance payable as part of the income support entitlement. Accordingly, we propose to introduce such an allowance for those entering residential care and nursing homes from April 1993. We intend that it should be paid at a rate established by reference to the rents typically paid by people in sheltered housing accommodation, and that there should be a higher rate in the area defined for income support purposes as Greater London. Consultation will now take place with the local authority associations about the detailed procedures for the new allowance.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his latest estimate of the number of people in receipt of income support in *(a)* residential homes and *(b)* nursing homes;

(2) what is his latest estimate of the numbers of people in *(a)* residential homes and *(b)* nursing homes in receipt of income support who are over pension age;

(3) what is the total number of people living in *(a)* private and voluntary residential care homes and *(b)* private and voluntary nursing homes.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is contained in the table:

	Residential care homes	*Nursing homes*
Total with income support[1]	150,000	104,000
Women over 60	89,100	73,700
Men over 65	20,400	22,100

[1] The figures have been rounded to thousands.

Source: Income support Sstatistics quarterly inquiry November 1991 residential care and nursing home report.

Information is not collected on the numbers of people in homes who do not receive income support.

Mesothelioma

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy towards victims of mesothelioma.

Mr. Scott: Diffuse mesothelioma has been in the industrial injuries scheme's list of prescribed industrial diseases since 1966. Disablement benefit is payable where disablement caused by the condition is assessed at 1 per cent. or more. payment of additional industrial injuries benefits is considered automatically where disablement is assessed at 100 per cent.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the annual contributions from Government sources to the independent living fund since its establishment, together with any initial contributions involved in the setting up of the fund.

Mr. Scott: The independent living fund was established in 1988 with an initial contribution into its trust fund of £4,500. Provision for the fund in 1988-89 was £5 million. Actual expenditure was £1 million in 1988-89; £10 million in 1989-90 and £26 million in 1990-91. Provision for the fund in the current financial year is £54 million.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the names, backgrounds and associations of the 10 trustees of the independent living fund.

Mr. Scott: The independent living fund's trustees are as follows:

Mr. Derek Chislett
Sir Geoffrey Dalton
Miss Eilis Gallagher
Mr. Joe Hennessy
Mr. Trevan Hingston (Chairman)
Mr. Stewart Lyon (Treasurer)
Mr. Bert Massie
Mr. Jack McGregor
Miss Pauline Thompson (Vice Chairman)
Mrs. Winifred Tumim

Five of the trustees—Mr. Chislett, Sir Geoffrey Dalton, Miss Gallagher, Mr. Hingston and Mrs. Tumim—were appointed by the Secretary of State. The remainder were appointed by the independent living fund's co-founders, the Disablement Income Group.

Helplines

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the location of his Department's helplines in Scotland and the number of lines available at each location.

Miss Widdecombe: The provision of helplines is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, and Miss Ann Chant, chief executive of the Contributions Agency. They will write to the hon. Member and copies of their letters will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Performance Targets

Mr. Jim Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will announce the 1992-93 performance targets which he is setting his Department's executive operations.

Mr. Newton: I have today announced the targets for 1992-93 which I have set for Department of Social Security executive operations.

A number of changes have been made to the format and range of the targets to improve the measures of performance and to cover the introduction of the new disability benefits. The targets set challenging standards of performance for the Department and represent an overall improvement over those set for the current year. The clearance time target for disability living allowance claims represents a considerable improvement over the equivalent targets for attendance allowance and mobility allowance. The war pensions disablement claims target has been modified to allow for an average 20 days before claims reach the agency and to relate it to continued work load which in 1991-92 has run at double the forecast level. While the target is lower than had previously been planned, it nevertheless represents against the background of the greatly increased number of claims a challenging target entailing a significant improvement in performance.

The targets support fully the continued success of the Government's "next steps" agencies and the citizen's charter initiative. They are as follows:

Benefits Agency

1. *Benefit Clearance Times*[1]
   - Social fund crisis loans—applications cleared on the day the need arises.[2]
   - Social fund community care grants—applications cleared on average in seven days.[2]
   - Income support new claims—claims cleared on average in four days.[2]
   - Sickness and invalidity benefit claims—65 per cent. of claims cleared in 10 days and 95 per cent. in 30 days.
   - Child benefit—65 per cent. of claims in 10 days and 95 per cent. in 30 days.
   - Family credit—60 per cent. of claims in 13 days and 95 per cent. in 45 days.[3]
   - Disability living allowance—60 per cent. of claims in 30 days and 95 per cent. in 55 days.[4]
   - Disability working allowance (claims from people starting work)—95 per cent. of claims in five days.
   - War pensions (new disablement cases)—60 per cent. of claims in 175 days.[5]
   - War pensions (widows' cases)—80 per cent. of claims in 75 days.
2. *Benefit Accuracy*
   - Income support—to pay the correct amount in 94 per cent. of cases.
   - Incapacity benefits[6]—to pay the correct amount in 96·5 per cent. of cases.
   - Family credit—to pay the correct amount in 94 per cent. of cases.
   - Disability living allowance—to pay the correct amount in 96 per cent. of cases.
   - Disability working allowance—to pay the correct amount in 95 per cent. of cases.
3. *Customer Satisfaction*
   - 85 per cent. of customers to regard the agency's service as satisfactory or better.
4. *Resource management*
   - To manage the agency's resources so as to deliver its business plan within a total budget of £1,948 million.
   - Achieve new efficiency savings worth at least £53·7 million. The budget of £1,948 million is net of these savings.
   - Keep to gross allocation for social fund loans and grants of £302 million.
5. *Financial recovery*
   - Recovery of social fund loans—£175 million.
   - Benefit savings from detection and prevention of fraud —£460 million.
   - Recovery of income support overpayments—£30 million. 1992-93 to include recovery from estates.

Contributions Agency

1. *Performance—Compliance*
   - Increase aggregate yield by:
     - *(a)* Increasing collection of contribution arrears (excluding central payments section) by £13·3 million over the 1991-92 outturn.
     - *(b)* Increasing class 1 identified from survey (arrears and in-year savings) by £12 million over the 1991-92 outturn.
   - Increase the number of surveys to 114,000, including 17,000 employer educational visits.
   - Actively identify 40,000 persons with class 2 liability.
2. *Performance—Records Maintenance*
   - Process 98 per cent. of available employers' end of year returns by 31 December 1992.
   - Correct 83 per cent. of rejects from employers' end of year returns by 31 march 1993.
3. *Performance—Customer Service/Information Provision*
   - Clear 99 per cent. of benefit inquiries handled clerically in three working days to 98 per cent. accuracy.
   - Dispatch either a full reply, or an informative response, to 95 per cent. of all customer inquiries within 10 working days of receipt.
   - Complete action to register acceptable personal pension cases and process straightforward termination notices for 92 per cent. of all cases within 28 working days of receipt.
   - Provide a level of public service considered to be satisfactory by at least 75 per cent. of customers surveyed.
4. *Resource Management*
   - To manage the agency's resources so as to deliver its business plan within a total budget of £142 million.
   - Achieve new efficiency savings of £2·6 million.

Information Technology Services Agency

1. *General*
   - To manage the agency's resources so as to deliver agreed services within the approved 1992-93 running cost and capital allocations and accruals based budgets;
   - to achieve running cost business efficiency savings of 3·9 per cent; and
   - to produce monthly profiles and actual monitoring data for all general and financial targets.
2. *Quality of Service*
   - Service availability—93 per cent of district offices will receive at least the weekly service availability level agreed in the relevant customer service level agreement each month; and
   - on-line response time—the average response time for on-line services is set at seven seconds or less across 95 per cent. of all responses.
3. *Financial*
   - Unit cost and financial ratio targets are set but are not published for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

Resettlement Agency

1. *Customer Care*
   - Not less than 90 per cent. of published facilities to be provided.
   - Survey of residents to confirm that not less than 85 per cent. express satisfaction with standards.
2. *Resource Management*
   - To manage the agency's resources so as to deliver its business plan within a total budget of £25·517 million, including £14·196 million for the costs of existing resettlement units and agency HQ.
   - To achieve £0·3 million in new efficiency savings to be reallocated to grants for replacement providers.
3. *Disengagement Strategy*
   - Make satisfactory alternative provision for four resettlement units and then disengage from running them by 31 March 1993.
   - Secure commitments to satisfactory alternative provision for a further four units, and then announce decisions to disengage from running them during 1993-94, by 31 March 1993.

Child Support Unit

Responsibility for the Department's existing work on collecting maintenance for children will pass in April 1992 from the Benefits Agency to the new child support unit, in preparation for the launch of the child support agency in 1993. The unit's service delivery and financial targets will be:

- Percentage of lone parents making new and repeat claims for income support for whom maintenance is arranged —20 per cent.[7]
- Number of lone parents already in receipt of income

support on 6 April 1992 for whom maintenance is arranged—24,000.[7]

Annual Benefit Savings—£320 million.

To manage the unit's resources so as to deliver its business plan within a total budget of £86 million.

In addition to the above, agencies also have milestone targets to be achieved during 1992-93. Details of these will be published in agency annual business plans. Some of the above budget allocation figures differ from the plans published in the DSS report—Cm 1914. This is due to recent transfers between budgets.

[1] Clearance times normally cover the period from date of receipt of the claim in the agency to the formal decision by the adjudication officer or equivalent. Notification of the result is normally issued by the following day. All days refer to working days.

[2] Based on "calculated" measure, reflecting work outstanding, work processed and working days in the month, measuring from date of entry to date of clearance on statistical record sheet or, for social fund, from date of claim.

[3] The target value is subject to assumption about the number of cases still requiring further inquiries following procedural changes in April 1992.

[4] By comparison, the current targets for attendance allowance is 70 per cent. in 50 days and 95 per cent. in 90 days. The current target for mobility allowance is an average of 37 days, but is not directly comparable.

[5] Based on a forecast workload of 102,000 new cases, compared with an original forecast for 1992-93 of 69,500 claims: the target to be varied subject to work loads.

[6] Incapacity benefits is an overall term used to cover sickness benefit, invalidity benefit, severe disablement allowance and maternity allowance.

[7] These two targets are together broadly equivalent to a target of 27 per cent. of all lone parents on income support receiving maintenance.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 11 March 1992

ENVIRONMENT

Construction Industry

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet representatives of the Building Employers Federation to discuss the effects of the recession on the industry.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet representatives of the construction industry to discuss the effects of the recession on the industry.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and Ministers in the Department have regular meetings with representatives of the construction industry to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Planning Controls

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his final legislative proposals to increase local planning controls over the unnecessary demolition of dwelling houses by developers prior to any redevelopment activity.

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend will recall that we published proposals for public consultation in July last year. We have carefully considered the responses to the options we proposed. In the light of these responses, we have decided how to proceed. In about two months' time, we hope to make the instruments needed to commence the new controls, comprising a commencement order for the relevant parts of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991; a direction which makes clear which types of building are to be subjected to the new controls over demolition; and a general development amendment order, designed to ensure that the new controls operate in an efficient way, and without undue burden on either local authorities or potential developers.

The main effect of the new system will be that those who wish to demolish a dwellinghouse, or a building attached to a dwelling-house, will first need to notify the local planning authority and give 28 days for the authority to decide whether to call for details of the demolition, which it would then consider in the same way as a planning application—the right to demolish, subject to complying with the conditions, would not be removed or to make an article 4 direction, which would require a full planning application to be made, in which case there might be a requirement to pay the owner compensation. We do not expect the new system to result in a substantial number of planning applications for demolition, since in practice most of the details are likely to be sorted out in negotiation between the local planning authority and the developer in the context of his planning application for replacement buildings on any site.

Devon County Structural Plan

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration was given to inviting Devon's hon. Members to participate and give evidence to the public examination of the Devon county structural plan on 24 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: It is normal practice to invite MPs to participate in an examination in public only if they had expressed an interest in the submitted proposals for alteration. Any request to participate will be considered by the panel chairman.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the criteria on which the participation list for the public examination of the Devon county structural plan on 24 March was drawn up; and who was consulted.

Mr. Yeo: In selecting participants for an examination in public, the basic criterion will be the significance of the contribution which, from their knowledge or the views they have expressed, they can be expected to make to the discussion of the matters to be examined. The examination is not directed to hearing objections, and it is not intended that all those who have objected should be invited to attend.

The list of selected matters and invited participants was produced in consultation with the panel chairman, as is normal practice. It was advertised by Devon county council on 16 January. The four-week period during which representations could be made ended on 13 February.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration was given to including voluntary amenity and environmental groups from Devon localities in the public examination of Devon county structural plan; and if he will invite the South Hams Amenity Federation to give evidence.

Mr. Yeo: In drawing up the list of participants for an examination in public, the aim is to select particpants who between them represent a broad range of viewpoints. A number of local environmental and amenity groups, including the Council for the Protection of Rural England, Devon Green party, Devon Friends of the Earth and Devon Conservation Forum have been invited to participate. It was decided that those participants invited to the examination, along with the written representations already received—including those of the South Hams Amenity Federation—would provide sufficient information for a decision to be reached on the alteration proposals.

No further representations were received from the South Hams Amenity Federation during the four-week period for comments to be made about the published draft list of selected matters and invited participants. However, the chairman of the panel has assured me that any late request by the federation will be treated sympathetically.

Empty Property, Devon

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the number of empty *(a)* public and *(b)* private properties for each district of Devon.

Mr. Yeo: Local authorities report the number of their own dwellings which are empty and estimates of empty dwellings owned by housing associations, by other public sector landlords, and by the private sector in their annual housing investment programme—HIP1—returns. "Other public sector" includes dewllings situated in the local authority area but owned by another local authority.

The latest available figures, for April 1991, are in columns A71, A72, A73 and A74, respectively, of the "1991 HIP1 All Items Print". A copy is in the Library.

Local Authority Debt

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the list of local authorities which have debts which are not taken account of in their standard spending assessment, with the amount of those debts individually.

Mr. Key: The capital financing element of standard spending assessments is based on an assessment of interest charges flowing from a notional debt figure. There are a number of reasons why notional debt may differ from actual debt. No records are kept of individual items of excluded capital expenditure.

EC Directives

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to issue a consultation paper on the implementation of the urban waste water treatment directive and the nitrates directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: We have today issued a consultation paper outlining the Government's proposals in England and Wales for criteria and procedures for identifying sensitive areas and less sensitive areas—urban waste water treatment directive—and "polluted waters"—nitrates directive. As far as I am aware the United Kingdom is the first member state to consult publicly on the way we intend to implement these directives. This, I believe, demonstrates the Government's commitment to openness in environmental decision making and to the proper implementation of these directives which will make an important contribution to improving our environment. A copy of the consultation paper has been placed in the Library of the House.

Cash Limits

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any changes to announce to his Department's cash limits for 1991-92.

Mr. Yeo: Yes. I propose to make the following changes:

(i) The non-voted cash limit for DOE/OES will be increased by £478,000 from £93,894,000 to £94,372,000. This results from the provision of additional supplementary credit approvals to enable local authorities to raise finance to fulfil their obligations to contribute part of the cost of certain roads built by the Commission for the New Towns and new town development corporations in England. The increase will be wholly offset by a counterbalancing new towns receipt (see (iii)(b) below).

(ii) The non-voted cash limit for DOE/LACAP will be increased by £89,260,000 from £3,019,202,000 to £3,108,462,000. This results from the provision of additional supplementary credit approvals to enable Milton Keynes BC and The Wrekin DC to raise finance to purchase housing stock from Milton Keynes Development Corporation and Telford Development Corporation respectively. This increase is also wholly offset by counterbalancing new town receipts (see (iii)(b) below).

(iii) The non-voted cash limit for DOE/NT (New Towns) will be increased by £95,262,000 from minus £449,800,000 to minus £354,538,000. This net increase is the result of the following individual changes:

  (a) an increase of £185,000,000, reflecting the effect on receipts of the present state of the property market. This increase will be charged to the reserve and will therefore not add to the planned total of public expenditure;

  (b) reductions of £478,000 and £89,260,000 respectively resulting from additional receipts from local authorities financed by the cash limit increases described in (i) and (ii) above.

(iv) The external finance limit for Letchworth Garden City Corporation will be increased by £231,000 from minus £500,000 to minus £269,000. This reflects changes in the corporation's financing profile as a result of the continuing depression in the property market.

Manchester Concert Hall

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the proposed Manchester concert hall.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has today announced a grant of up to £22 million to Central Manchester development corporation towards the cost of the Manchester concert hall, which is part of the Great Bridgewater initiative. The concert hall will provide a much needed new home for the Hallé orchestra and is central to the Great Bridgewater regeneration initiative.

Irish Sea (Science Co-ordinator)

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether agreement has been reached on the appointment of an Irish sea science co-ordinator.

Mr. Baldry: I am glad to report that my Department and the Departments of the Environment and of the Marine of the Republic of Ireland have agreed to commission EOLAS, the Irish Science and Technology Agency, to provide the services of Mr. Richard Boelens for three years as Irish sea science co-ordinator. Mr. Boelens will act as secretary of the co-ordination group to be set up to review existing and proposed monitoring and research programmes in the Irish sea and to assess priorities for further work to improve our knowledge of environmental issues affecting the Irish sea.

In the course of this work he will prepare an inventory of Irish sea research and monitoring, identify gaps in these programmes and needs for co-ordination and prepare, in liaison with the relevant agencies, proposals for meeting these needs. Consideration will also be given to the timing, content and research requirements of a further quality status report on the Irish sea.

CITES Controls

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government support proposals before the conference of the parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora—CITES—in Kyoto aimed at strengthening controls on trade in wild caught animals and birds.

Mr. Baldry: The Government have made clear their determination to work within CITES to ensure that wildlife species are not exploited by trade. The United Kingdom delegation to the CITES conference has played a leading role in negotiating proposals aimed at improving consultation with wildlife exporting countries and providing for tough action to crack down on trade which is being conducted at unsustainable levels. These proposals have been supported by the conference.

Charterhouse Estates Ltd.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities will consider visiting the Liverpool 1 area to look at the Charterhouse Estates Ltd's involvement in the inner-city area.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 5 March 1992]:* During my visit to Liverpool on 6 March, I met the managing director of Charterhouse Estates Ltd and toured the Liverpool 1 area with him.

Mortgage Rescue Schemes

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the housing associations, building societies and local authorities within Derbyshire who are involved in negotiations with the Council of Mortgage Lenders to provide mortgage rescue schemes.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 10 March 1992]:* Nine members of the Council of Mortgage Lenders have so far announced details of their mortgage rescue schemes, some of them involving agreements with housing associations; others are still being negotiated. I hope that borrowers in Derbyshire will benefit from these schemes, and from the other measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 19 December, as will borrowers in other parts of the country. I understand that Amber Valley district council is intending to introduce a mortgage rescue scheme in conjunction with Walbrook housing association. Derby city council has said that it regards the introduction of a mortgage rescue scheme as a priority.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on 2 March, *Official Report*, columns *45-46*, if he will produce three tables listing percentage figures for the 1992-93 settlement for *(a)* each district council, *(b)* each metropolitan district and *(c)* each shire county in England and Wales, based on the criteria used in that answer, in each case listing authorities in descending order according to the percentage size of the Government grants.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 10 March 1992]:* The information requested is not available for individual authorities for 1992-93.

Heritage and Archaeology

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil servants are employed in his Department on matters relating to *(a)* the heritage and *(b)* archaeology.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 10 March 1992]:* The heritage division of my Department has 41 staff, 12 of whom deal with archaeology. They are supported by English Heritage who are my statutory advisers on conservation matters. My Department's conservation unit, which advises on the good management of the Government's own historic estate, has five staff. In addition, staff in this and other Departments who are engaged on building construction and maintenance programmes recognise and discharge responsibilities for heritage conservation.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what expenditure was made by his Department in the last financial year for which figures are available on *(a)* the heritage and *(b)* archaeology.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 10 March 1992]:* The Department's expenditure on the heritage in 1990-91 was £148·4 million. The estimated outturn for 1991-92 is £176·5 million. Expenditure on archaeology, within the heritage total, is funded through English Heritage and the Royal Commission on the historical monuments of England, whose archaeology expenditure in 1990-91 was £8·1 million and £1·8 million respectively.

Mentally Ill Homeless People

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what funds are being made available through the Housing Corporation in 1992-93 to provide revenue funding for housing associations providing permanent housing for mentally ill homeless people ready to move out of specialist short-term hostels in central London;

(2) how many permanent places for mentally ill homeless people currently living in specialist short-term hostsels in central London will be provided by housing associations in 1992-93.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply.

The Department revenue funds the specialist short-term hostels set up under the homeless mentally ill initiative at the rate of £14,630 per place per annum—1992-93 costs. Permanent accommodation for those moving on from the hostels is being provided via the Housing Corporation. In 1992-93 it expects to make available 150 new units and 150 units from housing association relets. The corporation monitor this provision regularly. The social care of people moving on from the short-term hostels is the responsibility of local social services authorities. To ensure that the transition takes place smoothly the Department has included within the homeless mentally ill initiative £500,000 per annum for the three years 1992-93 to 1994-95 to provide resettlement support.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Part-time Students

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to restrict benefit entitlement for people who currently study part time under the 21-hour rule.

Miss Widdecombe: We have no such plans.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will evaluate the performance of the independent living fund since its inception in 1988.

Mr. Scott: We are proud of the many achievements of the ILF since it was founded nearly four years ago. It has played an important role in the run-up to community care and is currently helping nearly 12,000 people to live independently in their own homes.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review his decision to abolish the independent living fund in March 1993.

Mr. Scott: A successor body will be established to take over all the cases where beneficiaries of the independent living fund are receiving help at the end of March 1993. This new body will continue to make cash payments to its beneficiaries in the same way as the fund does now.

It is planned that from April 1993, people needing such help will be dealt with under the mainstream arrangements for community care.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provision will be made available to the independent living fund for 1992-93.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if it remains his policy to ensure that the independent living fund can help existing beneficiaries and admit new people during 1992-93;

(2) how much his Department has allocated for funding the independent living fund for 1992-93; and if he will take steps to ensure that the independent living fund has sufficient funds to meet new applications throughout 1992-93.

Mr. Scott: In addition to the £82 million already proposed for the independent living fund in 1992-93, the Government have decided to grant a further £15 million, bringing a total provision to £97 million. The trustees assure me that this will be sufficient—in conjunction with other steps they are taking—to enable the fund to continue operating until April 1993.

Parliamentary approval for the additional sum, which will be met from the reserve without adding to the planning total for public expenditure, will be sought in the usual way.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many young people in *(a)* Coventry, *(b)* the west midlands and *(c)* nationally have had their benefit cut as a result of coming off the youth training scheme prematurely or because they refused a place when offered one.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not available.

Pensions

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the percentage increase since 1979 in the real value of *(a)* retirement pension, *(b)* invalidity benefit and *(c)* widows' pension; and if he will give the latest figures for the numbers of people receiving each benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: Basic retirement pension, invalidity benefit and widows pension have each increased by 2·8 per cent., in real terms, after allowing for inflation between the two complete uprating years ending November 1979 and April 1990.

The estimated average numbers of people, in thousands, in receipt of these benefits at any one time are in the table.

	'000
Retirement pension	10,000
Invalidity benefit	1,209
Widows' pension	285

Note: The figures in the table are for Great Britain and are rounded to the nearest thousand; the source is "DSS Statistics". The retirement pension figure is based based on March 1991 data. The invalidity benefit figure is based on March 1990 data. The widows' pension figure is based on September 1990 data.

Disabled People (Benefits)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes he has recently made to benefits for disabled people and their carers.

Mr. Scott: We have already issued a quarter of a million disability living allowance claim packs—to people who are currently not entitled to benefit and to those who can now claim extra benefit. Our extensive TV and press advertising campaign has resulted in over 250,000 inquiries from people who want information about the new benefits. To them we have issued a specially designed colour-coded guide which not only explains the two new benefits but also covers the many other benefits available to disabled people.

We have also begun to take claims for the new benefit, disability working allowance which is aimed at disabled people who are able to work, but have limited earnings' potential. The first awards of the benefit have already been made.

We are shortly to make several other changes which will help disabled people and their carers.

We have today laid regulations that raise to £40 the limit on the weekly amount that a carer can earn without it affecting their entitlement to invalid care allowance. This means that the limit will have increased by over 200 per cent. in the last two years.

We have also laid regulations which will, from April, raise from 12 to 21 the number of hours of study that someone claiming invalid care allowance can undertake without it affecting their entitlement to that benefit.

Other regulations will be laid shortly to bring the residence and presence conditions for severe disability allowance into line, from April, with those which we have introduced for disability living allowance. This means the removal of the long-criticised "10 in 20 years" residence test.

I am also pleased to announce that I laid yesterday regulations which will allow disabled people, who receive either invalidity benefit or severe disability allowance, to serve for one day a week as members of the new disability appeal tribunals and receive the full fee for taking on that invaluable work—without it affecting their entitlement to those benefits.

National Insurance

Sir Timothy Raison: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans for technical adjustments to the system of national insurance contributions and credits which would assist people to qualify for contributory benefits.

Mr. Scott: We propose to lay regulations shortly which will amend the Social Security (Credits) Regulations 1975 to provide that people who receive a payment in lieu of notice or certain other compensatory payments will no longer be prevented from obtaining unemployment credits for the period covered by the compensatory payment.

This will assist people to qualify for contributory benefits by covering potential deficiencies in their contribution records.

We are also laying the Social Security (Contributions) Amendment (No. 5) Regulations 1992, which will further assist people to qualify for contributory benefits by the reallocation of national insurance contributions—NICs —paid in one tax year to another tax year.

Those who will benefit are employed earners who commence employment towards the end of the tax year and whose first payment of earnings from that employment is made in accordance with the employer's normal pay practice in the following tax year. If the NIC record in the first tax year is deficient for contributory benefits, the class 1—employed earners—NICs paid for the first payment of earnings can be treated as paid in respect of the tax year in which the employment began if that would enable the employee to satisfy the contribution conditions for benefit.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for attendance allowance were received in 1990-91.

Mr. Scott: In 1990-91, there were 445,000 claims for attendance allowance. This is a correction to the figure of 395,000 in table 10 of the "DSS Departmental Report", Cm 1914.

Pensioners

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of *(a)* women and *(b)* men in 1980 and in the latest year for which the figures are available reached retirement age with entitlement to (i) the full basic state pension, (ii) some state earnings-related pension or additional pension, (iii) an occupational pension and (iv) a personal pension.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 12 February 1992]*: information is not available in the precise form requested, however such information as is available is given in the tables:

Table 1

	Per cent.
1. Percentage of men age 65 at 28 November 1980 in receipt of:	
1. Any state retirement pension	84·35
ii. Full rate basic pension	79·47
iii. Some additional pension (SERPS)	55·14
2. Percentage of men age 65 at 31 March 1991 in receipt of:	
i. Any state retirement pension	79·77
ii. Full rate basic pension	69·45
iii. Some additional pension (SERPS)	71·49
3. Percentage of women age 60 at 28 November 1980 in receipt of:	
i. Any state retirement pension	63·10
ii. Full rate basic pension (own contributions)	20·01
iii. Some additional pension (SERPS)	10·16
4. Percentage of women age 60 at 31 March 1991 in receipt of:	
i. Any state retirement pension	67·44
ii. Full rate basic pension (own contributions)	15·04
iii. Some additional pension (SERPS)	28·04

Table 2

The percentage of recently retired in receipt of an Occupational Pension

Year	Percentage
Men	
1979	61
1988	69
Women	
1979	20
1988	40

Notes for Table 2:

(a) The "recently-retired" are defined as men aged 65-69 and women aged 60-64.

(b) Estimates are for the United Kingdom and are based on the 1979 and 1987 Government Actuary's Department (GAD) Occupational Pensions Surveys and the 1979 and 1988 Family Expenditure Surveys.

TRANSPORT

Coach Parking, London

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in meetings with representatives of the coach and tourist industries, London local authorities, the police and other Government Departments to alleviate coach parking problems in central London.

Mr. Freeman: I have today announced a series of initiatives which will help to improve the central London coach parking situation. The measures include the provision of more than 160 new coach parking spaces in or close to central London; the lifting of evening coach parking restrictions on the Victoria embankment and Park lane; the relaunch of the Bus and Coach Council code of conduct for the operating and parking of tourist coaches; arrangements for distribution of the revised code of conduct to coach drivers at continental channel ports and Dover; a new pay and park facility for coaches at the North Mall coach park; Sunday morning opening at the Tower of London; the freezing of charges at the Tower coach park for a third consecutive year and a feasibility study for a radio call back experiment in the area close to Westminster abbey.

Dial-a-Ride

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements have been made to fund the London dial-a-ride service.

Mr. Freeman: I am pleased to announce that the grant to London dial-a-ride services for 1992-93 will be £10·5 million. It has been most encouraging to see the rapid expansion of the scheme in recent years, and this announcement will allow London Transport to improve the services still further in 1992-93: increasing the number of dial-a-ride trips from some 740,000 in the present year to more than 800,000 next year. It will also enable the completion of the planned regionalisation of the service.

Rail Passengers Charter

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the bonuses to be paid to British Rail board members in relation to the passengers charter performance standards.

Mr. Freeman: For 1990-91 BR board members could have earned a maximum 25 per cent. bonus on salary for meeting a series of targets, including up to 7 per cent. for quality of service. Members actually received a maximum of 4 per cent. which included 1 per cent. for quality of service.

Details of a revised BR board bonus scheme for 1992-93, including quality of service targets based on the passengers charter, are currently being developed. On the basis of a possible maximum 10 per cent. bonus for quality, the actual bonus in 1991 would have been less than 2 per cent. of salary if the charter standards had applied, equivalent to around £4,000 for the chairman.

Channel Tunnel Freight Services

Mr. Grist: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has yet approved any order for freight wagons to equip British Rail's proposed channel tunnel freight services.

Mr. Freeman: I have authorised British Rail to invest in initial builds of 450 intermodal wagons and up to 550 automotive wagons for channel tunnel freight services, at a total cost of up to £65 million. The intermodal wagons will be used to carry standard containers and swap bodies in terminal to terminal services between BR's network of regional freight terminals in Britain and key destinations on the continent. The fully enclosed automotive wagons will enable BR to offer high quality services for the delivery of finished cars for import and export, minimising the risk of damage to vehicles en route.

Airedale Route Strategy

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on the A650 Airedale route strategy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Airedale strategy will eventually provide a high standard dual carriageway road from Skipton in the north-west, via Bradford, to the M62. Good progress has been made on a number of sections. I am today announcing preferred routes for the Shipley eastern bypass, which would link to a tunnel on section 4, and for the Hard Ings road improvement, which improves a section of single carriageway in Keighley to dual two-lane carriageway standard.

We are also pressing ahead with the preparation of main works for section 3 of the route, with advance works at Park road in Bingley currently out to tender and expected to start soon. We are well advanced in the preparation for inviting consultants to bid for the commission to carry out the preliminary design work for the tunnel option for section 4 and will invite bids soon.

Vehicle Mileages (Clocking)

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he proposes to take to combat the clocking of vehicle mileages.

Mr. Chope: We are working closely with the private sector in the development of effective and practical proposals to combat this abuse. Some companies already offer mileage check information services for the public and the motor trade, and the introduction of more comprehensive schemes is being actively considered. To provide the fullest possible data to underpin these services a "mileage box" is to be included on the vehicle registration document. Vehicle mileages at both the time of sale and of purchase will be collected by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and passed to companies running mileage check services. I believe that this development will prove to be a significant step forward in our drive to stamp out the fraudulent alteration of vehicle odometers and will be welcomed by the motoring public and motor dealers alike.

Airline Failures

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will introduce a scheme to compensate scheduled airline passengers for financial loss arising from the failure of an airline in the light of the Civil Aviation Authority's advice to him published in 1991.

Mr. Rifkind: I have considered the Civil Aviation Authority's advice and have decided in principle that it would be desirable to introduce such a scheme, to provide financial protection for passengers who book tickets on United Kingdom airlines. I envisage that, in line with the CAA's advice, a fund would be set up from which any compensation would be paid, financed by a levy on United Kingdom airlines. I do not expect the levy to have a significant effect on fares. It would be of short duration —a matter of months—and should not exceed £1 per traveller. The scheme would complement the financial protection arrangements which already exist for people who book charter holidays by air.

I am asking the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority to develop detailed proposals along these lines, and to consult as appropriate. Primary legislation would be necessary to implement such proposals and an opportunity to introduce such legislation will be sought in due course.

Red Routes

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will be in a position to make public the full analysis of the survey of the red route pilot scheme carried out last autumn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I have today published the results of the autumn monitoring of the pilot scheme independently designed and assessed by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory. Copies are being placed in the Library, and I am writing to all London MPs about them. The report shows that red route measures bring shorter, more reliable journey times for existing traffic, notably for buses, ease the flow of traffic and greatly improve safety on and off the route. London Buses is planning to introduce a new, limited stop, bus service on the pilot route taking advantage of the benefits to buses being produced. The environment is enhanced through the reduction of stopping and starting on the route, the improvement of roadside conditions, and the attraction of traffic away from residential side roads. Improvements are being achieved in spite of an increase in the volume of traffic now using the route, nearly all of which appears to be coming from side-roads in the corridor. Variations in trading activity are recorded but they seem to depend more on the type of business being conducted and the economic climate than on red route measures.

Traffic Management, London

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will issue his draft traffic management and parking guidance for London for consultation under the Road Traffic Act 1991.

Mr. Rifkind: I have published draft traffic management and parking guidance for London for consultation, as required by the Road Traffic Act 1991. Copies are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses and are being sent to each London Member.

The draft guidance explains London's transport needs and the Government's approach to meeting them. It refers to the Government's desire to maximise the use of public transport where it offers a realistic alternative to the car and to see a coherent approach to the management of traffic and parking, so that public and private transport can move efficiently, smoothly and reliably on the main routes and supporting action can improve conditions throughout London. In particular, it explains how the Government propose that the major traffic management initiatives in the Road Traffic Act 1991; red routes and the new system of local authority enforcement of "decriminalised" on-street parking controls, should contribute to the approach and tackle the problems of congestion in the short term. It will help the London traffic director to start planning the introduction of the red routes and the local authorities, the introduction of their new parking system.

Comments on the draft have been invited by 12 June 1992.

Railway Investment

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much Government financial assistance was given in relation to each train kilometre in *(a)* France and *(b)* Britain, over the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: International comparisons of railway subsidy cannot be made with precision because of differences in accounting practice. For instance, past debt write offs mean that British Rail pays significantly less interest that SNCF. Comparative information is published by the International Union of Railways in "International Railway Statistics". I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library.

The following figures are available for Great Britain.

£ per train kilometre

	BR (Great Britain)
1985	2·2
1986	2·0
1987	2·1
1988	1·3
1989	1·4
1990	1·5
[1]1991	2·1

[1]:Estimated.

Notes:

Train kilometres include all passenger and freight kilometres. There is no subsidy paid to BR for freight.

Rail Stations (Security)

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail concerning the improvement of the design of railway stations with the aim of reducing injury in the event of a terrorist bomb.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend met the chairman of British Rail and London Transport and the chief constable of the British Transport police on 3 March to discuss security arrangements for BR and London Underground. The design of railway stations is primarily a matter for British Rail. I understand that BR has produced a code of practice for its architects, on future station design changes and security implications.

Kent Rail Services

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has held with British Rail over improvements to Kent services and the placing of the order for the class 465 Networkers.

Mr. Freeman: I meet the chairman of BR regularly to discuss current issues, including improvements to Kent rail services. A total of 486 Kent link Networkers are already under construction at a cost of £364 million. BR is not yet in a position to say when the order for a further 188 Networkers will be placed.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce the results of the consultation on the proposal to direct London Transport to dispose of the Docklands light railway to the London Docklands development corporation.

Mr. Rifkind: Having considered the comments received in the consultation I have concluded that the strength of the case for uniting the DLR with the LDDC remains undiminished. I have, therefore, today directed London Regional Transport to dispose of the DLR to the LDDC for a nominal sum with effect from 1 April 1992.

Worksop Bypass

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what reasons his Department is withholding £330,000 in compensation and interest charges from Bassetlaw district council as the final payment for land for the A57 Worksop bypass; and when he expects the payment to be made.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 10 March 1992]:* The Department is not withholding compensation and interest payments from Bassetlaw district council. Agreement was reached in March 1990 on the compensation due and in December 1990 a 90 per cent. advance payment was made to the council—this was the maximum allowed by the legislation in force at the time. Under the new provisions of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 payment of accrued interest is also required to be made, and a payment in respect of that amount will reach the council shortly. The outstanding balance and any further interest due will be paid on completion of the land ownership transfer procedures, in the usual way.

Rail Investment

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out *(a)* the level of investment by Network SouthEast in each year since 1962 at current prices and *(b)* the total operating grant paid to (i) British Rail and (ii) Network SouthEast in each year since 1962 at current prices.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* The information is as follows:

NSE Investment (£ million at 1991-92 prices)
(Capital and revenue)

	£ million
1982[1]	192
1983	181
1984-85[2]	168
1985-86	162
1986-87	183
1987-88	305
1988-89	381
1989-90	414
1990-91	323
1991-92[3]	380

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[1] NSE was formed in 1986. Previous comparable figures are available only from 1982.

[2] 1984-85 was a 15-month period. The figure quoted is the 12-month equivalent.

[3] Estimated.

Source: NSE.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Gifted Children

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will consider the statementing of children of exceptional ability.

Mr. Fallon: It is for LEAs to make appropriate provisions for gifted children.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what proportion of the resources made available for children with special needs is made available for the education of gifted children;

(2) how many local education authorities have able child resource centres;

(3) what proportion of the national educational budget is devoted to providing additional resources for children of exceptional ability.

Mr. Fallon: This information is not available centrally. It is for individual local authorities and schools to determine the deployment of their resources to meet additional educational needs, including the needs of exceptionally able pupils.

HIV and AIDS

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what account he has taken of the Education Act 1986 and the European convention on human rights in considering implementation of the recommendations of his pamphlet, "HIV and AIDS: a Guide for the Education Service"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The purpose of my Department's publication "HIV and Aids: A Guide for the Education Service" is to present, for education professionals, the basic facts about HIV, draw attention to ways in which the education service can contribute to the dissemination of knowledge about HIV and AIDS, and give guidance on standard hygiene practices which educational institutions should adopt to guard against the risks of accidental transmission. My right hon. and learned Friend consistently made it clear, in line with section 46 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, that sex education, including education about the sexual transmission of HIV, should be given in such a manner as to encourage pupils to have due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life; and that detailed decisions about how such education is delivered in the classroom should take full account of local circumstances, the particular needs of pupils, and the views of parents. This approach is consistent with the requirements of the European convention on human rights on the need to respect the right of parents to ensure that their children's education conforms with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to confirm the Government's proposals for teachers' pay for 1992.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: After careful consideration of the representations I have received from associations representing teachers and their employers, I have decided to accept all the recommendations of the School Teachers' Review Body. The order I have signed today will bring into effect the provisions in the 1992 School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document from 1 April 1992. This will make it possible for all school teachers to receive the pay increases recommended by the review body in full and on time.

Parents Charter

Mr. Ground: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science which local education authorities in England have distributed copies of the parents charter to parents in their areas; which local education authorities have refused to do so; and what alternative arrangements have been made for distributing copies of the parents charter to parents in those areas where local education authorities are not doing so.

Mr. Eggar: Sample copies of the charter were sent to headteachers and chairmen of governors at every school, together with an order form for further copies. More than 16,400 schools—66 per cent.—requested some 4 million copies to distribute to parents. The charter was widely advertised in the national press with a freepost coupon or a freephone number for ordering copies. It is also available in public libraries and post offices. Some 1·9 million copies have now been distributed through these means.

We are aware that a few local education authorities actively discouraged their schools from distributing copies of the charter, but we do not have comrehensive information about local authority attitudes. This is essentially a matter for schools, and the great majority have requested copies for distribution.

Sex Education

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the provisions for the teaching of sex education in schools.

Mr. Atkins: School governing bodies are responsible, under the provisions of the Education (No 2) Act 1986, for deciding whether their schools should provide sex education beyond those aspects required by the national curriculum; and for maintaining a written record both of that decision and of their policy on the content and organisation of any six education they decide should be provided. Schools are required to ensure that any sex education they may provide encourages pupils to have due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life. The circular "Sex Education at School", issued by the Department in 1987, offers guidance on these provisions.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fishery Decommissioning Scheme

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 27 February, *Official Report*, columns *612-14*, what proportion of funding for the proposed decommissioning scheme for the fishing industry has been allocated by *(a)* the European Community and *(b)* Her Majesty's Government over the period concerned, giving these sums both as a percentage and as a capital sum.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend has explained that expenditure on decommissioning will be limited to £25 million. Assuming that all expenditure is eligible the Community will reimburse between 50 and 70 per cent. depending on the method of withdrawal. However, the EC budget is funded in such a way that the United Kingdom taxpayer will have to meet 73 per cent. of the Community contribution as well as all the national contribution. The net result of this is that the United Kingdom taxpayer will have to contribute about £20 million of the £25 million available for decommissioning or in percentage terms about 80 per cent. of the total.

Crown Immunity

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to lift immunity of Crown premises for food safety; what progress has been made on implementing this provision; when he intends to issue the code of practice in connection with this measure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Food Safety Act 1990 extends food safety law to Crown premises with effect from 1 April this year.

Crown premises will need to be registered before 1 July 1992 in accordance with the Food Premises (Registration) Regulations 1991.

A code of practice on the enforcement of the Food Safety Act 1990 in relation to Crown premises will be issued under section 40 of the Act later this month.

Veterinary Medicines Directorate

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what performance targets he has set for the Veterinary Medicines Directorate in 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The chief executive of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate—VMD—has submitted his proposals to me and I have agreed that the VMD should be set the following performance targets for 1992-93:

full cost recovery for the three business activities of licensing, policy work and residues monitoring;

100 per cent. of new licence applications to be issued within 210 clock days; 80 per cent. within 120 days;

an overall efficiency gain of 2 per cent.

These are challenging targets, which will build on the improvements already made in efficiency and quality of service by the directorate since its establishment as a next steps agency, and for which I commend the chief executive and his staff. In addition, I have agreed with the chief executive that the VMD's corporate plan 1992-93 to 1994-95 should be published. Copies are being placed in the Library of the House.

Cash Limits

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to make any changes to his Department's cash limits for 1991-92.

Mr. Gummer: Yes. The cash limit for Class III Vote 4 (other agricultural and food services, support for the fishing industry, arterial drainage, flood and coast protection) will be reduced by £2,000,000 from £267,044,000 to £265,044,000. Within this limit expenditure will be reduced by £1,900,000 on emergency and strategic food services reflecting a reduction in the size of the emergency food stockpile and by £100,000 on extensification to reflect a reduction in demand under these schemes.

The reduced cash limit will offset an increase in the financial ceiling for United Kingdom hill livestock compensatory allowances.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Authorised Practitioner Scheme

Mr. Moss: To ask the Attorney-General when the relevant provisions of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 will be implemented to establish the authorised practitioner scheme.

The Attorney-General: The consultation document on the draft Authorised Practitioner Regulations which was published last April produced a large number of responses representing a wide variety of views. Last December a further consultation was undertaken involving those bodies with a principal interest in the conveyancing market. Responses to the further consultation have confirmed that there is insufficient demand for authorisation to justify the implementation of the relevant provisions of the 1990 Act at the present time. In addition, the Law Commissioners and the Securities and Investments Board are presently reviewing aspects of the regulation of commissions in the financial services market, the outcome of which may affect the approach taken towards the regulation of authorised practitioners in this respect. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor intends therefore to postpone implementation for the present. He will keep the position under review and will reassess the situation should there be a future increase in the demand for authorisation.

Public Record Office

Mr. Moss: To ask the Attorney-General when the Public Record Office is to be established as an agency.

The Attorney-General: Further to my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) on 23 January, at column *181*, I am pleased to confirm that the Lord Chancellor will establish the Public Record Office as an executive agency on 1 April 1992. I will arrange for a copy of the Public Record Office's framework document to be placed in the Library.

The table sets out the key performance targets that the Lord Chancellor has set for the Public Record Office for 1992-93.

Public Record Office key performance targets—1992-93

Indicator	*Target*
1. *Efficiency*	
Cost of selecting and accessioning records per unit quantity (foot-run).	To establish a baseline cost for the year 1992-93 with a view to setting a target for 1993-94.
Unit costs of providing record storage space, document productions and reader services.	To increase the cost of providing records storage space per linear foot by no more that 5·5 per cent. from £0·90 to £0·95[1].
	To decrease the cost per cost per document produced to readers by 18 per cent. from £1·71 to £1·40.
	To decrease the total reader service costs per reader visit (Census microforms) by 10 per cent. from £2·18 to £1·96.
	To decrease the total reader service cost per reader visit (other records) by 8 per cent. from £6·85 to £6·28.
Backlog of records awaiting review.	To reduce the backlog of records over 30 years old which have not been reviewed, by 500 ft.
Provision of acceptable storage conditions.	The store 81 per cent. of records to an acceptable standard.
Management efficiency in running services and projects.	To establish systems to permit specific targets to be set for 1993-94.
2. *Quality of Service*	
Hours during which the office is open to the public.	To run a pilot scheme from 4 July 1992 to 31 December 1992 of opening the census reading rooms on a Saturday and to continue the service if customer demand is great enough.
Provision of finding aids	To produce a new edition of the "Current Guide' and to begin work on a single set of finding aids for all the records.
Public availability of staff.	On 90 per cent. of days on which the office is open to the public there will be a minimum of four staff available to assist the public at Kew, four staff in the census rooms and four staff in the other rooms at Chancery lane.
Response time for answering correspondence	Replies to letters requiring a response to stock letter will be sent within one week and those to other letters will be sent within three weeks.
Speed of producing reprographic copies.	Copies of records will be provided within the following periods: Electrostatic copies: Same day service: up to a stated maximum number of copies per person. Other orders: five working days. Prints from film (from existing microfilm): eight working days. Bromide prints: three weeks. A self-service copying service will be available at Kew and in the census rooms at all times.
Quality of copies made.	No more than 5 per cent. of copies to require to be re-taken.

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[1] The cost of storage has been increased by the cost of installing the new records information system, which will enable longer term efficiency savings to be made.

Personal Injury Claims

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Attorney-General whether the small claims procedure in the county courts will be extended to cover lower value personal injury claims.

The Attorney-General: The small claims arbitration procedure provides an accessible, informal and inexpensive means of resolving straightforward money claims through the county courts. The level at which claims are automatically referred to arbitration on receipt of a defence was doubled last year from £500 to £1,000. Plaintiffs claiming unspecified amounts, as is often the case where people claim compensation for personal injuries, are at present free to limit their claim to £1,000 if they wish to benefit from the advantages of the informal procedure. It is the intention of my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor to encourage more personal injury litigants to benefit from these advantages, in a way which would safeguard equally the interests of both parties to a claim. The responses to a consultation paper published last year have suggested that provisions for costs should be part of the scheme. The Lord Chancellor is considering further what can be done to meet this suggestion.

SCOTLAND

Environmental Grants

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement concerning the amount of grant aid being made available under the special grants (environmental) programme in 1992-93 to voluntary bodies in Scotland working in the environmental field.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am pleased to announce that grant aid totalling £303,125 has been offered to voluntary bodies to assist them in carrying out environmental conservation, improvement or educational work in Scotland. The special grants (environmental) programme offers two different types of funding: core funding to help organisations with their central administrative costs, and project funding for distribution to projects designed to further government environmental policy aims as set out in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance". Core funding has been allocated to 39 organisations as follows:

Organisation	*Grant £*
Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland	2,000
Ayr Architectural Heritage Trust	5,000
Buchan Countryside Group	2,000
Centre for Human Ecology	6,500
Council for Scottish Archaeology	13,500
Community Service Volunteers	6,500
Environment Centre	4,500
Friends of the Earth (Scotland)	12,000
Garden History Society	4,500
Habitat Scotland	3,000
Heartland Radio Association	2,000
Heritage Education Trust	1,500
Highland Forum	11,000
John Muir Trust	4,000
Locus Breadalbane	2,500
Mid Craigie Community Business Ltd.	1,000
National Society for Clean Air	3,500
Royal Zoological Society Scotland	3,000
Rural Forum	14,000
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	9,000
Scottish Conservation Projects	25,000
Scottish Ecological Design Association	1,400
Scottish Environmental Education Council	24,000
Scottish Environment News	2,000
Scottish Field School of Archaeology	3,000
Scottish Field Studies Association	3,000
Scottish Historic Buildings Trust	11,700
Scottish Native Woods Campaign	5,500
Scottish Rights of Way Society	7,000
Scottish Scenic Trust	1,750
Scottish Wildlife and Countryside Link	9,000
Scottish Wildlife Trust	21,000
Strathclyde Building Preservation Trust	6,300
Sustrans Scotland	10,000
Touchstone	2,000
Venture Scotland	2,000
Water of Leith Conservation Trust	5,000
West Galloway Fisheries Trust	1,350
Woodland Trust	4,000
TOTAL	256,000

Project funding has been allocated to 12 organisations as follows:

Organisation	*Project*	*Grant £*
Age Concern (Orkney)	Inter-island glass recycling project	3,225
CSV Media Green Action	Aberdeen media action video project	3,700
Council for Scottish Archaeology	Archaeological action information packs	3,000
Friends of the Earth (Scotland)	Consumer awareness information pack	5,000
Lothian and Edinburgh Environmental Partnership	Edinburgh and Lothians car sharing project	3,550
Scottish Native Woods Campaign	Growing up with trees project pack	4,000
Scottish Wildlife Trust	Wildlife information network	5,000
Skye Forum	Salmon ensilage project	3,750
Slide Workshop	Model school grounds information dissemination project	900
Sustrans Scotland	Rutherglen bridge project	5,000

Organisation	*Project*	*Grant* £
Touchstone	Aldie Burn adventure trail	5,000
Water of Leith Conservation Trust	Community environmental action	5,000
TOTAL		£47,125

Further sums are being held in reserve to support suitable proposals which may arise during the year. The experience of the scheme to date has been generally very good. I am satisfied that the grants now offered will greatly assist the voluntary organisations to increase their level of activity and do much useful work.

EC Directives

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to issue a consultation paper on the implementation of the urban waste treatment directive and the nitrates directive.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have today issued a Scottish consultation paper outlining the Government's proposals for the criteria and procedures to be used to identify sensitive areas and less sensitive areas in terms of the urban waste water treatment directive and "polluted waters" in terms of the nitrates directive. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Similar papers are being issued for England and Wales and for Northern Ireland.

Traffic Offences (Fixed Penalties)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he proposes to make any changes to the extended fixed penalty system for road traffic offences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the light of consultation with representative organisations, my right hon. Friend proposes to increase fixed penalty levels to £20 for non-endorsable offences and £40 for endorsable offences from 1 April 1992.

Schools Inspectorate

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are employed in Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools; and what increase or decrease is being proposed for Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 12 December 1991]:* At the beginning of April, Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools in Scotland will consist of 107 professional and 65 support staff. Little change to these numbers is foreseen in the near future.

Psychiatric Beds

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the average number of staffed beds for all NHS hospitals in Scotland was represented by psychiatric specialties in each year since 1980.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* The information requested is shown in the table. During this period the percentage of psychiatric beds fell as the Government's care in the community policy took effect.

National health service hospitals in Scotland—available staffed beds; psychiatric specialties as a percentage of all specialties; for years ending 31 March

	per cent.
1980	29·4
1981	29·2
1982	28·9
1983	29·0
1984	28·7
1985	29·0
1986	28·9
1987	28·6
1988	28·5
1989	28·0
1990	27·6
1991	27·5

Higher and Further Education

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to appoint a chief executive for the Scottish Higher and Further Educational Funding Council; and what civil service grade the successful applicant will have.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* We intend to commence the recruitment process, through open competition, as soon as the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill receives Royal Assent. The terms and conditions of service for the post will be announced later.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Departmental Spending

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give gross spending for his Department in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms using April 1979 as 100 both (i) as a percentage of gross domestic product and (ii) per 100,000 of the population for each year 1978-79 to the latest available year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is as follows:

Financial year	Northern Ireland block		Northern Ireland block as a percentage of United Kingdom gross domestic product	Northern Ireland block expenditure per 100,000 population	
	Cash terms £ million	Real terms (April 1979 = 100) £ million	per cent.	Cash terms £ million	Real terms (April 1979 = 100) £ million
1978-79	2,099	2,099	1·20	138	138
1979-80	2,451	2,098	1·17	160	137
1980-81	2,837	2,051	1·19	185	134
1981-82	3,158	2,084	1·21	205	136
1982-83	3,464	2,133	1·21	225	139
1983-84	3,710	2,185	1·20	240	142
1984-85	4,011	2,248	1·21	259	145
1985-86	4,209	2,235	1·16	270	144
1986-87	4,427	2,277	1·13	283	145
1987-88	4,758	2,320	1·10	302	147
1988-89	5,373	2,444	1·12	340	155
1989-90	5,645	2,412	1·08	357	152
1990-91	5,784	2,279	1·04	364	143

Note:

(i) Figures for 1978-79 to 1983-84 have been adjusted to the new planning total definition.

(ii) Figures for 1988-89 and 1989-90 reflect the privatisation of Short Brothers and Harland.

Social Security

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the cost of benefit expenditure on the unemployed and the administration costs of unemployment benefit and redundancy payments in 1991-92.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows.

Estimated Benefit Expenditure on Unemployed People—1991-1992

Type	Expenditure £ million
Unemployment Benefit	39·4
Income Support	189·0
Redundancy Payments	2·0
Total	230·4
Estimated Administration Costs—1991-1992	
Benefits	12·7
Redundancy Payments	0·2

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many offices, providing public access for the purpose of claiming benefit, including unemployment benefit, were in operation on 1 April 1979, and at the latest available date;

(2) how many home visits, excluding specialist visits, including those for the purpose of investigating suspected fraud were made per 1,000 claimants in the latest available year; and how many were made in 1978-79.

Mr. Hanley: Social security operational matters are the responsibility of Mr. Alec Wylie, chief executive of the Social Security Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies of his reply will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Criminal Injuries (Compensation)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are being taken to maintain the principle that all innocent victims of violence are entitled to fair compensation, within a reasonable time, following the introduction of new minimum levels of compensation for personal injury and mental injury or shock.

Dr. Mawhinney: The existing statutory criminal injuries compensation scheme in Northern Ireland provides fair and reasonable compensation to the innocent victims of violence. The scheme contains two thresholds or lower limits on compensation—one in respect of physical injuries and the other in respect of mental injury.

Thresholds have been a feature of the scheme for many years. Their purpose is to exclude lower value claims from compensation and to set a limit which the Government believe that it would be reasonable to expect those criminally injured to bear themselves.

Voters

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the number of married women in Northern Ireland who would need to produce their marriage certificate as proof of identity in order to cast their ballot in the forthcoming general election.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the number of people in Northern Ireland who hold each of the documents necessary to identify themselves at the forthcoming general election.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, one of the documents concerned, the medical card issued by the Central Services Agency, is available to all electors in Northern Ireland free of charge. There is, therefore, no need for any elector to be without their vote.

Household Statistics

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the number of households in each parliamentary constituency in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: I understand from the chief electoral officer that the number of households in each parliamentary constituency in Northern Ireland is approximately as follows:

Constituency	*Approximate number of households*
Belfast East	29,800
Belfast North	24,200
Belfast South	32,800
Belfast West	33,300
East Antrim	34,500
East Londonderry	36,300
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	30,900
Foyle	32,500
Lagan Valley	36,200
Mid Ulster	30,100
Newry and Armagh	30,500
North Antrim	33,600
North Down	35,800
Strangford	35,000
South Antrim	34,200
South Down	35,400
Upper Bann	33,200
TOTAL	558,300

Tourist Board

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the present term of appointment of the chairman of the Northern Ireland tourist board ends; and when he will announce the name of the chairman for the next period of office.

Mr. Needham: The NITB chairman's appointment ends on 30 June 1994; the name of a chairman for the next period will be announced at an appropriate time before that date.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide details about the launch of the Government's next steps agency administering the Ordnance Survey for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: The Ordnance Survey executive agency will be formally established on 1 April 1992.

Its performance targets for the period 1 April 1992 to 31 March 1993 are as follows:

To survey 33,175 house units in the continuous revision programme;

to complete 756 data capture units representing 1,220 basic scale map sheets converted to digital format;

to update the digital topographical database with 90 per cent. of the surveyed change within seven days of receipt of the field date;

to despatch within seven working days 90 per cent. of orders for folded and basic scale maps; and

to reduce unit costs so that the weighted mean percentage reduction of selected representative activities is 2 per cent.

A framework document has been prepared for the agency and a copy has been placed in the Library.

Driver and Vehicle Testing

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide details about the launch of the Government's "next steps" agency for administering the vehicle inspection and driving test centres in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: The Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency will be formally established on 1 April 1992.

The key performance targets set for the agency for 1992-93 are:

Throughput of drivers tested (per person per day)
Target—7·6 tests per person per day.
Throughput of vehicles tested (per person per day)
Target—15·75 vehicle tests per person per day.
Waiting time for driver testing
Target—80 per cent. to be tested by 8 weeks; 100 per cent. by 10 weeks.
Waiting time for vehicle testing
Target—80 per cent. to be tested within 4 weeks; 100 per cent. within 5 weeks.
Error rates (percentage of faulty inspections)
Target—faulty inspections will not exceed 0·5 per cent. of tests conducted.
Unit cost of driver of vehicle tests
Target—composite unit cost £16·16.
Level of complaints
Target—complaints about booking arrangements should be less than 1 per cent. of applications received; complaints about the conduct of tests should be less than 1 per cent. of tests conducted.
Customer satisfaction levels
Target—Greater than 92 per cent. satisfaction with booking arrangements; Greater than 96 per cent. satisfaction with testing procedures.

A copy of the framework document setting out the terms within which the agency will operate will be placed in the Library shortly.

Compensation Schemes

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about progress towards the establishment of a "next steps" agency in the Northern Ireland Office to administer the compensation schemes.

Mr. Brooke: The Compensation Agency will be formally established on 1 April 1992. I have made arrangements for copies of the agency's framework document to be placed in the Library. I have set a number of key performance targets for the agency to achieve in its first year. These are:

Financial Targets

To live within a running costs budget of £3·5 million, reflecting a 2·1 per cent. cash efficiency saving.

To manage the agency's budget for demand-led expenditure within the financial limit approved by the Department, including in-year adjustments, while ensuring that expenditure is within a margin of 0·5 per cent. of the approved provision.

To reduce the unit cost of processing each type of compensation claim by at least 4 per cent. in real terms.

Claims Processing Targets

Target	*Criminal Injuries Claims*	*Criminal Damage Claims*	*Emergency Provisions Claims*
Number of claims cleared:	11,750	4,500	4,600
To reduce the average time taken to reach a decision on an application by:	4 weeks	4 weeks	3 days
To reduce the number of claims over 3 years old[1] where no decision has been reached by:	25 per cent.	25 per cent.	25 per cent.

[1] Over one year old in the case of emergency provisions claims.

EC Directives

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he intends to issue a consultation paper on the implementation of the urban waste water treatment directive and nitrates directive.

Mr. Needham: We have today issued a consultation paper outlining the Government's proposals for Northern

Ireland for criteria and procedures for identifying sensitive areas and less sensitive areas—urban waste water treatment directives—and "polluted waters"—nitrates directive. As far as I am aware, the United Kingdom is the first member state to consult publicly on the way it is intended to implement these directives. This, I believe, demonstrates the Government's commitment to openness in environmental decision making and to the proper implementation of these directives which will make an important contribution to improving our environment.

WALES

Job Losses, Clwyd

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people have lost their jobs in Clwyd, South-West over the last *(a)* three months, *(b)* six months and *(c)* 12 months.

Mr. David Hunt: In the 12-month period to December 1991 there were 23 notified redundancies in Clwyd, South-West. None of these was in the last six months. These figures are the latest available and are still provisional.

Elective Surgery

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will respond to the sixth report of the Welsh Affairs Committee, Session 1990-91, on elective surgery, House of Commons paper 390.

Mr. David Hunt: I am pleased to announce that the response has been published today as Command Paper 1863.

Cancer Treatment

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to develop cancer treatment services for the people of north Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Having carefully reviewed all the options set out in the Deloitte, Haskins and Sells report I have decided that cancer patients in north Wales will best be served by the establishment of a dedicated cancer centre in north Wales itself. I have consequently, commissioned a detailed investment appraisal of this option. Provided the conclusions of this are satisfactory I am hopeful that a start on such a centre can be made in 1993.

The remaining recommendations of the DHS report are primarily for health authorities in north Wales to consider in the light of their local strategies for health and the development of cancer services in the areas concerned.

Neighbourhood Amenities

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to establish a community initiative fund to promote the development of neighbourhood facilities and amenities.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *[holding answer 26 February 1992]:* EC Community initiatives and associated funding are the responsibility of the European Commission. The Commission's mid-term review of the last reform of the EC structural funds, which is to include a chapter on "Guidelines for the Future", is expected to issue later this month. One of the issues under consideration is the case for modifying objective 2 areas—areas of industrial decline, in Wales, Industrial South Wales and Clwyd—to give greater emphasis to urban regeneration. During the review, we will be pressing for designation of as many eligible areas as possible within Wales.

Both the EC RECHAR and LEADER programmes, for industrial south Wales and rural mid-Wales respectively, have recently received European Commission approval and will make European regional development and European social fund grant assistance available for a wide range of measures in coalfield and rural areas, including social infrastructure and local community based developments.

The Community Development Foundation—CDF—has set up an office in Wales with the aim of promoting greater understanding of the value of community development and assisting specific community projects in the Principality. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales was pleased to launch this initiative formally in October 1990—one of the many community initiatives under the programme for the valleys—and provide urban programme aid to run two pilot schemes in Rhondda and Ogwr.

The Welsh Development Agency is providing support for a community enterprise initiative within the valleys programme area, which is aimed at stimulating a range of community self-help projects offering economic benefit —for example, community businesses—encompassing the provision of advice as well as financial assistance. Some £200,000 per annum has been provided under this initiative by the WDA since the programme started.

"Landscape Wales", the WDA's land reclamation and environmental programme, aimed at the restoration of the Welsh landscape, includes schemes which assist in the provision of local amenities—for example, sports fields, recreation facilities, country parks, picnic sites, cycle ways, the external improvement of redundant buildings in order to bring them into reuse for the benefit of the community, and so on. In 1991-92 the budget for Landscape Wales is £31 million.

Last December, my right hon. Friend announced, as a further stage of the rural initiative, a fresh series of measures to strengthen and carry forward rural programmes across the economic, environmental and social fields. These measures include an annual competition of local authority capital projects designed for the benefit of rural communities. We are particularly keen that the community councils are allowed full opportunity to put forward proposals on behalf of their local communities, and that social as well as economic and environmental schemes are adequately represented. For 1992-93, the Secretary of State has allocated £6 million to fund the competition.

The Development Board for Rural Wales is also actively involved in the social development of its area. In 1991-92, £1 million has been made available to launch the board's social development action programme, which covers youth, community, sports, arts and cultural development. Emphasis will also be placed on improving the environment, better entertainment and cultural provision, and enhancing activities which promote the Welsh language and culture.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Fiji

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid Britain currently gives to Fiji; and whether the United Kingdom's assistance has been reconsidered in the light of the Harare declaration.

Mrs. Chalker: Our bilateral aid programme consists of technical co-operation in the form of the provision of expert manpower and advice from the United Kingdom together with the training of Fijians in areas where it is most needed.

The Government keep their aid policy to Fiji, as elsewhere, under regular review.

Withholding aid would not further the objective of a return to democracy. No useful purpose would be served, for example, by depriving the ordinary people of Fiji of medical services made possible by our aid. There has been no evidence recently of a pattern of regular or systematic abuse of basic human rights in Fiji.

Angola

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about his recent visit to Angola; and what information he now has about the recent deaths of British tourists whilst in Angola.

Mrs. Chalker: My planned visit to Angola from 1 to 3 February had to be cancelled owing to ill health. An Angolan Government investigation is under way into the murder of the British tourists. Our embassy is in close touch with both the Government and UNITA on this investigation.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Weapons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the most recent United Kingdom owned and controlled nuclear weapons withdrawn from deployment, and dismantled, as a result of negotiations, pursuant to article VI of the 1968 nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom's nuclear defence requirements are reviewed on a regular basis and kept at the minimum necessary to ensure effective deterrence. Those weapons no longer required are taken out of service and dismantled. The Defence Secretary announced in October last year that we would be making substatial reductions in the United Kingdom's sub-strategic nuclear capability, including a reduction of about 50 per cent. in the number of our free-fall bombs.

European Union

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the effect from 1 January 1993 of ratification by all member states of the treaty on European union.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The treaty on European union will enter into force on 1 January 1993, if all member states have ratified it before that date. On entry into force member states will become subject to the obligations of the treaty.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what effect ratification of the treaty on European union will have on the official name and description of what is now the European Community.

Mr. Garel Jones: The treaty on European union provides that, throughout the treaty establishing the European Economic Community, the term "European Economic Community" shall be replaced by the term "European Community".

Diplomats (Offences)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many serious offences were allegedly committed in 1991 by persons entitled to diplomatic immunity; and how many foreign diplomats were withdrawn from their posts in Britain in that year following alleged offences.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Forty alleged serious offences by persons entitled to diplomatic immunity were drawn to the attention of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1991. "Serious offences" are defined in accordance with the Report to the Foreign Affairs Committee "The Abuse of Diplomatic Immunities and Privileges"—1985—as offences falling into a category which would in certain circumstances attract a maximum penalty of six months or more imprisonment. The majority involved drinking and driving, and shoplifting.

Seven diplomats were withdrawn from their posts in Britain in 1991 following alleged offences, as against six in the previous year.

Diplomats (Parking Fines)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish up-to-date figures recording the number of unpaid parking fines incurred by each diplomatic mission in London during 1991.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested by my hon. Friend is given in the table, which also includes those international organisations which incurred unpaid fines. The figures may be reduced by late payment.

The total of 1991—5,145—indicates a 22 per cent. reduction over the total 1990 figure—6,551—and is only 5 per cent. of the 1984 figure—108,932—the last to be published before the introduction in May 1985 of the Government's policy on parking by members of diplomatic missions. We welcome the further reduction in unpaid parking fines that has been achieved during 1991 and appreciate the co-operation of diplomatic missions since the introduction of the parking policy. We shall continue to monitor carefully the level of unpaid fines and bring pressure to bear on diplomatic missions to reduce this still further.

Unpaid parking fines

Diplomatic mission	*1991*	*1990*
Saudi Arabia	367	346
Russia (and former Soviet Union)	363	308
Israel	191	131

Diplomatic mission	*1991*	*1990*
Morocco	165	156
Nigeria	159	70
Greece	155	146
Poland	154	531
France	144	101
China	140	92
Canada	135	39
Sudan	132	193
Korea	130	152
Turkey	130	76
Qatar	122	83
Cote d' Ivoire	122	183
Egypt	105	105
Jordan	99	71
United Arab Emirates	99	185
Pakistan	97	220
Ghana	84	0
Bulgaria	81	101
Cameroon	77	191
India	73	121
Thailand	72	145
Hungary	68	82
Federal Republic of Germany	66	122
Zambia	64	76
Oman	58	70
Uruguay	57	34
Gambia	56	55
Cyprus	55	110
Barbados	54	48
Spain	50	89
Bangladesh	49	59
Tanzania	47	24
Portugal	45	69
Tunisia	43	31
Yugoslavia	41	101
Zimbabwe	38	28
Brazil	38	51
Iraqi Interests Section	38	125
Bahrain	37	18
Italy	35	34
Romania	34	60
Gabon	32	43
Brunei	31	63
Sierra Leone	28	54
Malaysia	28	84
Guatemala	27	18
Ethiopia	27	23
Finland	26	16
Yemen	21	71
Malawi	20	8
Liberia	18	38
United States of America	17	15
Venezuela	17	15
Algeria	16	46
Honduras	16	16
Japan	16	22
Guyana	16	39
Syria	16	0
Angola	15	86
Panama	14	4
Iran	14	0
Vietnam	13	20
Mauritius	13	21
Cuba	13	20
Eastern Caribbean States	13	7
Jamaica	12	49
Fiji	10	2
Mexico	9	7
Zaire	9	18
Mongolia	9	12
Lebanon	9	11
Myanmar	9	14
Bolivia	9	4
Botswana	8	8
Senegal	8	24
Philippines	8	29
Chile	8	20
Sweden	8	6
Togo	8	8
Lesotho	7	12
Trinidad	7	10
Nepal	7	2
Kenya	7	18
Peru	7	2
Paraguay	6	11
Czechoslovakia	6	30
Belgium	6	18
Ireland	5	0
Somalia	5	18
Iceland	5	12
Australia	5	11
Uganda	5	15
Norway	4	15
Bahamas	4	0
Costa Rica	4	1
Seychelles	4	25
Austria	3	9
Indonesia	3	22
Singapore	3	6
Netherlands	3	3
Sri Lanka	3	7
Mozambique	3	0
Switzerland	2	0
Swaziland	2	0
South Africa	2	1
Luxembourg	2	8
Malta	2	1
Papua New Guinea	2	0
Argentina	1	0
Ecuador	1	7
El Salvador	1	1
Benin	1	4
Denmark	1	3
Dominica	1	5
Nicaragua	1	13
Kuwait	0	218
Afghanistan	0	3
New Zealand	0	0
Grenada	0	1
Antigua and Barbuda	0	1
Colombia	0	1
International organisations		
Commonwealth Sec	40	49
Cocoa	5	6
INMARSAT	3	0
Coffee	2	6
EC	2	1
IMO	1	0
WEU	1	0
UN	0	0
Sugar	0	0
	5,145	6,551

NATIONAL FINANCE

Clearing Banks

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has held with chairmen of major clearing banks following his initiative last year on the treatment by banks of small businesses; what information he has on the measures taken to ensure that each bank has dealt satisfactorily with complaints, especially in relation to any compensation made to borrowers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I am pleased to say that seven banks—Midland, Lloyds, National Westminster, Barclays, TSB and the Bank of Scotland and the Royal Bank of Scotland—have now published codes of banking practice for their business customers. The codes are well written, in plain English and they all reflect the seven principles I outlined in my statement on 17 July to the House *Official Report*, columns *181-83*. In some cases they go beyond. All the codes explain how complaints may be pursued, and that would include any requests for compensation where errors have been made.

The codes are, of course, only now being implemented. I have not held any further discussions with the chairmen of the banks. In the final analysis, it is the reaction of customers, not the Government, which matters, as the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee said in its report published on Monday. I warmly welcome the Committee's encouragement to small businesses to compare the different banks' codes and stimulate competition by letting the banks know if they do not feel the codes meet their requirements in any way. Four of the banks have said explicitly that they will be reviewing their codes so that further improvements can be made in the light of customer opinion. I hope that the others will do the same. I believe these codes are an important step in improving the relationship between banks and their small business customers. But I hope that small businesses will also play their part in building and maintaining effective relationships with their bankers by discussing with them, in advance, any problems or opportunities they may foresee.

North Sea Oil and Gas

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for what purposes the Government have used the revenues from North sea oil and gas production since 1979.

Mr. Maples: Revenues from individual taxes are not allocated to specific spending programmes.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has for the retail price index following the abolition of the community charge and its replacement by the council tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[pursuant to his reply, 7 February 1992, c. 256]:* I announced in my answer on 7 February my intention to reconvene the Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee. The membership of the RPIAC will be as follows:

Membership of the retail prices index advisory committee 1992

Chairman

Mr. W. P. McLennan (Director, Central Statistical Office)

Members

Mr. J. Astin (EUROSTAT, Luxembourg)
Mr. S. Brittan (Financial Times)
Professor D. Currie (London Business School)
Professor M. C. Fleming (Loughborough University)
Mr. K. H. B. Frere (Nominated by National Federation of Consumer Groups)
Mr. S. G. B. Henry (Bank of England)
Mr. T. Hoyes (Nominated by Age Concern)
Mr. J. Hughes (Nominated by National Consumer Council)
Mr. D. Lea OBE (Nominated by the Trades Union Congress)
Miss R. Lea (The Mitsubishi Bank Ltd.)
Dr. R. J. Maurice
Mr. C. Mowl (Her Majesty's Treasury)
Professor J. F. Pickering (Portsmouth Polytechnic)
Professor G. Rhys (Cardiff Business School)
Mrs. B. Rosewell (Business Strategies Ltd.)
Dr. P. Rowlatt (National Economic Research Associates)
Mr. A. Sentance (Nominated by the Confederation of British Industry)
Professor R. Turvey (London School of Economics)
Mr. R. G. Ward (Central Statistical Office)

Secretary

Mr. D. J. Sellwood (Central Statistical Office)

Assistant Secretary

Mrs. M. S. Dolling (Central Statistical Office)

One or two further members may be added later.

Corporation Tax

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to the Exchequer of exempting from corporation tax *(a)* the first £1,000 of profits and *(b)* the first £5,000 of profits in respect of (i) small limited companies and (ii) all limited companies; and if he will state the equivalent income tax cost for unincorporated businesses.

Mr Maude *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* On the assumption that a single exempt amount would be available to a company group and would be divided equally between the members of the group, the direct corporation tax cost is tentatively estimated to be:

Exempt amount £	*Companies liable at the small companies rate* £ *million*	*All companies* £ *million*
1,000	20	30
5,000	100	150

The equivalent income tax cost in a full year for unincorporated businesses is of the order of £600 million for an exempt amount of £1,000 and £2·5 billion for an exempt amount of £5,000.

These estimates are based on the existing distribution of taxable profits and therefore exclude probable behavioural changes. These cannot be quantified readily, but they are likely to increase the cost substantially.

Income

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated *(a)* mean and *(b)* median, (i) original, (ii) gross, (iii) disposable and (iv) post-tax income in 1991-92 and 1992-93, in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maude: The estimates requested for 1991-92 and 1992-93 will not be available until data from the Family Expenditure Surveys for 1991 and 1992 have been analysed. The most recent estimates available, for 1989, were provided in the reply given to the hon. Member on 26 February, at column 501.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Minimum Wage

11. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received from business men about the impact of a minimum wage in other EC countries on British industrial competitiveness.

Mr. Lilley: I am aware of the very widespread concern among business men of the harmful impact a minimum wage in Britain would have on our industrial competitiveness with the consequent loss of output and jobs.

35. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what would be the aggregate costs to British industry of introducing a statutory minimum wage of *(a)* £3, *(b)* £3·40 and *(c)* £3·80 an hour assuming the maintenance of constant employment levels.

Mr. Lilley: On the basis of earnings distributions in the April 1991 "New Earnings Survey", the estimated impact cost to British industry of introducing a statutory minimum wage is:

Minimum Wage	*Increase in Costs*
£3·00 per hour	Around £1·0 billion a year
£3·40 per hour	Around £2·5 billion a year
£3·80 per hour	Around £5·0 billion a year

These estimates take no account of attempts to maintain earnings differentials.

Manufacturing Investment

16. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has recently received about manufacturing investment.

Mr. Leigh: In 1991, manufacturing investment was over one third higher than 10 years earlier.

Industrial Policy

22. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will next meet representatives of the North East regional CBI to discuss industrial policy.

23. **Mr. Radice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will next meet representatives of the North East regional CBI to discuss industrial policy.

Mr. Lilley: I next expect to meet representatives of the North-East regional CBI on 18 September 1992.

26. **Mrs. Heal:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will next meet representatives of the West Midlands regional CBI to discuss industrial policy.

Mr. Lilley: I next expect to meet representatives of the West Midlands regional council of the CBI on 12 March 1992.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

24. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the latest situation regarding the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The multi-fibre arrangement has been extended for a period of 17 months to 31 December 1992, pending the outcome of the GATT Uruguay round negotiations.

Estate Agents

25. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he proposes to introduce regulations in respect of misrepresentation by estate agents.

Mr. Leigh: Misrepresentation about offers received or prospective purchasers was made an undesirable practice by an order that came into effect last July under section 3 of the Estate Agents Act 1989.

My Department is currently reviewing the outcome of consultation on a proposed order under the Property Misdescriptions Act 1991. The order would specify those aspects of property in respect of which misdescription would be an offence.

ECGD

27. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the average premium rate of the Export Credits Guarantee Department in *(a)* France, *(b)* the United Kingdom and *(c)* Germany.

Mr. Sainsbury: The premium rates quoted by export credit agencies vary greatly according to such factors as the market, the buyer and the horizon of risk. The average premium rate will therefore reflect the risk of business insured. The average premium rate charged by ECGD on business insured to date in 1991-92 is 4·27 per cent. Similar information on the average rate charged by French and German export credit agencies is not available.

Machine Tools

28. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet representatives of the Machine Tool Technologies Association to discuss the effects of the recession on the machine tool industry.

Mr. Leigh: I have no plans for such a meeting.

World Trade

29. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the latest figures for the United Kingdom's share of world trade.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom share of total world trade (visible and invisible imports and exports) was 7·7 per cent. in 1990. Our share of the volume of world exports of manufactured goods is estimated to have risen in 1991 for the third successive year.

34. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the latest figures of the United Kingdom's share of world trade.

Mr. Lilley: The United Kingdom share of world exports of total manufacturers was 6·4 per cent. in 1990.

Fraud

30. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to review the procedures in his Department for handling fraud cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: As my hon. Friend will be aware, the handling of fraud cases imposes responsibility on a number of Ministers. My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General is responsible for the Serious Fraud Office and Crown prosecution service, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is responsible for matters of criminal procedure and my noble and learned Friend the

Lord Chancellor has responsibility for matters relating to the judiciary. The prosecutions for fraud handled by my Department are cases which are not large or complex enough to have been accepted for handling by the Serious Fraud Office or the fraud investigation group of the Crown prosecution service.

My hon. Friend will be aware of the work being carried out by the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice in relation to the handling of fraud cases. The Government are keen to see rapid and successful pursuit and prosecution of fraud.

Engineering Industry

31. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current output levels of the engineering industry.

Mr. Leigh: Output in 1991 was 24 per cent. higher than in 1981.

EC Presidency

32. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement about the role of his Department during the British presidency of the EC later in the current year.

Mr. Lilley: Without doubt the Government will face a very busy presidency. To us will fall a number of important tasks:

- the completion of the single market;
- preparing the Community for enlargement;
- developing the Community's links with eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union;
- dealing with the outcome of the GATT talks, be it success or failure;
- reform of the CAP, and;
- depending on the progress under the Portuguese presidency, perhaps taking forward the review of the Community's finances.

While undertaking these tasks we shall encourage our partners to place greater emphasis on several key themes:

- first, deregulation: the rigorous scrutiny of all directives to ensure they do not impose unnecessary burdens;
- secondly, the implementation and enforcement nationally of Community directives;
- thirdly, the phasing out of beggar-my-neighbour credit and trade support policies;
- fourthly, the maintenance of competitive rather than interventionist policies.

My Department will have a key role to play in our presidency. My colleagues and I will chair five Councils: Internal Market, Telecommunications, Industry, Research and Consumer Affairs. We will also field trade policy issues in the Foreign Affairs Council.

I gave further information about my Department's priorities to an audience at the Institute of Directors on 21 February. A copy of my speech has been placed in the Library.

Quality Standards

33. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many companies in the United Kingdom have achieved the BS 5750 quality standard.

Mr. Leigh: Approximately 7,500 companies have been certified as complying with BS5750.

Technological Innovation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals his Department plans to put forward on technological innovation at the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro.

Mr. Leigh: My Department commissioned two reports looking at the role of technology transfer in the context of "Global Climate Change" and "Conservation of Biological Diversity" for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The reports were jointly funded with the Overseas Development Administration and the Department of the Environment respectively and have been well received by the international community. Copies of both reports are in the Library of the House.

My Department is currently working with the Department of the Environment on producing case studies which examine technology co-operation that exists between the United Kingdom and the developing countries. These will be presented at the UNCED.

During the UNCED in Rio de Janeiro there will also be an environmental technology exhibition in Sao Paulo, "ECOBRASIL 92". My Department is providing financial assistance to eligible British firms who wish to participate.

My Department is actively promoting technological innovation by United Kingdom companies. The outcome of the UNCED may well lead to increased market opportunities for innovative environmental technology.

Supervisory Bodies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) pursuant to his answer of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *346*, what information he has on the duration of a visit by the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants and the number of files which its compliance officers will examine during each visit;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *346*, what information he has about the number of client files which the supervisory bodies will examine during each visit.

Mr. Redwood: I understand that, including time spent on preparation, discussion of the findings with the firm, review, and reporting conclusions and recommendations, the length of time spent on monitoring visits by the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants, in its capacity as a recognised supervisory body, will typically range from one and a half to four days.

The association will monitor members of the Association of Authorised Public Accountants on the same basis under the terms of arrangement between those bodies.

The number of files to be examined will vary according to the circumstances but will be sufficient for the compliance officer to determine whether the required standard of audit work has been attained.

The joint monitoring unit of the three Institutes of Chartered Accountants will normally examine not less than three client files on each visit although in many cases the number of files to be examined will be considerably greater.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the cost of the Ernst and Young staff seconded to his Department, the functions they are performing, and their supervision by his Department.

Mr. Redwood: The Department has one member of staff on secondment from Ernst and Young at an annual cost, including salary, national insurance and superannuation which is linked to the civil service grade 7 salary scale.

The secondee's main functions, performed under the direct supervision of a civil servant, are the authorisation of new insurance companies and the provision of expert advice on the supervision of insurance companies.

Inward Investment

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the level of inward investment in the United Kingdom and in the United Kingdom's European competitors.

Mr. Lilley: The United Kingdom has been the most successful country in Europe in attracting inward investment.

Single Market

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress he plans to make on the single market during the United Kingdom presidency of the EC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: During the United Kingdom presidency, the Government intend to make progress on the remaining programme of measures, to ensure that the single market can be declared genuinely open for business on 1 January 1993.

We shall be focusing on those measures which are central to the successful operation of the single market. The Government will also put particular emphasis on considering the quality, effectiveness and enforcement of legislation already in place.

Making the single market work, rather than planning more new legislation, will be a central theme of our presidency.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Lilley: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission has a very important role under United Kingdom competition legislation as an independent investigative body.

Car Exports

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has made to the United States Government about the effect which the United States luxury tax is having upon British car manufacturers seeking to export to the United States; and what response he has received.

Mr. Sainsbury: Vigorous representations have been made to the Administration on the adverse impact of the luxury tax on United Kingdom car exports. While a formal reply is awaited to my right hon. Friend's request to the United States Secretary of the Treasury that exemption for cars should be included in the budget, we are continuing to put over the case for repeal in tandem with our own industry to both the Administration and senior Members of Congress.

British Shipbuilders

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on British Shipbuilders' external financing limit for 1992-93.

Mr. Leigh: British Shipbuilders' external financing limit for 1992-93 was set at minus £5·0 million as recorded in the Government's expenditure plans 1992-93 to 1994-95 published in January 1992 (Cm 1904). I am now able to announce a reduced EFL for 1992-93 of minus £6·85 million which amounts to an improvement of £1·85 million. This has been made possible by the inclusion in British Shipbuilders' internal resources of forecast receipts from RENAVAL funding and interest earned on accumulated cash balances.

Greenhouse Gases

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish the consultancy study commissioned by his Department on the implications for trade policy of measures to control greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Lilley: The study was commissioned jointly by my Department and the Department of the Environment. I have today placed a copy of its report in the Library of the House.

Telephone Adaptations

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has had with licensed telephone operators about making telephones adaptable and accessible to people with hearing difficulties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 March 1992]:* The licences issued to BT, Mercury, Kingston Communications and all the fixed link public telecommunications operators under the Telecommunications Act 1984 require them to ensure that telephones for the hearing impaired are available to meet all reasonable demands and to install facilities for the hearing impaired in all their public call boxes. The licences under which most private systems are run require that certain telephones installed for emergency use, such as those in lifts, can be coupled inductively to suitable hearing aids.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on available telecommunications systems in other countries to help people with hearing difficulties to use telephones; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 March 1992]:* Comprehensive information on how other countries' telecommunications systems cater for people with hearing difficulties could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

In the USA, the Hearing Aid Compatibility Act (1988) has made mandatory the fitting of inductive couplers to certain types of telephones. In Europe, the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI), in which the United Kingdom is a major participant, requested funds from the European Commission last month to study the possible development of pan-European standards in this area. In framing this proposal, ETSI's Human Factors Committee noted that only two national regulations, on inductively coupled telephones and amplification for the hard of hearing, existed in Europe, both from the United Kingdom.

Media Expenditure

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what expenditure was made, in the last financial year for which figures are available, on *(a)* film, *(b)* video, *(c)* publishing, *(d)* the record industry and *(e)* the press.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 10 March 1992]:* In the current financial year, my Department has provided support for film totalling £5·6 million. Overall Government support for film in the current financial year amounts to £25·9 million.

There are no specific support schemes for video, publishing, the record industry or the press.

Employment Statistics

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many civil servants are responsible in his Department *(a)* part time and *(b)* full time for (i) film, (ii) publishing, (iii) video, (iv) the record industry and (v) the press.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 10 March 1992]:* There are nine civil servants in my Department with full-time responsibility for issues relating to film and video.

For the other sectors there are no staff with specific responsibility, but the Department's market intelligence unit handles issues relating to most individual industries and market sectors.

CFCs

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the quantity of chlorofluorocarbons exported from the United Kingdom in 1991.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 10 March 1992]:* This information is not published, for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

British Technology Group

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the Government's plans for the sale of the British Technology Group.

Mr. Lilley *[pursuant to the reply, 4 March 1992, columns 183-84]:* I am pleased to announce that an agreement for the sale of British Technology Group was entered into today, 11 March, following negotiations between Government and a management-led consortium. The initial proceeds will be £27·75 million.

The consortium represents a balance between financial institutions, individuals, and organisations. The lead investor is CIN Venture Managers Limited (CIN Ven) the second largest European venture capital house. (CIN Ven manage the unquoted securities portfolios of the pension funds of British Coal, British Rail and Barclays Bank). The consortium members include 10 other financial institutions, BTG management and staff, and up to 13 United Kingdom universities, under the aegis of the CVCP (the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals). A holding company has been formed to purchase the shares. Management and staff will participate in the company both directly, through individually subscribing for shares, and indirectly, through an employee share trust which will acquire up to 26 per cent. of the share capital. Apart from the trust, no individual member of the consortium will own more than 15 per cent. of the voting rights in the holding company.

The consortium was selected as the preferred purchaser following a two-stage competitive bidding process against a number of criteria, which arose from the objectives for the sale of maximising proceeds consistent with a good prospect for the continuation of BTG's technology transfer activities. The Government are convinced that the consortium offers the best prospect that BTG's present activities will be continued as an independent organisation.

The proceeds of the sale will be made up from two elements. The initial proceeds will be:

	£ million
Initial consideration	14·25
Special dividend to be paid on completion	12·00
Dividend paid in February in respect of NEB	1·50
TOTAL	27·75

The initial consideration is dependent on certain working capital requirements being met at completion, which is due to take place on 31 March 1992 provided that certain conditions of the type commonly found in share purchase agreements are fulfilled by that date.

Future proceeds will arise if over the next five years the business performs at a level in excess of the net revenues forecast by BTG management in its business plan. The Government will be entitled to 60 per cent. (less tax) of the sum by which aggregate net revenues exceed the target which has been agreed with the purchaser. Net revenues principally comprise the revenues from licences which accrue to the company less the payments which are made to inventors from those licence income streams. Further proceeds may also arise from clawback on the proceeds of sale of real property.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Vagrancy Act Prosecutions

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were *(a)* prosecuted and *(b)* convicted (i) of begging and (ii) sleeping out in north Yorkshire in 1979 and each year since then.

Mr. John Patten: The information for North Yorkshire police force area for the years 1979, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 (which is provisional) is given in the table. To produce further information for the other years requested would involve disproportionate cost.

Number of persons prosecuted and convicted of begging and sleeping out offences under the Vagrancy Act 1824 in the North Yorkshire police force area 1979 to 1990[1]

	Begging		Sleeping out	
Year	Prosecutions	Convictions	Prosecutions	Convictions
1979	1	—	1	1
1981	1	1	—	—
1983	—	—	—	—
1985	2	2	2	2
1987	5	5	1	1
1988	3	3	1	1
1989	1	1	—	—
1990[1]	2	2	—	—

[1] Provisional.

Ethnic Minority Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state, for England and Wales, the total expenditure under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966, for each year since 1982, identifying separately expenditure by training and enterprise councils in ethnic minority grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The total amount of section 11 grant paid to local authorities in each financial year between 1982-83 and 1990-91 was as follows:

	£ million
1982-83	60·8
1983-84	76·2
1984-85	76·3
1985-86	63·4
1986-87	102·2
1987-88	93
1988-89	88·8
1989-90	114·8
1990-91	135·5

The figure for 1991-92 is not yet available. The new, separate, ethnic minority grant, under which funds will be paid by this Department to TECs to support projects undertaken by voluntary organisations, comes into effect from 1 April 1992.

PC Seymour

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the result of an appeal by former police constable Seymour which took place on 12 and 13 December in relation to events which took place in 1988 in Brixton.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend has allowed Mr. Seymour's appeal against finding. The parties to the appeal were notified by letter on 28 February.

Community Charge

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) to what extent the community charge court workload has led to *(a)* delay in processing general criminal court business, *(b)* the postponement of magistrates court hearings and *(c)* the arrangement of extra court sittings in each petty session division in England and Wales;

(2) what assessment has been made of the additional costs to the magistrates court system caused by the processing of community charge summonses in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: It is not possible to make an overall assessment of the possible impact of community charge enforcement proceedings on delays in criminal proceedings, which are the product of the interplay of many factors, especially since in some areas additional sittings have been arranged to accommodate liability order applications. Neither the number of such additional sittings nor the number of postponed sittings is, however, collected. It follows that it is not possible to calculate the extent to which the total estimated costs of community charge enforcement proceedings between 1 April 1990 and 31 December 1991 of £6·2 million represent additional costs.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many community charge summonses have been withdrawn in England and Wales for the latest date for which figures are available; and how many are currently outstanding.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not collected centrally.

Prison Catering

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give his latest estimate for the annual wage and food costs in the catering service at *(a)* Her Majesty's prison, Durham and *(b)* Her Majesty's prison, Belmarsh and state whether the catering service expenditure at either prison is likely to exceed the projected annual budget for the current financial year.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 10 March 1992]:* The estimated expenditure on wage and food costs in the catering service at Her Majesty's prison Durham for the financial year 1991-92 is:

	£
Prison service staff	161,000
Inmates	12,000
Victualling	363,000
TOTAL	536,000

The catering service for Her Majesty's prison Belmarsh is supplied by contract, the details of which are confidential for commercial reasons. The estimated victualling costs in addition to the contract costs are £279,000 for the financial year 1991-92.

The total cost of the catering service is not separately identified in each establishment's budget. Moreover, victualling costs are on a per capita basis and thus vary depending on the size of the inmate population.

Prison Service Review

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has yet received the report of Sir Raymond Lygo's review of the management of the Prison Service.

Mr. Kenneth Baker *[pursuant to his reply, 16 December 1991, col. 13]:* Sir Raymond Lygo submitted to me a report, published on 16 December 1991, which provided a cogent analysis of the problems of the management of the Prison Service in England and Wales, and offered a wide-ranging and coherent set of recommendations for tackling them. I am indebted to Sir Raymond, and to Lord Rayner who assisted in producing the report, for the speed and thoroughness with which the review was carried out. I am grateful for the wide range of comments on the report which have been received from both within and outside the Service—including from Lord Justice Woolf and His Honour Judge Tumim, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons. I was impressed by the general level of support for the great majority of Sir Raymond's recommendations.

The central recommendation in Sir Raymond's report is for the Prison Service to move to executive agency status under the "next steps" initiative. I have concluded that this is indeed the way forward for the Prison Service and I intend that the service should become an agency as from 1 April 1993. Consultations with the trade unions and other interested parties will begin shortly.

In line with Sir Raymond's recommendations, I intend to create a supervisory board, which would have responsibility for advising the Home Secretary on strategic, policy and resource questions affecting the service. I believe that the supervisory board should be chaired by the Home Office Minister responsible for prison matters. I do not share Sir Raymond's view that there is a role for a part-time non-executive chairman to head the management board. The chief executive, who will be appointed by open competition, and who will chair the management board, will be directly accountable to the Home Secretary.

Sir Raymond's other recommendations cover a wide range of personnel and management issues; they will be followed up appropriately in the coming months. I strongly endorse his recommendation that the Prison Service should be prepared to recruit from outside to management posts at headquarters and establishments, and expect to see that objective progressed vigorously.

One recommendation to which I am not attracted is the extension of the wearing of uniform to all governors in establishments. I share the concerns expressed by a number of commentators about the impact that would have on the future direction of the service. I await with interest the recommendations of the current internal review on modes of dress in the service.

Sir Raymond's important report merits a vigorous and decisive response. I believe that the move of the Prison Service to executive agency status, with the other measures which I have announced, will provide the right framework for placing the management of the service on a more professional footing, providing the most positive environment for staff to work in and, above all, ensuring the delivery of an improved service both to the public and to those held in custody.

Solicitors' Fees

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will refer the question of fixed fees for solicitors at magistrates courts to the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

No. Fee structures are a matter for consultation with the legal professions. The Royal Commission is considering the question of standard fees in so far as it affects subjects within its remit, and has agreed to accept a submission from the Law Society. The Royal Commission's recommendations and any consequent changes to fee structures will be considered in due course.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

INFO 92

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chairman of the Information Committee if he will make INFO 92 available to hon. Members and their staff.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: INFO 92 is a factual and bibliographical database on progress achieved towards the single market in line with the European Commission's White Paper on the implementation of measures for completing the internal market. The Library expects to have online access to this database shortly. It may also be available on CD-ROM disk. If hon. Members wished to use it in their offices they would have to take out their own contract with one of the online hosts for which there would be a charge.

EMPLOYMENT

Jobcentre, Burnley

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is the cost of the proposed removal of Burnley jobcentre; and what will happen to the existing furniture and equipment;

(2) what representations and consultations he has received regarding the proposed removal of Burnley jobcentre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give his initial estimate of the number of applications to industrial tribunals for the years 1990-91 and for the year 1991-92, the number of tribunals actually registered for 1990-91 and the most up to date figures for the year 1991-92, the original allocation for running costs in both these years and the final total.

Mr. Forth: The figures are as follows:

	1990-91	*1991-92*
Applications registered	43,243	[1]61,762
Cases heard	11,864	[2]13,344
Original allocation	£11,402,160	£12,320,232
Total running cost expenditure	£12,222,824	

[1] (to end of February).
[2] (to end of January).

The total running cost expenditure for the industrial tribunals in 1991-92 will not be known until the end of the current financial year.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will state for Great Britain as a whole, and separately for each region, the number of trainees entering youth training, both in total, and disaggregated by employee and trainee status, for each quarter between April 1991 and the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Information about the number of entrants is given in the following table. A breakdown by employed and trainee status is not available.

Youth Training Starts with Training Providers 1991-92: Provisional Estimates[1]

Region	*QTR 1 (1 April-23 June)*	*QTR 2 (24 June-15 September)*	*QTR 3 (16 September-5 January)*
South East	5,200	11,200	10,500
London	3,500	5,800	5,200
South West	2,400	6,900	6,700
West Midlands	6,400	12,700	6,600
East Midlands	6,100	13,100	8,200
Yorkshire and Humberside	8,100	12,900	7,300
North West	10,100	19,400	14,200
Northern	5,400	9,200	6,000
Wales	4,000	6,200	5,600
England and Wales	51,400	97,300	70,300

Source: Osmosis.

[1] Figure subject to adjustment.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will state for Great Britain as a whole, and separately for each region, the number of trainees entering youth training, who, under the terms of the training and enterprise councils operating agreement, are in the guarantee and extended guarantee groups for each quarter between April 1986 and the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is not available.

TECs

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide a list of the qualifications against which training and enterprise councils may claim an output-related funding bonus in youth training and employment training, and the numbers of output bonuses claimed against each qualification; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: There are over 700 vocational qualifications which are accepted by the Employment Department in payments to TECs for output-related funding (ORF) in youth training and employment training. I have arranged for a copy of the January 1992 edition of the Department's listings of acceptable vocational qualifications to be placed in the Library. In addition to these vocational qualifications, TECs may in some cases claim for the achievement of GCSEs, A/S levels and A levels.

Figures for ORF payments against individual vocational qualifications are not collected, and it would not be cost effective to do so. Available figures are for payments by national vocational qualification (NVQ) (or equivalent) level. Payments for the numbers of trainees achieving NVQs on ET and YT in England and Wales during the 1991-92 financial year to 5 January 1992 are given in the following table.

Numbers of payments to TECs for trainees in England and Wales achieving national vocational qualifications (1 April 1991 to 5 January 1992)

	Number
Youth training (including credits)	
NVQ level 1	3,015
NVQ level 2	34,221
NVQ level 3 or above	10,262
Employment training	
NVQ level 1 or 2	19,060
NVQ level 3 or 4	1,293
NVQ level 2 (for skills shortage trainees and labour market returners who also gain employment)	555
NVQ level 3 or 4 (for skills shortage trainees and labour market returners who also gain employment)	111

Source: TEC invoice.

Employment Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will state for Great Britain as a whole, and separately for each region, the number of people entering employment training, both in total and disaggregated by employee and training status for each quarter between 1988 and the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The information is not available as requested. Information about the number of employment training entrants since 1988 is given in the following table. Information about the employment status of people entering employment training is not collected centrally. The number of trainees with employment status has risen since the programme began and it is estimated that currently about 3 per cent. of all those in training have employed status. Those trainees without employed status have trainee status.

Employment Training
Number of Entrants 1988-89—1989-90

		1988-89		1989-90			
	SEPT	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
South East	1,500	5,700	6,800	6,400	9,700	6,400	8,700
London	2,500	8,500	11,000	8,800	10,500	9,500	12,500
South West	1,100	5,500	6,900	5,600	5,000	4,900	6,500
West Midlands	2,500	10,800	14,300	11,200	11,200	10,400	13,400
East Midlands	1,800	7,800	9,700	8,300	8,900	7,600	9,400
Yorkshire and Humberside	3,000	14,400	16,900	13,500	12,800	13,100	15,500
North West	3,000	14,700	19,000	16,900	16,100	14,600	18,400
Northern	2,400	9,600	13,100	11,500	11,300	9,600	12,300
Wales	1,400	6,700	9,800	7,900	8,600	7,200	9,100
Scotland	2,300	11,400	14,800	13,100	13,500	13,300	15,500
Great Britain	21,500	95,000	122,200	103,200	107,600	98,000	121,800

Source: ET Telephone Census.

Employment Training
Number of Entrants 1990-91-1991-92

	1990-91	1991-92 (Provisional estimates)		
		Quarter 1 (1 April-23 June)	Quarter 2 (24 June-15 September)	Quarter 3 (16 September-5 January)
South East	24,500	3,800	5,200	6,400
London	32,300	4,300	5,900	10,400
South West	18,600	2,300	3,200	4,400
West Midlands	32,100	4,100	6,700	10,500
East Midlands	22,400	3,400	4,700	7,400
Yorkshire and Humberside	39,800	7,500	8,900	13,300
North West	46,100	8,500	10,500	15,400
Northern	34,600	5,300	6,200	8,500
Wales	22,900	3,900	5,100	7,100
Scotland	47,700	—	—	—
TNPU[1]	68,300	—	—	—
Great Britain[2]				
England and Wales	389,200	43,100	56,400	83,500

[1] TECs and National Providers. Figures included in appropriate region in 1991-92.

[2] Information not available for Scotland for 1991-92.

Source: OSMOSIS.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will state for Great Britain as a whole, and for each region the number of trainees entering employment training who, under the terms of the training and enterprise councils operating agreement, are in the aim and guarantee groups for each quarter between 1988 and the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: As the information requested is contained in a number of tables I will write to the hon. Member.

Tourism

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement about Government policy on tourism in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Howard: I have published today, along with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland, "Tourism in the UK—Realising the Potential". I have placed a copy in the Library.

The document sets out the extent of the Government's support for the tourism industry, both financially and in creating an environment in which the industry can prosper. It describes activities and initiatives that directly or indirectly benefit tourism. It is an impressive record, which features the work of most Government Departments.

The document also announces a package of further measures to help the industry. They include:

A major new foreign language initiative to improve the quality of service that the tourism industry can offer foreign visitors.

The setting of standards for the times that visitors from abroad should expect to wait before being seen by a United Kingdom immigration officer.

Consultation on possible changes to the liquor licensing laws in England and Wales which would provide for a system of children's certificates; for a new category of liquor licence specifically for café type premises; and possibly for other reforms, in order to make it easier for families to eat and drink together.

Research into how the system of central Government grants to local authorities can best take account of the costs of serving day visitors.

Measures to improve coach parking in London.

The designation of 1993 as Industrial Heritage Year.

A proposal by the United Kingdom Government to the European Commission for an initiative to ensure that all member states co-operate to give people with disabilities information on the tourist facilities available to them and to exchange best practice on this subject.

Employment Service

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the targets for the Employment Service will be in 1992-93.

Mr. Jackson: Targets for the Employment Service in 1992-93 will be announced later in the year.

HEALTH

Plasma

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will permit the Bio Products Laboratory to offer for sale to national health service hospitals 8SM high purity factor VIII produced from plasma that has neither been tested nor screened for *(a)* hepatitis C or *(b)* ALT —alanine aminotransferase.

Mr. Dorrell: The Bio Products Laboratory markets products in accordance with the requirements of the United Kingdom licensing authority and of the European Community. These requirements include screening for HCV antibody, which demonstrates the presence of Hepatitis C.

ALT testing in this country has been considered by experts who advised us that it is unnecessary. There is currently no European Community requirement for ALT testing.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the provision of small hospital units in areas where former hospitals have been closed, since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: The reforms of the NHS have centred upon the importance of establishing the role of district and family health authorities as the purchasers of hospital, community health and primary care services and prevention. They have important functions in translating patients' needs and concerns into improved services. One of the main aims of the reforms is to bring all those involved in securing and delivering health care services closer together so that they are more aware of the needs and wishes of patients, including those concerning the location of facilities, and can therefore be more responsive to them.

Consultants

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will hold discussions with the Trent regional health authority about the ratio of male to female consultants employed by the region.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department, through the Opportunty 2000 scheme launched by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, has set the NHS the goal of improving the ratio of male to female consultants to four to one by 1994. Regional health authorities will be required to monitor appointments procedures and to ensure that all appointments committees receive equal opportunities training. The Department will shortly be scrutinising Trent's action plan for meeting all the goals set by Opportunity 2000 and will contine to hold discussions with the authority about the action to be taken to improve opportunities for women in medicine.

GP Prescriptions

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the difference between numbers of general practitioner prescriptions issued and those filled.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Unplanned Pregnancies and Sex Education

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what provisions exist for advising on unplanned pregnancies for the under-25s;

(2) if he will make a statement on the provisions for the teaching of sex education for young people.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Long-standing guidance to the NHS draws attention to the need for separate, informal family planning services for young people, with staff experienced in dealing with the particular needs of this group and their problems. New guidelines on family planning service provision, issued by the NHS management executive in January, remind health authorities of the special needs of young people and draw on the findings of a study funded by the Department into the family planning and counselling needs of young people. NHS provision in this area is complemented by the work of a number of voluntary organisations, which receive financial support from public funds, such as the Family Planning Association and Brook Advisory Centres. These organisations produce a range of information material for young people. The provision of sex education in schools is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Dentists

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the figures from 1979 to 1992 inclusive for the amount collected by dentists for writing out prescriptions in England.

Mr. Dorrell: Dentists have been able to claim such a fee, in specified circumstances, since the introduction of the dental contract on 1 October 1990. The amount received by dentists in England and Wales for issuing prescriptions was as follows:

1990—£39,639 (1 October 1990 to 31 December 1990)
1991—£325,607 (1 January 1991 to 31 December 1991)

Figures for England only are not available.

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the details of circumstancess under which dentists may charge for writing out a prescription.

Mr. Dorrell: A dentist may claim a fee for issuing a prescription where no other treatment is being given and no other fees are being claimed in a particular course of treatment. A dentist may, however, also claim a fee for a prescription issued when a patient has been visited at home and a claim is made for the associated fee for a domiciliary visit, or when the dentist has returned to and re-opened the surgery and a claim is made for the associated recalled attendance fee.

Southern Derbyshire Health Authority

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give, for the Southern Derbyshire health authority, for the years 1986-87 and 1991-92 (estimate) *(a)* the number of nurses employed, *(b)* the number of doctors employed, *(c)* the number of professions ancillary to medicine and *(d)* the total staffing.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is in the table:

NHS directly employed staff in post by specific staff groups Southern Derbyshire district health authority

	Nursing and midwifery[2,1]	Medical[3,1]	Professions allied to medicine[1]	Total staff[1]
30 September 1986	3,850	190	320	7,510
30 September 1991[5]	3,800[4]	200	400	7,420

Source: Department of Health (SM13) annual census of medical and non-medical manpower.

[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalent.

[2] Includes agency staff.

[3] Includes permanent paid, honorary and locum staff but excludes consultants and senior registrars whose contracts are held by Trent region.

[4] Some nurse manager and student posts are no longer included in this definition.

[5] These figures have not yet been validated centrally.

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the level of spending in Southern Derbyshire health authority for the years 1986-87 and 1991-92 (estimated), showing the rate of growth in cash and real terms.

Mr. Dorrell: The total revenue expenditure of the Southern Derbyshire health authority was £93·6 million (cash) in 1986-87. The authority estimates its 1991-92 revenue expenditure at £164·7 million (cash). This represents an increase of 76 per cent. in cash terms and 26 per cent. in real terms, measured at 1991-92 prices.

Appointment of DHA Chairmen

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the names of those people appointed to be chairmen of district health authorities with effect from 1 April.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have today placed in the Library a list of those people appointed as chairmen of district health authorities with effect from 1 April 1992.

Ward Closures

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of temporary ward closures and the number of beds involved, in each hospital in each London constituency since 1 November 1991, the occasions on which any hospital was unable to accept admissions from major incidents and the relevant times and dates.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not collected centrally.

Bone Marrow Transplants

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have died in each year since 1979 while waiting for bone marrow transplants to be carried out.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available.

Statistical Information

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to meet future needs for statistical information on population and housing of the type currently provided by periodic censuses.

Mr. Dorrell: I have decided, together with my colleagues responsible for the census offices in Scotland and Northern Ireland, that there should be a review of the future needs for census-type information on population and housing in the United Kingdom and the options for providing it.

Arrangements have therefore been made for the census offices of the United Kingdom—the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, the General Register Office (Scotland), and the Census Office (Northern Ireland)—to lead an evaluation and reappraisal of census policy in consultation with other Government Departments. This will cover what kind of information will be needed, how it is to be collected, how frequently it should be provided, and how it should be disseminated.

The census offices will shortly begin to consult organisations and individuals with interests in the future of census-type information in the United Kingdom. This will include the national health service, local government, the academic community, commercial bodies, and the European Community.

Copies of the paper on which the consultation will be based have been placed in the Library.

Census Records

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether final approval has been given for the production and supply of the Economic and Social Research Council of samples of anonymised records from the 1991 census.

Mr. Dorrell: In my reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) on 1 February 1991 at column *682*, I said that a final decision about producing and supplying samples of anonymised records (SARs) would be taken after the report of the technical assessor, Professor David Holt, once the confidentiality aspects had been considered.

In his report, Professor Holt expressed his conclusions as follows.

> "As a reasonable statistical judgement, the risk of disclosure is negligible for the large majority of the population and thought to be extremely small for the remainder. International experience indicates that the levels of risk are consistent with a decision to go ahead with the release of SARs, and I so advise".

Having considered the report, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Scotland, and I have given approval for the production by the registrars general of two samples of anonymised records.

A copy of Professor Holt's report and the specifications of the two samples of anonymised records have been placed in the Library.

Homelessness

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many units of permanent accommodation are to be provided in 1992-93 in central London for mentally ill homeless people moving out of specialist short-term hostels funded by his Department;

(2) what resources his Department are to provide in 1992-93 to meet the needs of mentally ill homeless people

currently living in specialist hostels in central London once they are ready to move into more permanent accommodation;

(3) what arrangements he has made to co-ordinate the provision of more permanent accommodation for mentally ill homeless people currently living in specialist short-term hostels in central London.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department revenue funds the specialist short-term hostels set up under the homeless mentally ill initiative at the rate of £14,630 per place per annum (1992-93 costs). Permanent accommodation for those moving on from the hostels is being provided via the Housing Corporation. In 1992-93 they expect to make available 150 new units and 150 units from Housing Association relets. The corporation monitor this provision regularly. The social care of people moving on from the short term hostels is the responsibility of local social services authorities. To ensure that the transition takes place smoothly the Department has included within the homeless mentally ill initiative £500,000 per annum for the three years 1992-93 to 1994-95 to provide resettlement support.

DEFENCE

Gurkhas

Mr. Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the maximum levels of pensions payable in 1992-93 to Gurkha personnel specially or prematurely retired or discharged as part of the planned reduction in the Brigade of Gurkhas for *(a)* privates, *(b)* corporals, *(c)* sergeants, *(d)* warrant officers class I, *(e)* lieutenants, *(f)* captains and *(g)* majors with (i) six years' reckonable service, (ii) nine years' reckonable service and (iii) 12 years' reckonable service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Gurkhas' redundancy scheme provides for credit of service to be given to Gurkhas specially or prematurely retired or discharged before completing the normal maximum length of service for their rank. The effect is that the pensions shown in the table, which are the rates payable at their normal maximum length of service, will be paid to personnel made redundant with reckonable service within the bands listed. In addition privates and corporals made redundant with between four and 10 years service will receive a pension at the special rate of £15·34 per month at 1991-92 levels. Rates for 1992-93 are not yet available.

Maximum Pensions Payable—April 1991

Rank	*Reckonable Service on Redundancy*	*Pension Rate*
Rifleman	10—15 years	20·46
Corporal	10—15 years	22·08
Sergeant	12—18 years	28·58
Warrant Officer Class I	15—22 years	37·25
Lieutenant—QGO	17—24 years	45·38
Captain QGO	21—28 years	62·72
Major—QGO	21—28 years	73·97

QGO—Queen's Gurkha Officer.
Monthly rates are in £ Sterling calculated at an exchange rate 34·50 Indian Rupees/£.

Mr. Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will specify for 1992-93 the single and married levels of (i) the Hong Kong Gurkha addition and (ii) the special rate Gurkha addition payable as a component of the special capital payment to Gurkha personnel specially or prematurely retired or discharged as part of the planned reduction in the Brigade of Gurkhas.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The table shows the single and married accompanied levels of the Hong Kong Gurkha addition payable from 1 July 1991, and the rates of special Gurkha addition used in the calculation of special capital payments to Gurkhas made redundant. The rates of 1992-93 are not yet available.

Monthly rates of Gurkha addition—Hong Kong
Effective Date—1 April 1991

Rank	*Single unaccompanied*	*Married accompanied*	*Special Gurkha addition*
Rifleman		470·10	
Less than 4 years service	113·48		186·43
After 4 years service	144·18		220·97
After 5 years service	159·94		238·25
After 6 years service	174·91		255·54
After 7 years service	190·29		272·84
After 10 years service	198·24		281·78
After 12 years service	206·09		290·61
Corporal	219·71	589·06	320·81
Sergeant	224·80	606·91	328·76
Warrant Officer Class I	251·81	687·00	369·16
Lieutenant (QGO)	261·50	714·37	383·48
Captain (QGO)	288·56	786·72	422·97
Major (QGO)	318·48	866·45	466·60

Monthly rates are £ Sterling at an exchange rate of HK$ 12·60/£ as at 1 July 1991.

Mr. Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide figures for 1992-93 of the maximum levels of special grant payment to Gurkha personnel specially or prematurely retired or discharged as part of the planned reduction in the Brigade of Gurkhas for *(a)* privates, *(b)* corporals, *(c)* sergeants, *(d)* warrant officers Class I, *(e)* lieutenants, *(f)* captains and *(g)* majors with (i) six years' reckonable service, (ii) nine years' reckonable service and (iii) 12 years' reckonable service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The table shows the levels of special capital payment payable to Gurkhas made redundant, against the years of service for each rank for which redundancy is currently envisaged. This amount is shown in pounds sterling as calculated at August 1991. Rates for 1992-93 are not yet available.

Payments in respect of soldiers are calculated for class I personnel on the lowest band.

All figures take account of length of service increments, but not good service pay, which is calculated on an individual basis.

Special capital payments for Gurkhas made redundant

Year of service	*Rifleman* £	*Corporal* £	*Sergeant* £	*WOI* £	*Lieutenant (QGO)* £	*Captain (QGO)* £	*Major (QGO)* £
1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4	1,254	1,763	—	—	—	—	—
5	1,680	2,208	—	—	—	—	—
6	2,150	2,653	—	—	—	—	—
7	2,931	3,602	—	—	—	—	—
8	3,493	4,590	—	—	—	—	—
9	4,347	5,584	—	—	—	—	—
10	5,674	6,416	—	—	—	—	—
11	4,737	5,357	—	—	—	—	—
12	3,903	4,295	5,531	—	—	—	—
13	2,927	3,221	5,531	6,176	6,487	—	—
14	1,951	2,147	5,531	6,176	6,487	—	—
15	Nil	Nil	4,425	6,176	6,487	—	—
16	—	—	3,318	6,179	6,487	—	—
17	—	—	2,212	6,176	6,487	—	—
18	—	—	Nil	6,176	6,487	7,214	—
19	—	—	—	4,941	6,487	7,214	—
20	—	—	—	3,705	6,487	7,214	—
21	—	—	—	2,470	5,189	7,214	—
22	—	—	—	Nil	3,892	7,214	—
23	—	—	—	—	2,594	7,214	7,994
24	—	—	—	—	Nil	7,214	7,994
25	—	—	—	—	—	5,771	7,994
26	—	—	—	—	—	4,328	7,994
27	—	—	—	—	—	2,885	7,994
28	—	—	—	—	—	Nil	7,994
29	—	—	—	—	—	—	6,395
30	—	—	—	—	—	—	4,796
31	—	—	—	—	—	—	3,197
32	—	—	—	—	—	—	Nil

Mr. Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy for the rules governing Gurkhas' pensions always to be interpreted to provide the maximum theoretical entitlement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is the Department's policy that pensions are paid to Gurkhas at the rates to which they are entitled under the provisions of the appropriate code.

Live Firing Ranges

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will consider removing some of the live firing ranges from national parks to areas of army training land which the National Audit Office has identified as under-utilised.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The live-firing facilities that the Ministry of Defence retains in certain national parks are mainly for field-firing of small arms, heavy calibre infantry or anti-tank weapons, or artillery. Alternative locations where this live-firing could be safely accommodated are already fully subscribed. Transfers are not a practical proposition at the present time.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 12 March 1992

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Lords of Appeal in Ordinary

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the Lords of Appeal in Ordinary together with their date of appointment and the date by which they are required by law to retire.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is as follows:—

	Appointment Date	*Retirement Date*
Lord Keith of Kinkel	10 January 1977	7 February 1997
Lord Templeman MBE	30 September 1982	3 March 1995
Lord Griffiths MC	23 May 1985	26 September 1998
Lord Ackner	30 January 1986	18 September 1995
Lord Goff of Chieveley	6 February 1986	12 November 2001
Lord Jauncey of Tullichettle	9 February 1988	8 May 2000
Lord Lowry	5 August 1988	30 January 1994
Lord Browne-Wilkinson	1 October 1991	30 March 2005
Lord Mustill	10 January 1992	10 May 2006
Lord Slynn of Hadley	11 March 1992	17 February 2005

Polygamous Marriages

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Attorney-General what plans the Government have to implement the recommendations of the Law Commission and the Scottish Law Commission in their report on "Polygamous Marriages: Capacity to Contract" (Law Comm. No. 146, Scots Law No. 96).

The Attorney-General: Following the publication of this report in 1985 the Government consulted on its recommendations, the main purpose of which is to ensure that those domiciled in England and Wales or in Scotland should not lack the capacity to contract a marriage which is in fact monogamous merely because it is celebrated in polygamous form according to foreign law. Marriages that are actually polygamous would continue not to be recognised as valid in this country. In the light of the views expressed on consultation the Government have decided to accept these recommendations and will introduce legislation to implement them when a suitable opportunity occurs.

ENERGY

Sizewell B

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he has had, and what undertakings he has given to the European Commission, in connection with state aid requirements, regarding the commercial rules for operating Sizewell B nuclear power station.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The notification of commercial arrangements relating to Nuclear Electric plc's operations up to 1998 made to the European Commission in March 1990 under state aid notification procedures included Sizewell B.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many visits were made by the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) in his capacity as Minister in 1990, 1991 and the current year, respectively; and what were the places and duration of each visit.

Mr. Wakeham: I shall ask my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) to write to the hon. Gentleman.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Brixton Prison

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve the treatment of medical and psychiatric prisoners at Brixton prison.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is the Government's policy that mentally disturbed offenders should receive care and treatment from the health and social services. They should be diverted from the criminal justice system at the earliest possible opportunity.

However following adverse criticism of the arrangements in Brixton prison, we felt it entirely appropriate to develop enhanced activities and general support for patients undergoing observation or treatment. We are now in the final stages of developing an acute psychiatric unit to provide a high standard of medical and nursing care for acutely disturbed inmates, for whom transfer to hospital is not possible.

The necessary building works are nearing completion and the unit is expected to be ready by the end of March for the receipt of patients in April.

"Custody, Care and Justice"

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which prisons have been selected for the pilot schemes of staff compacts described in paragraph 4.12 of the White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice".

Mrs. Rumbold: The commitment given in the White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice" to providing a statement of the facilities for staff, and the standards expected of them, is being addressed alongside the work on a new staff handbook, and standards for the treatment and care of prisoners. Work is progressing on the most appropriate format for the delivery of these objectives, but is not yet sufficiently advanced to implement any pilot programmes.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the outcome of the review of the reception and induction arrangements for prisoners referred to in paragraph 7.17 of the White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice".

Mrs. Rumbold: Guidance based on the review is to be issued to prison governors within the next few months.

Bail

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisons he expects to provide bail units, and how many to provide bail information schemes, before the end of the current financial year.

Mr. John Patten: All local prisons and remand centres have a bail unit or bail officer. Bail information schemes currently operate at 15 establishments. Two further establishments have schemes approved, but they will not be operational before the end of the financial year.

Male Prisoners

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many prisons male convicted prisoners are now allowed to wear their own clothes.

Mrs. Rumbold: The White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice" announced the Government's intention to extend the wearing of own clothess by male convicted prisoners. A pilot scheme began at HM prison Belmarsh in April 1991 and this is expected to be extended to two further establishments later this year. In addition, some establishments already allow male convicted prisoners to wear certain items of their own clothing.

Criminal Justice Consultative Council

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate the immediate programme of work agreed for the Criminal Justice Consultative Council following its initial meeting in January.

Mr. John Patten: The council's work programme will be considered by its members at its next meeting on 9 April, following a preliminary discussion at its first meeting.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Criminal Justice Consultative Council will hold its next meeting.

Mr. John Patten: The Criminal Justice Consultative Council will hold its second meeting on Thursday 9 April 1992.

London Bridge Bomb

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of those injured as a result of the London bridge explosion were injured by flying glass.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: A figure for those injured specifically by flying glass as a result of the London Bridge explosion of 28 February is not available, but of the 30 people who went to hospital as a result of the explosion, 12 were suffering from cuts, bruises or other associated pains.

Retail Premises (Security)

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the Chartered Institute of Loss Adjusters concerning its recommendations on appropriate security shutters for retail premises.

Mr. John Patten: I have had no discussions with the Chartered Institute of Loss Adjusters and I understand that the institute has made no such recommendations.

Crime Statistics, Manchester

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest crime figures in the Greater Manchester police area.

Mr. John Patten: The latest information is for 1991 and is published in table 3 of "Home Office Statistical Bulletin" 2/92, a copy of which is in the Library.

Name Badges (Prisons)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to introduce name badges for all staff on duty in prisons.

Mrs. Rumbold: Work is progressing on the commitment given in the White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice" to the wearing of name badges by all staff on duty in prisons. Procurement action will be initiated when the consultations with the trade unions about the detailed arrangements have been satisfactorily concluded.

Cardphones (Prisons)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether cardphones are now available in all prisons.

Mrs. Rumbold: Cardphones for prisoners' use are available at all category C and D prisons, including equivalent female and young offender establishments.

On publication of the Woolf report my right hon. Friend announced that cardphones would be installed in the rest of the prison estate. The installation programme is scheduled to be completed by the end of June 1992.

Prisoners (Television)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in which prisons he proposes to conduct experiments under which prisoners may have televisions in their cells or rooms.

Mrs. Rumbold: The White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice" announced that closely monitored trials would take place at a small number of establishments to test the use of televisions in cells.

A trial of battery-operated televisions began at HM prison The Mount in December 1991. Trials of mains-powered sets will be held at Manchester and Stockton prisons when the necessary cabling work has been completed in the summer. In-cell television will be tested in other establishments if the need arises.

Sexual Offences

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the average sentence imposed in each of the last 10 years upon offenders convicted of *(a)* indecent assault on a female, *(b)* unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16, *(c)* unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13 and *(d)* incest;

(2) how many offenders convicted of *(a)* indecent assault on a female, *(b)* unlawful sexual intercourse with

a girl under 16, *(c)* unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13 and *(d)* incest were given sentences of (i) immediate imprisonment, (ii) suspended imprisonment, (iii) community service, (iv) probation, (v) a fine and (vi) discharge in each of the last ten years.

Mr. John Patten: The information for England and Wales for the years 1980, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990, which is provisional, is given in the tables. To produce further information for the other years requested would involve disproportionate cost.

Table A

Number of offenders sentenced to immediate custody and average length of sentence imposed for certain sexual offences by type of court 1980, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990[1]

England and Wales

Offence	*Year*	*Magistrates' courts*		*Crown Court*	
		Total immediate custody	*Average sentence length (months)*	*Total immediate custody*	*Average sentence length (months)*
Indecent assault on a female	1980	141	4	275	16
	1985	172	4	489	18
	1987	134	4	821	22
	1988	131	3	866	21
	1989	91	4	913	23
	[1]1990	73	4	885	23
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16	1980	22	4	64	12
	1985	33	4	70	13
	1987	25	4	88	12
	1988	13	3	94	12
	1989	8	3	73	12
	[1]1990	13	4	72	11
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13	1980	—	—	50	31
	1985	—	4	69	25
	1987	—	—	82	36
	1988	—	4	95	33
	1989	—	—	61	38
	[1]1990	—	3	65	40
Incest	1980	2	4	95	36
	1985	—	5	95	30
	1987	—	—	156	38
	1988	—	—	159	42
	1989	—	—	134	43
	[1]1990	—	—	117	46

[1] Provisional

Table B

Number of offenders sentenced for certain sexual offences by type of court and result 1980, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990[1]

England and Wales

Offence and year	*Total sentence*	*Immediate custody*	*Fully suspended*	*Comm. serving order*	*Probation order*	*Fine*	*Abs or conditional discharge*	*Other*
Magistrates courts								
Indecent assault on a female								
1980	1,937	141	149	22	407	609	326	283
1985	1,396	172	113	34	365	278	240	194
1987	1,176	134	93	34	337	232	181	165
1988	1,220	131	105	29	323	290	188	145
1989	1,245	91	103	31	335	296	222	167
1990[1]	1,138	73	67	27	303	290	228	150
Unlawful sexual intercourse with girl under 16								
1980	414	22	49	18	34	188	69	14
1985	279	33	30	19	47	72	68	10
1987	191	25	24	19	31	59	33	—
1988	175	13	22	14	24	49	49	4
1989	139	8	8	8	21	58	35	1
1990[1]	154	13	7	9	27	50	45	3
Unlawful sexual intercourse with girl under 13								
1980	10	—	—	—	1	1	—	8
1985	12	1	—	5	1	1	2	2
1987	5	—	—	—	—	1	—	4
1988	10	1	—	—	—	—	2	7
1989	8	—	—	—	—	—	5	3
1990[1]	7	1	—	—	—	—	1	5
Incest								
1980	7	2	—	—	2	1	—	2

Offence and year	*Total sentence*	*Immediate custody*	*Fully suspended*	*Comm. serving order*	*Probation order*	*Fine*	*Abs or conditional discharge*	*Other*
1985	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
1987	4	—	—	—	—	—	1	3
1988	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
1989	4	—	—	—	—	3	—	1
1990[1]	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Crown court								
Indecent assault on a female								
1980	507	275	92	8	58	35	15	24
1985	744	489	100	8	94	14	18	21
1987	1,151	821	137	12	119	27	14	21
1988	1,305	866	180	18	159	27	22	33
1989	1,427	913	216	16	196	27	22	37
1990[1]	1,431	885	194	34	216	39	24	39
Unlawful sexual intercourse with girl under 16								
1980	147	64	33	9	10	24	7	—
1985	118	70	13	6	12	7	8	2
1987	156	88	29	10	14	6	7	2
1988	164	94	30	10	11	8	8	3
1989	123	73	22	7	6	7	7	1
1990[1]	150	72	36	13	11	9	7	2
Unlawful sexual intercourse with girl under 13								
1980	92	50	14	—	15	7	5	1
1985	98	69	10	7	8	1	3	—
1987	97	82	8	—	4	1	2	—
1988	125	95	6	4	10	2	3	5
1989	88	61	9	1	7	3	2	5
1990[1]	103	65	7	5	19	1	3	3
Incest								
1980	138	95	20	1	15	1	3	3
1985	126	95	21	1	8	—	—	1
1987	190	156	18	1	12	1	—	2
1988	195	159	16	3	15	—	2	—
1989	162	134	6	1	17	—	3	1
1990[1]	149	117	11	—	18	1	—	2

[1] Provisional.

Drug Abuse

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of drug addicts in each regional health authority each year since 1979.

Mr. John Patten: The number of addicts notified by doctors to the Home Office are given for each regional health authority and the years 1987 to 1990 in table A7 of "Statistics of the Misuse of Drugs: Addicts Notified to the Home Office, United Kingdom, 1990—Area Tables", a copy of which is in the Library. Figures for earlier years are not available by regional health authority.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many drug-related convictions there were in each police area in England and Wales since 1979.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is given in the table.

Persons found guilty of drugs offences by police force area and year[1]

England and Wales *Number of persons*

Police force	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
England												
Avon and Somerset	319	383	388	542	396	374	358	410	350	336	560	164
Bedfordshire	50	77	69	75	100	79	110	96	74	74	126	137
Cambridgeshire	317	300	275	169	152	108	151	164	159	132	156	234
Cheshire	110	171	144	184	206	298	223	209	411	395	511	324
Cleveland	104	118	84	58	41	57	98	78	69	90	95	93
Cumbria	130	174	246	374	288	289	335	293	290	364	376	326
Derbyshire	92	107	130	124	81	144	167	95	148	127	129	219
Devon and Cornwall	322	432	363	464	505	474	696	545	588	599	651	689
Dorset	115	161	162	224	183	222	197	129	91	64	132	165
Durham	51	60	49	59	89	76	62	34	63	67	80	61
Essex	129	240	219	259	249	323	344	162	204	255	325	400
Gloucestershire	157	202	183	207	213	248	194	128	143	108	167	154
Greater Manchester	410	519	886	769	874	919	1,019	880	1,006	964	1,301	1,356
Hampshire	397	332	432	282	336	339	315	342	250	328	241	214
Hertfordshire	167	197	222	224	256	295	313	213	194	205	371	336

Police force	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Humberside	109	147	180	152	200	202	260	177	194	201	207	264
Kent	166	235	244	223	204	259	308	251	302	202	202	96
Lancashire	271	363	351	324	354	291	425	373	344	256	317	585
Leicestershire	253	249	225	55	164	178	211	224	178	199	183	192
Lincolnshire	62	72	65	58	82	42	51	46	77	77	116	186
Merseyside	247	269	237	276	434	586	1,059	724	725	845	1,078	1,399
Metropolitan Police (including City of London	4,315	5,608	6,033	7,485	8,469	7,925	6,678	5,341	4,476	5,810	6,672	6,329
Norfolk	195	263	156	114	197	153	176	202	162	217	272	391
Northamptonshire	87	117	105	68	73	66	77	89	67	52	58	105
Northumbria	179	122	203	169	134	159	221	169	183	175	223	289
North Yorkshire	84	86	122	135	125	165	162	145	162	67	94	109
Nottinghamshire	109	150	161	233	191	154	147	158	217	165	143	145
South Yorkshire	175	145	180	236	144	257	298	283	336	238	324	351
Staffordshire	59	93	65	56	66	160	220	116	114	156	180	235
Suffolk	146	242	200	188	196	155	157	160	211	195	272	244
Surrey	219	284	305	254	287	351	406	306	254	236	391	361
Sussex	489	516	578	521	631	519	458	364	506	431	731	860
Thames Valley	466	479	408	514	488	514	608	536	543	643	770	911
Warwickshire	64	83	78	127	74	88	86	82	82	120	131	171
West Mercia	166	263	187	152	230	233	156	354	224	285	266	376
West Midlands	234	288	393	452	612	702	663	508	469	771	823	1,148
West Yorkshire	327	347	362	432	607	361	395	552	573	608	596	942
Wiltshire	121	124	166	137	149	252	147	112	83	106	120	103
Total England	11,413	14,018	14,856	16,375	18,080	18,017	17,951	15,050	14,522	16,163	19,390	20,664
Wales												
Dyfed-Powys	191	200	163	157	180	222	212	154	182	157	165	186
Gwent	103	124	111	152	101	132	134	125	114	131	118	144
North Wales	83	196	172	260	252	205	276	187	207	265	404	375
South Wales	228	278	319	418	575	736	597	419	532	586	657	578
Total Wales	605	798	765	987	1,108	1,295	1,219	885	1,035	1,139	1,314	1,283

[1] Excludes offenders prosecuted for offences dealt with by HM Customs and Excise, British Transport Police, British Airports Authority and Port of London Authority (England) and all those cautioned or dealt with by compounding for drugs offences.

Overseas Electors Scheme

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the total cost to date, broken down into all expenditure heads, of the implementation of the overseas electors scheme.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 9 March to a question by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist).

Crime Statistics, Merseyside

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions for criminal offences on Merseyside were made in each of the years 1978 to 1991 inclusive; how many crimes were reported on Merseyside in each of those years; and what percentage of the crimes reported the convictions constituted in each of those years.

Mr. John Patten: Information on convictions and cautions within police force areas is published annually in the Command Paper "Criminal statistics, England and Wales". Tables 3*(a)*, 7*(a)* and 35*(a)* of the 1978 edition, tables 3*(a)*, 7*(a)* and 34*(a)* of the 1979 edition and tables S3.2(A), S3.4(A) and S3.7(A) of the supplementary tables volume 3 from 1980 to 1989 refer. The 1990 Command Paper has yet to be published but provisional figures show 49,000 convictions and 9,800 cautions for all offences in the Merseyside police force area. This information covers offenders and the convictions data records the principal offence only—that is, does not take into account additional findings of guilt or offences taken into consideration. Court proceedings data for 1991 are not yet available.

Information on offences recorded by the police is also published annually in the Command Paper. Table 32 of the 1978 and 1979 editions, table 2.5 of the 1983 edition and table 2.4 of the 1989 edition refer. Figures for 1990 and 1991 are published in table 2 of "Home Office Statistical Bulletin" 2/92. Copies of all the publications referred to above are available in the Library.

Because of the different collection basis, it is not possible to compare statistics on offences recorded by the police with those on court proceedings.

Travellers

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the reasons why the officer commanding Southwark division Metropolitan police did not alert Kent county constabulary, Gravesend, that six traveller families were moving into the county of Kent; for what reasons the usual protocol was ignored, and on whose authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Commissioner accepts that Kent constabulary should have been told about the movement of these families and regrets that this did not happen. Police officers on Southwark division have been reminded of the importance of inter-force co-operation in similar cases.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated level of payments under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 to the London borough of Tower Hamlets and previously to ILEA in the current year and in each year since 1966.

Mrs. Rumbold: The amount of section 11 grant provision payable direct to Tower Hamlets in respect of each financial year from 1967-68 to 1990-91 is as follows.

The figures for each year up to 1989-90 relate to grant in service areas other than education. It is not possible to isolate precise figures for the grant payable to ILEA during this period in respect of education provision within Tower Hamlets. The figure for 1990-91 includes education provision transferred from ILEA. The figure for 1991-92 is not yet available.

Financial Year	£
1967-68	11,526
1968-69	10,618
1969-70	20,388
1970-71	19,010
1971-72	22,853
1972-73	26,651
1973-74	25,958
1974-75	20,473
1975-76	42,098
1976-77	39,860
1977-78	72,677
1978-79	78,830
1979-80	77,065
1980-81	633,466
1981-82	644,060
1982-83	841,531
1983-84	930,384
1984-85	116,519
1985-86	158,974
1986-87	234,680
1987-88	245,120
1988-89	199,843
1989-90	297,795
1990-91	4,732,150

National Lottery

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that the headquarters of the proposed national lottery be established on Merseyside; if he will consult the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers and the Football Pool Promoters Association in connection with the expertise they have available and the preservation of jobs of pools workers on Merseyside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government's White Paper published on 6 March invites views from all interested parties, including the pools companies, about the possible effect of a national lottery on their activities. Decisions about the headquarters of the national lottery cannot be taken at this stage, but the pools companies would, of course, be able to make a bid for a contract to operate the national lottery if they so wish. I should welcome comments on the proposals in the White Paper, which should be sent to my Department by 1 June.

United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in establishing a new body to supervise the work of the refugee unit of the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At the joint invitation of my right hon. Friend and the London representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, a planning group has been established, which will be chaired by Mrs. Usha Prashar.

Mr. Geoffrey Bindman and Ms. Janet Lewis-Jones have also agreed to participate, and the group may co-opt other members.

The group has been asked to consult voluntary organisations and others concerned with the welfare of refugees, and to devise a constitution for a new organisation, whose objective will be to provide legal counselling for asylum seekers and representation in appeals against adverse decisions by the immigration authorities. These proposals will take account of the need for the trustees of the new body to be able to meet their responsibilities under charity law and to satisfy my right hon. Friend and the UNHCR that there will be proper accountability for grants received. When agreement has been reached on the constitution of the new body, it is envisaged that the group should play a leading part in its establishment. In the meantime, the director of the refugee unit will report to the group, which will assume responsibility for general oversight of the unit until the new body is established.

I am grateful to Mrs. Prashar and her colleagues for taking on this task.

Fire Service College

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made towards establishing the Fire Service college as an executive agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am pleased to announce that the Fire Service college will be established as both a Home Office executive agency and a trading fund on 1 April. It will continue to be known as the Fire Service college under this new status. I shall be placing a copy of the college's framework document in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

The main aim of the Fire Service College will be to provide fire-related training and to promote fire safety awareness. It is recognised as being pre-eminent in its field and will therefore be starting from a sound basis in fulfilling this aim. I am confident that the enhanced freedoms and responsibilities which the framework document grants to the chief executive of the agency, together with the additional financial flexibilities of a trading fund, will enable the college to deliver further improvements in its services to customers by providing better value for money.

The key targets which I have set the agency for its first year of operation are:

i) to break even financially with a return on capital employed of 6 per cent.

ii) to achieve a cost per student week of £787;

iii) to achieve a throughput of 16,650, 3,202 and 2,182 student weeks, or equivalent consultancy income, in respect of the United Kingdom fire service, the commercial and industrial sector and the international sector respectively;

iv). 85 per cent. of students to achieve a 70 per cent. pass rate in assessments;

The chief executive, Mr. Brian Fuller CBE, will be directly accountable to me for the performance of the Fire Service College. An advisory board comprising representatives of the Home Office, the Scottish Office and fire authorities, together with two independent members, will help me to assess the college's performance.

Magistrates Courts Rules

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the changes to the magistrates courts rules recommended by the working group on pre-trial issues are being implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has today made the Magistrates' Courts (Miscellaneous Amendments) Rules 1992 which give effect to the rule changes recommended by the working group. Of particular note are the new rules governing the service of summonses, which allow the courts to use more effective and economical procedures where appropriate.

We have also taken this opportunity to bring the magistrates courts rules into line with the provisions of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 in respect of the tools and implements of trade which bailiffs may seize where a court authorises distress.

Asylum Applications

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on decisions made since December 1991 on applications for asylum in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 1 December 1991 new arrangements were introduced to record, manually, decisions on asylum applications. Under these arrangements decisions are counted at the time they are made in the asylum and special cases divison. This provides a more up-to-date count of decisions than the information previously available, which is subject to delays in recording on the computer system.

Figures for December 1991 and January and February 1992, produced under these new arrangements are given in the tables.

Decisions[1,2] made in December 1991 on applications for asylum in the United Kingdom, by nationality

	Granted Asylum	*Granted Exceptional leave*	*Refused Asylum and Exceptional leave*	*Refused on third country grounds*[3]	*Refused under paragraph 101 of Immigration rules*[4]	*Total decisions*
Europe and Americas						
Bulgaria	—	—	1	—	1	2
Colombia	—	—	—	—	—	—
Czechoslovakia	—	—	—	—	—	—
Poland	—	—	—	—	—	—
Romania	—	—	1	—	2	3
Turkey	10	21	16	12	—	59
USSR	—	2	—	—	—	2
Yugoslavia	2	—	—	—	—	2
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	12	23	18	12	3	68
Middle East						
Iran	6	19	1	—	—	26
Iraq	9	20	1	5	—	35
Lebanon	—	5	3	1	—	9
Others	2	10	4	7	—	23
Total	17	54	9	13	—	93
Africa						
Angola	—	2	8	5	241	256
Benin	—	—	—	—	—	—
Burkina Faso	—	—	—	—	2	2
Cameroon	—	—	—	2	1	3
Central African Republic	—	—	—	—	—	—
Chad	—	—	—	—	—	—
Congo	—	—	1	—	23	24
Ethiopia	1	14	—	2	1	18
Gabon	—	—	—	—	19	19
Ghana	1	—	6	2	4	13
Ivory Coast	—	—	—	—	4	4
Kenya	—	—	3	—	—	3
Liberia	—	—	—	2	—	2
Nigeria	1	—	3	2	—	6
Somalia	—	68	—	7	—	75
South Africa	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sudan	1	—	—	1	—	2
Togo	—	—	—	—	3	3
Uganda	—	10	6	—	14	30
Zaire	1	—	6	19	317	343

	Granted Asylum	*Granted Exceptional leave*	*Refused Asylum and Exceptional leave*	*Refused on third country grounds*[3]	*Refused under paragraph 101 of Immigration rules*[4]	*Total decisions*
Others	—	1	—	—	139	140
Total	5	95	33	42	768	943
Asia						
Bangladesh	—	3	6	—	—	9
China	—	4	1	—	—	5
India	—	45	38	11	6	100
Pakistan	—	27	31	—	7	65
Sri Lanka	—	38	—	1	—	39
Others	4	35	—	—	—	39
Total	4	152	76	12	13	257
Grand Total	38	324	136	79	784	1,361

[1] Excluding dependants.

[2] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same time period.

[3] Refused on the grounds that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country.

[4] For failure to provide evidence within a reasonable period to support the claim. The majority of these refusals were on grounds of failure to respond to two invitations to interview.

Decisions[1] [2] made in January 1992 on applications for asylum in the United Kingdom, by nationality

	Granted Asylum	*Granted Exceptional leave*	*Refused Asylum and exceptional leave*	*Refused on third country grounds*[3]	*Refused under paragraph 101 of Immigration rules*[4]	*Total decisions*
Europe and Americas						
Bulgaria	—	—	1	—	—	1
Colombia	—	—	—	—	—	—
Czechoslovakia	—	—	—	—	—	—
Poland	—	—	—	—	—	—
Romania	—	7	1	—	—	8
Turkey	8	27	9	9	10	63
USSR	—	—	—	—	—	—
Yugoslavia	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	1	1	1	9	—	12
Total	9	35	12	18	10	84
Middle East						
Iran	3	18	1	—	—	22
Iraq	9	18	—	—	—	27
Lebanon	—	6	2	4	—	12
Others	3	9	4	5	1	22
Total	15	51	7	9	1	83
Africa						
Angola	—	—	16	—	299	315
Benin	—	—	—	—	47	47
Burkina Faso	—	—	1	—	20	21
Cameroon	—	—	—	—	90	90
Central African Republic	—	—	—	—	4	4
Chad	—	—	1	—	21	22
Congo	—	—	—	—	24	24
Ethiopia	3	16	1	3	10	33
Gabon	—	—	—	—	62	62
Ghana	—	2	19	—	37	58
Ivory Coast	—	—	—	—	147	147
Kenya	—	—	—	—	—	—
Liberia	—	—	—	—	2	2
Nigeria	—	—	5	2	5	12
Somalia	1	189	—	4	21	215
South Africa	—	—	1	—	1	2
Sudan	10	3	—	—	5	18
Togo	—	—	—	1	42	43
Uganda	2	3	4	—	45	54
Zaire	—	1	4	11	252	268
Others	—	—	6	—	16	22
Total	16	214	58	21	1,150	1,459

	Granted Asylum	*Granted Exceptional leave*	*Refusd Asylum and exceptional leave*	*Refused on third country grounds*[3]	*Refused under paragraph 101 of Immigration rules*[4]	*Total decisions*
Asia						
Bangladesh	—	3	9	—	7	19
China	—	—	—	—	—	—
India	—	62	40	8	17	127
Pakistan	1	46	30	2	25	104
Sri Lanka	1	76	—	1	1	79
Others	1	42	1	1	—	45
Total	3	229	80	12	50	374
Grand Total	43	529	157	60	1,211	2,000

[1] Excluding dependants.

[2] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same time period.

[3] Refused on the grounds that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country.

[4] For failure to provide evidence within a reasonable period to support the claim. The majority of these refusals were on grounds of failure to respond to two invitations to interview.

Decisions[1,2] *made in February 1992 on applications for asylum in the United Kingdom, by nationality*

	Granted Asylum	*Granted Exceptional leave*	*Refused Asylum and exceptional leave*	*Refused on third country grounds*[3]	*Refused under paragraph 101 of Immigration rules*[4]	*Total decisions*
Europe and Americas						
Bulgaria	—	—	—	—	1	1
Colombia	—	—	2	—	—	2
Czechoslovakia	—	—	—	—	—	—
Poland	—	—	—	—	2	2
Romania	—	—	2	2	1	5
Turkey	15	24	10	4	18	71
USSR	—	—	—	—	—	—
Yugoslavia	—	—	—	6	—	6
Others	—	—	—	—	3	3
Total	15	24	14	12	25	90
Middle East						
Iran	4	17	3	—	—	24
Iraq	9	17	2	1	3	32
Lebanon	—	15	1	1	2	19
Others	3	5	4	2	3	17
Total	16	54	10	4	8	92
Africa						
Angola	—	—	1	—	203	204
Benin	—	—	—	—	47	47
Burkina Faso	—	—	—	—	27	27
Cameroon	—	—	—	—	82	82
Central African Republic	—	—	—	—	7	7
Chad	—	—	—	—	22	22
Congo	—	—	—	—	20	20
Ethiopia	—	4	1	3	16	24
Gabon	—	—	—	—	2	2
Ghana	1	3	20	1	44	69
Ivory Coast	—	—	1	—	106	107
Kenya	—	—	1	—	2	3
Liberia	—	—	—	—	1	1
Nigeria	—	—	2	—	5	7
Somalia	6	122	—	5	17	150
South Africa	—	—	—	—	1	1
Sudan	8	3	—	—	7	18
Togo	—	—	—	—	40	40
Uganda	—	1	—	—	2	3
Zaire	1	—	—	10	333	344
Others	—	—	1	—	22	23
Total	16	133	27	19	1,006	1,201
Asia						
Bangladesh	1	2	8	—	18	29
China	—	—	—	—	—	—
India	—	59	99	7	23	188

	Granted Asylum	*Granted Exceptional leave*	*Refused Asylum and exceptional leave*	*Refused on third country grounds*[3]	*Refused under paragraph 101 of Immigration rules*[4]	*Total decisions*
Pakistan	—	63	53	1	31	148
Sri Lanka	4	61	—	1	6	72
Others	4	20	1	—	2	27
Total	9	205	161	9	80	464
Grand Total	56	416	212	44	1,119	1,847

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[1] Excluding dependants.

[2] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same time period.

[3] Refused on the grounds that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country.

[4] For failure to provide evidence within a reasonable period to support the claim. The majority of these refusals were on grounds of failure to respond to two invitations to interview.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Interest Rates

18. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the business community on the impact which the current level of interest rates are having on its performance.

Mr. Maples: I have received a number of such representations.

Public Debt

19. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is Britain's public debt as a proportion of national income; and what are the figures for other EC countries.

Mr. Mellor: The ratio of general Government gross debt to gross domestic product is lower in the United Kingdom than any other country in the European Community, except Luxembourg.

Inflation

20. **Mr. Rost:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest assessment of the prospects for retail price inflation.

24. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast of United Kingdom inflation in 1992.

Mr. Maples: The Budget forecast is for RPI inflation to be down to 3¾ per cent. in the fourth quarter of 1992 and 3¼ per cent. by mid-1993.

23. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of *(a)* United Kingdom inflation and *(b)* European Community average inflation in the third quarter of 1992.

Mr. Maples: In the Financial Statement and Budget Report my right hon. Friend forecast United Kingdom inflation of 3¾ per cent. in the final quarter of 1992. We have made no forecast of EC inflation but in January 1992 it was 4·7 per cent.

Taxation

21. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about his proposals for income tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The reductions in income tax I announced in the Budget on Tuesday have been widely welcomed.

26. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the overall tax burden for a married couple, both working on 100 per cent. of male average earnings in 1978-79; and what it was in 1990-91.

Mr. Maude: Over this period, the couple's real take-home pay would have risen by 31 per cent. Their overall tax burden is estimated to have risen from 36½ to 38½ per cent.

28. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the basic rate of income tax.

Mr. Maude: I have received a large number of representations on the basic rate of income tax reflecting a variety of views.

29. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many wage earners would benefit from a 1p cut in income tax.

Mr. Maude: Following the introduction of a 20p lower rate of tax which will now be the marginal rate of tax for almost 4 million individuals, a 1p cut in the basic rate of income tax would benefit about 21 million individuals in 1992-93.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the change in revenue to the Exchequer from taxation over the remainder of the current financial year as a result of the proposals announced in his Budget.

Mr. Maude: The Budget measures will have a negligible effect on receipts in 1991-92.

Savings

22. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further proposals he has regarding the taxation of savings.

Mr. Mellor: On Tuesday, we doubled the PEP limits for qualifying unit and investment trusts. We intend to continue reducing taxes on savings and giving incentives on a wider range of investments.

Football Stadiums

25. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to fund the Football Stadia Advisory Design Council.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Earnings Statistics

27. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the take-home pay of a married man with two children on average earnings increased *(a)* between 1974 and 1979 and *(b)* between 1979 and 1992.

Mr. Maude: A man on average male earnings with a wife and two children has enjoyed a 35 per cent. real increase in take home pay since 1978-79. The increase between 1973-74 and 1978-79 was a mere 1 per cent.

Business Investment

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of gross domestic product at current prices business investment in current prices represented in 1979 and in the fourth quarter of 1991.

Mr. Mellor: The figures requested are 14·3 per cent. and 12 per cent. In volume terms, the share of business investment in GDP rose from 12¾ per cent. in 1979 to 14¼ per cent. in 1991.

Leisure Courses

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidance he issues on the definition of leisure courses on which VAT is chargeable.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Customs and Excise have issued guidance on the VAT liability of supplies of education, and courses in sporting or recreational activities, in VAT leaflet 701/30—education. Additional guidelines for local authorities and higher education institutions have also been made available.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the gross domestic product has increased in real terms since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Gross domestic product at constant 1985 factor cost increased by 23 per cent. between 1979 and 1991.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to introduce fiscal measures to prohibit the sale and export of ozone-depleting substances.

Mr. Maude: No. We have urged other countries to ratify the London amendment to the Montreal protocol. We are committed to phasing out the production and consumption of ozone depleting substances by the end of 1995 and are urging the Community to adopt this target.

VAT Control Staff

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many value added tax control staff will lose their jobs up to 1 January 1993.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Each year the reassessment of VAT visiting priorities results in the redeployment of staff engaged in VAT control work, but it is Customs' intention that no one will lose their job as a result.

Stamp Duty

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many cases were brought by the Inland Revenue involving evasion of house purchase stamp duty in each year since 1983; and in how many cases convictions were secured.

Mr. Maude: No such cases have been brought by the Inland Revenue.

Widowers' Benefits

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many women have been disallowed tax relief in respect of the facility for women teachers to cover pre-6 April 1988 service for widowers' benefits.

Mr. Maude: The information requested is not available. Teachers, both men and women, may contribute up to 15 per cent. of their earnings to the teachers' superannuation scheme with the benefit of tax reliefs.

Value Added Tax

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the amount of uncollected VAT in each constituency in England and Wales.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Customs do not maintain statistics for individual constituencies or countries within the United Kingdom. Information on average daily arrears of value added tax on the basis of financial years, can be found in "Volume 12: Classes XVIII to XIX" of the 1990-91 appropriate accounts, pages vii and xiii respectively. A copy is available in the House of Commons Library.

EC Budget

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the value for money received from the European Community budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have written to Commissioner Schmidhuber to underline the importance which the United Kingdom attaches to the responsibilities of the Commission for the guidance principles of Community expenditure: economy and cost-effectiveness. These principles were endorsed at Maastricht.

The recent Court of Auditors' report on the 1990 Community budget—Official Journal C324, volume 34—shows that there is still a great deal of progress to be made in order to ensure that the taxpayer receives value for money even from current levels of spending. Sound financial management is of continuing importance; but assumes a particular relevance now in view of the Commission's recent proposals for Community expenditure over the five years after 1992. The need for progress bears directly upon the three major areas of Community spending in which the Commission's proposals envisage significant growth: the structural funds, external aid, and research and development. However, as the Court of Auditors emphasises, the principles of sound financial management are applicable generally to the Community's expenditure.

The Maastricht treaty has consequences for the quality of Community expenditure, by placing responsibility for sound financial management firmly upon the Commission. Finance Ministers will discuss the Court of Auditors' report next Monday; and we shall be looking for clear evidence that the Commission is acting upon the criticisms of the court.

I have placed copies of my letter to Commissioner Schmidhuber in the Library of the House, together with copies of the similar letters which I have written to colleagues on the Economic and Finance Council and to the chairman of the European Parliament's committee on budgetary control.

BCCI

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the fourth report from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee of the current Session on "Banking Supervision and BCCI" (HC 177).

Mr. Maples: The Government will consider the Committee's comments and recommendations carefully. The Government will, however, await Lord Justice Bingham's report on BCCI before reaching any conclusions on the Committee's recommendations.

In response to the Committee's report, the Bank of England issued a statement yesterday, a copy of which I am placing in the Library.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Lip Reading

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to ensure that lip reading classes are available as a right to all who need them.

Mr. Eggar: It is not for the Government to prescribe which form of communication should be employed in schools where there are pupils with hearing impairments. Such decisions are best made locally by the governing bodies of individual schools.

Special Needs

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what importance he places on the personal and social development of children with special educational needs.

Mr. Eggar: Schools have an important part to play in the personal and social development of all their pupils. Section 1 of the Education Reform Act 1988 requires that the curriculum of every maintained school should

> "promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of its pupils and of society"

and prepare pupils for the

> "opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life".

That applies equally to pupils with special educational needs, although there is provision for their curriculum to be considered on an individual basis where necessary. This might include more personal and social education where that is in their best interests and in keeping with the requirement that they receive a broad and balanced curriculum.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements are made for the procedures for, and personal teaching of, statemented pupils attending grant-maintained schools; on what basis their allocated personal teachers are supplied and paid; and what are the statutory responsibilities of local education authorities for such pupils.

Mr. Eggar: Local education authorities have a statutory duty to arrange the special educational provision specified in the statements they issue for all children in their area. Arrangements will vary to meet an individual pupil's statement. School governors, including GM school governors, have parallel statutory duties to provide for their registered pupils with statements.

Degrees (Validation)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the institutions previously accredited by the Council for National Academic Awards and the students registered with the CNAA for degrees will be transferred without interruption to other validating bodies by the date of closure of the CNAA without any increase in fees payable by institutions or students and under the same conditions.

Mr. Alan Howarth: As indicated in my answer of 5 March, *Official Report*, column *250*, we remain confident that new validation arrangements for institutions without degree awarding powers will be in place for the academic year 1992-93, with no further fee charged to students for whom the full registration fee has already been paid to the CNAA in a previous year. The validation fee to be paid by new students will be determined, following consultations set out in the Department's letter of 15 January 1992 to higher education institutions.

London Regional Office

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the budget and forecast actual expenditure for 1991-92 and 1992-93 of his Department's London regional office.

Mr. Atkins: With the exception of HM inspectorate's local offices, the Department does not have a regional structure. The Department's headquarters functions are undertaken jointly in its London and Darlington offices. In 1991-92 the Department's administration budget excluding that for HMI local offices, is £102 million and the forecast outturn £100 million. The planned budget for 1992-93 is £104 million on the same basis.

Departmental Programmes

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science since 1979, what has been the annual expenditure on *(a)* the professional industrial commercial updating programme—PICKUP—and *(b)* REPLAN, expressed (i) in cash terms, (ii) in constant 1991 prices and (iii) as a figure which indicates the amount of EC funding included in each programme.

Mr. Eggar: The annual expenditure on the Department's PICKUP and REPLAN programmes in England since they began in 1982 and 1984 respectively is given in the table. Information on EC funding to individual further and higher education institutions which may have been used to support their PICKUP or REPLAN type activities is not held centrally by the Department.

	PICKUP programme		*REPLAN programme*	
	Cash £ million	*1991-92 prices £ million*	*Cash £ million*	*1991-92 prices £ million*
1982-83	0·3	0·5	—	—
1983-84	1·0	1·6	—	—
1984-85	2·3	3·5	0·4	0·6
1985-86	5·6	8·1	2·4	3·5
1986-87	6·7	9·4	4·0	5·6
1987-88	5·9	7·8	4·5	6·0
1988-89	5·3	6·6	3·2	4·0
1989-90	6·1	7·1	1·8	2·1
1990-91	5·5	5·9	1·5	1·6
[1]1991-92	6·8	6·8	0·6	0·6

[1] Estimates.

Notes to table:

1. The PICKUP figures include the salary costs of PICKUP regional offices.

2. They exclude funding by the Universities Funding Council (and its predecessor, the UGC) and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (and its predecessor, the NAB) to meet the start-up costs of developing vocational continuing education: figures are not available on a basis that allows for a comparison over time or which is consistent with figures for the directly DES funded programme. It is estimated that the UFC will provide some £10 million to support the development of PICKUP provision in England in academic year 1991-92; and the PCFC will provide some £5 million in financial year 1991-92.

3. The figures include both the local education authority and the DES shares of expenditure on PICKUP and REPLAN supported by Education Support Grants, In-service Teacher Training Grants, LEA Training grants (LEATGS) and Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST).

Croydon College of Art and Technology

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his prior approval was required of Croydon college of art and technology's establishment of a further education employers' forum; and what sums of money have been spent on this venture.

Mr. Eggar: Neither the establishment of an employer's forum nor expenditure in respect of it would require the approval of my right hon. and learned Friend. The costs are a matter for those involved.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will update the table given in his answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn of 9 May 1991, *Official Report*, columns *562-64*, giving the latest available information in respect of each city technology college or proposed and planned city technology college.

Mr. Eggar: The table covers announced CTCs:

Name	*Kingshurst CTC Solihull*	*Emmanuel College Tyneside*	*Dixons CTC Bradford*	*Leigh CTC Dartford*	*Britschool CCTA Croydon*	*Djanogly CTC Nottingham*	*Macmillan College Teeside*
Site	*Kingshurst School site*	*St. John-Fisher School site*	*Newby Square, Bradford*	*Downs School site*	*Site of Selhurst Tertiary Centre*	*Sherwood Rise, Nottingham*	*St. Michael RC School, Middlesbrough*
LEA	*Solihull*	*Gateshead*	*Bradford*	*Kent*	*Croydon*	*Nottinghamshire*	*Cleveland*
Opening dates	1988	1990	1990	1990	1991	1989	1989
Planned number of pupils	1,100	900	980	1,250	720	1,000	1,100
Total capital cost £ million	9·71	8·61	9·16	8·95	10·00	9·75	8·45
Exchequer contribution £ million	7·60	6·89	7·33	7·16	8·00	8·20	6·74
Sponsors' contribution							
(i) committed[1] £ million	2·11	1·72	1·83	1·79	2·00	1·56	1·71
(ii) confirmed £ million	2·89	1·60	2·86	1·52	2·25	1·89	1·51
Principal sponsors	Hanson Trust	Peter Vardy	Dixons plc, Mr. Hakim Wong	Sir Geoffrey Leigh	The British Record Industry Trust	Mr. Harry Djanogly	BAT Industries plc
Contracts awarded to sponsors	None	Building contract Laings Northern	None	None	None	None	None
School closure involved	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Has a ballot of parents been held and with what result	No	No	No	[2]No	No	No	No

[1] Committed sponsorship contributions represent agreed percentage contributions to CTC capital cash limits as secured in formal funding agreements with CTCs.

[2] Public consultations were held by Kent on its proposals to close the Downs School. One statutory objection containing 62 signatures was made to the section 12 proposal subsequently published.

Name	*Harris CTC Norwood*	*Bacon's College Bermondsey*	*Haberdashers' CTC New Cross*	*Brook CTC Corby*	*Landau Forte College Derby*	*Thomas Telford School Telford*	*ADT College Wandsworth*	*Kingswood CTC Bristol*
Site	*Sylvan School site Croydon*	*Bacon's School site Southwark*	*Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham School site*	*Great Oakley Corby*	*Wood Street Derby*	*Old Park Telford*	*Mayfield School*	*Kingswood Bristol*
LEA	*Croydon*	*Southwark*	*Lewisham*	*Northants*	*Derbyshire*	*Shropshire*	*Wandsworth*	*Avon*
Opening dates	1990	1991	1991	1991	1992	1991	1991	1993
Planned number of pupils	1,100	1,100	1,100	900	900	1,000	1,000	900
Total capital cost £ million	8·66	15·47	9·15	10·19	10·20	10·75	11·32	To be determined

Name	Harris CTC Norwood	Bacon's College Bermondsey	Haberdashers' CTC New Cross	Brook CTC Corby	Landau Forte College Derby	Thomas Telford School Telford	ADT College Wandsworth	Kingswood CTC Bristol
Site	Sylvan School site Croydon	Bacon's School site Southwark	Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham School site	Great Oakley Corby	Wood Street Derby	Old Park Telford	Mayfield School	Kingswood Bristol
LEA	Croydon	Southwark	Lewisham	Northants	Derbyshire	Shropshire	Wandsworth	Avon
Exchequer contribution £ million	6·93	13·87	5·70	8·15	8·16	8·40	9·06	Not more than 80 per cent. of cost
Sponsors' contribution								
(i) committed[1] £ million	1·73	[2]1·60	3·45	2·04	2·04	2·35	2·26	At least 20 per cent. of cost
(ii) confirmed £ million	1·71	[3]1·00	[4]4·45	2·04	2·05	2·35	2·26	At least 20 per cent. of cost
Principal sponsors	Philip and Pauline Harris Charitable Trust	Philip and Pauline Harris Charitable Trust and Southwark Diocesan Board of Education	Haberdashers' Company as Trustees of Robert Aske Charity	Mr. Hugh de Capell Brooke	The Landau Foundation Forte plc	The Mercers Tarmac plc	ADT plc	Wolfson Foundation and Cable and Wireless plc
Contracts awarded to sponsors	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None
School closure involved	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Has a ballot of parents been held and with what result	Yes Majority Against	No	Yes Majority in Favour	No	[5]No	[5]No	[5]No	[5]No

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[1] Committed sponsorship contributions represent agreed percentage contributions to CTC capital cash limits as secured in formal funding agreements with CTCs.

[2] The sponsors commitment is stated net of the proceeds of sale of the site of the former school: the Exchequer contribution will be reduced by the amount of the proceeds of sale.

[3] The confirmed contribution is net of the proceeds of sale of the former school site and of contributions to community provision and the chapel.

[4] This figure includes the donation of the present site, which has been valued at £3·445 million.

[5] In each case, LEA, local schools and other interests consulted on proposals to establish CTC.

Industrial Relations

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what restrictions exist on the use of Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council funds for the creation of companies to deal with further education industrial relations.

Mr. Eggar: The activities eligible for funding by the PCFC are set out in section 132 (5) of the Education Reform Act 1988.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Incomes

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of the level of income of those people employed in the agriculture sector in the United Kingdom and each other state of the European Community in each of the years since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Data on incomes for people employed in agriculture in each member state of the Community are not readily available. Some information on the hourly earnings of regular whole time agricultural workers is contained in the Eurostat publication "Earnings in Agriculture".

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of the level of income for those people employed in the agriculture sector in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and for the United Kingdom as a whole, for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The average weekly earnings for regular whole-time male agricultural workers aged 20 and over is given in the table.

Agricultural workers average weekly earnings for regular whole time men (aged 20 years and over)

Year	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom
1979	—72·04—		72·02	57·46	71·90
1980	—86·48—		85·09	69·15	85·95
1981	97·21	93·02	93·40	74·41	96·29
1982	106·99	97·72	100·32	80·10	105·44
1983	118·37	106·65	112·25	88·41	116·57
1984	124·59	112·31	116·9	92·62	122·59
1985	136·50	124·16	126·18	99·74	134·10
1986	143·50	123·07	133·43	106·90	140·80
1987	150·95	131·89	137·86	110·26	148·00
1988	158·19	139·01	146·42	117·94	155·10
1989	170·81	147·83	156·99	126·85	167·40
1990	190·23	161·59	174·39	134·72	186·10
[1]1991	—206·23—		191·21	151·13	202·20

[1] Forecast.

Wild Birds

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the latest average mortality rate among wild birds which are imported into the United Kingdom; and whether he has set a target rate for mortalities for wild caught birds *(a)* in transit and *(b)* in quarantine.

Mr. Gummer: The latest statistics on mortality in imported captive birds, relating to imports in 1990, were published on 27 February and copies have been placed in the Library of the House. Average mortality, in transport and quarantine combined, was 12·3 per cent. compared with 12·7 per cent. in 1989 and 13·7 per cent. in 1988.

Our objective is to reduce mortalities to the lowest possible level. As explained in the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on 27 February, the Government are taking vigorous action to address this issue in international negotiations.

GNP Statistics

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will give details of the contribution agriculture has made to the gross national product of each of the member states of the European Community, expressed in cash and percentage terms, for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will give details of the contribution agriculture in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland made to the total United Kingdom gross national product, expressed in pounds sterling and in percentage terms, for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is contained in the tables, which show the contribution of agriculture to gross domestic product at factor cost. The national currency values which underlie the percentages shown in the first table are available in the Eurostat publications "Economic Accounts for Agriculture and Forestry", which are available in the Library of the House.

As the tables show, agricultural gross value added has declined as a proportion of total gross domestic product over the period in the great majority of members states.

Contribution of agriculture to gross domestic product at factor cost by member state (percentages)

Year	*Ireland*	*Denmark*	*Greece*	*West Germany*	*France*	*Italy*	*Netherlands*	*Belgium*	*Luxembourg*	*United Kingdom*	*Spain*	*Portugal*
1979	13·3	4·7	15·3	2·1	4·8	7·5	3·8	2·4	2·8	2·2	n.a.	n.a.
1980	11·0	4·8	16·3	1·9	4·0	7·0	3·6	2·3	2·6	2·1	n.a.	n.a.
1981	11·0	5·1	16·8	1·9	3·9	6·4	4·3	2·5	2·7	2·2	n.a.	n.a.
1982	11·2	5·5	17·9	2·2	4·3	6·3	4·5	2·6	3·5	2·3	n.a.	n.a.
1983	11·5	4·7	16·3	1·8	4·0	6·6	4·4	2·8	3·0	2·0	n.a.	n.a.
1984	11·8	5·5	16·8	2·0	4·0	6·1	4·5	2·7	2·7	2·2	5·7	n.a.
1985	10·2	5·0	16·6	1·8	3·7	5·0	4·2	2·5	2·6	1·8	6·1	n.a.
1986	9·7	5·1	14·4	2·0	3·9	5·2	4·7	2·6	2·7	1·8	5·6	n.a.
1987	10·3	4·0	15·6	1·5	3·5	4·5	4·1	2·2	2·4	1·6	5·2	6·4
1988	10·9	3·8	16·4	1·6	3·2	4·1	4·2	2·2	2·3	1·4	5·1	5·2
1989	10·5	4·2	16·5	1·7	3·3	4·0	4·6	2·4	2·4	1·5	4·7	5·5

Source: Commission of the European Communities—'The Agricultural Situation in the Community' Reports 1982-1991.

n.a.—Not readily available on a consistent basis.

The contribution of agriculture to United Kingdom GDP by country at factor cost (£ million and percentages).

	UK GDP average estimate	*Agricultural Gross Product (a)*				
		United Kingdom	*England*	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*
1979	173,181	3,800·1	3,023·3	409·5	209·6	157·7
Percentage		2·2	1·7	0·2	0·1	0·1
1980	201,017	4,227·9	3,379·8	427·6	253·6	166·9
Percentage		2·1	1·7	0·2	0·1	0·1
1981	218,755	4,773·8	3,769·9	500·3	288·4	215·2
Percentage		2·2	1·7	0·2	0·1	0·1
1982	238,231	5,415·5	4,263·4	584·1	317·1	250·9
Percentage		2·3	1·8	0·2	0·1	0·1
1983	261,083	5,170·8	4,065·5	549·7	292·4	263·2
Percentage		2·0	1·6	0·2	0·1	0·1
1984	280,052	6,155·5	4,857·5	656·3	328·8	312·9
Percentage		2·2	1·7	0·2	0·1	0·1
1985	306,716	5,446·8	4,293·0	544·6	330·5	278·7
Percentage		1·8	1·4	0·2	0·1	0·1
1986	326,182	5,848·0	4,615·9	622·9	341·6	267·6
Percentage		1·8	1·4	0·2	0·1	0·1
1987	358,297	5,911·6	4,543·8	687·9	358·1	321·8
Percentage		1·6	1·3	0·2	0·1	0·1
1988	397,292	5,716·6	4,339·6	648·4	372·0	356·6

	UK GDP average estimate	*Agricultural Gross Product (a)*				
		United Kingdom	*England*	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*
Percentage		1·4	1·1	0·2	0·1	0·1
1989	436,180	6,609·0	5,052·6	760·5	386·2	409·7
Percentage		1·5	1·2	0·2	0·1	0·1
1990	477,599	6,877·2	5,354·9	771·9	386·0	364·4
Percentage		1·4	1·1	0·2	0·1	0·1
1991[1]	n.a	6,667·4	5,215·7	712·8	381·0	357·9
Percentage	n.a	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

[1] Forecast.

(a) The agricultural gross product figures are inclusive of landlords' expenses and the produce of gardens and allotments.

DEFENCE

Bunkers, Iraq

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the number of bunkers in Iraq built to designs supplied by Her Majesty's Government's international military services organisation to the Iraqi Government; and how many of these bunkers have survived the allied bombing offensive.

Mr. Alan Clark: No operational bunkers were supplied or designed by IMS for Iraq. IMS supervised the construction of a reinforced testing and servicing facility between 1981 and 1987. We have no record of the precise location of this facility and so cannot say whether it survived the coalition bombing offensive.

Merchant Shipping

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *677*, when he expects to make a statement on the review of the strategic and defence role of British merchant shipping.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Shipping on 20 November 1991, *Official Report*, column *156*.

Army Reservists

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 6 March, *Official Report*, column *336*, when and for what reason the annual reporting exercise for Army reservists was suspended; when it will be resumed; what was the total expenditure on payment to Army reservists attending the annual reporting exercise in the last year for which figures are available; what assessment he has made of the effects of the suspension on the quick and effective mobilisation of reservists when required; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The annual reporting exercise for Army reservists was suspended in January. A new strategy for individual reservists is being developed as a result of the restructuring of the Army and in the light of the consultative open government document "The Future of Britain's Reserve Forces" which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence published on 5 March. As part of this work we are looking afresh at arrangements for annual reporting. Payment of grant to Army reservists reporting during 1990-91 amounted to £4,700,000. The short-term suspension of annual reporting is considered acceptable given the changes in the threat, concept and readiness requirements.

South Korea

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has been involved in discussions with British Aerospace and South Korea, to allow South Korea to build Hawk fighter/trainer aircraft, or any other aircraft, under licence in South Korea.

Mr. Alan Clark: No.

Metallurgy

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 5 March, *Official Report*, column *290*, when the expert concerned made notes of his telephone conversation; and whether copies of these notes were made.

Mr. Alan Clark: The notes were made in June 1988; so far as can be ascertained, no copies were taken at the time.

Air-to-Air Missiles

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral statement of 3 March, *Official Report*, column 161, when he estimates he will achieve a satsifactory agreement with British Aerospace regarding ASRAAM; how much money will be spent on the contract in each year for the next five years; and in which year he expects to take delivery of the first ASRAAM.

Mr. Alan Clark: Subject to the agreement of satisfactory terms, we expect to place the contract by the end of this month. The first ASRAAM is scheduled for delivery in 1998. It is not our practice to publish details of our future expenditure plans on a year-to-year basis.

Naval Vessels (Replacement)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral statement of 13 February, *Official Report*, column 1142, how much money will be spent in each of the next five years on the replacement programmes for HMS Fearless and Intrepid; and in which year these new vessels will come into service.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is not our practice to publish details of our future expenditure plans on a year-to-year basis. The planned in-service date for these vessels is 1999 for the first ship and 2001 for the second.

Procurement Programmes

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is prepared to change his policy relating to the publication of details of the future levels of expenditure per year for individual procurement programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: No.

Redundancies

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Army personnel who have applied for redundancy have indicated that it was their intention to find rented accommodation in *(a)* the private sector and *(b)* the public sector.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Of the 4,240 Army personnel who had indicated that they would be willing to be considered for selection for redundancy, and filled in a questionnaire on their future housing intentions, 289 indicated they might, amongst other possibilities such as purchase, look to housing associations and the private sector to rent; 770 indicated they would seek local authority housing. Work has now commenced to establish the housing intentions of those 3,338 Army personnel who were notified of their selection for redundancy on 26 February.

Anti-radar Missiles

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral statement of 19 February, *Official Report,* columns 331-32, in which year he will order a further batch of air-launched anti-radar missiles; how much money will be spent in each of the next five years on that order; and what information relating to this order he has supplied to the management of Marconi Defence Systems, Lucas Aerospace, Irving and Thorn EMI.

Mr. Alan Clark: Subject to the agreement of satisfactory terms, we expect to order the further batch of air-launched anti-radar missiles this year. It is not our practice to publish details of our future expenditure plans on a year-by-year basis, nor of our contacts with individual companies about prospective defence contracts.

Lynx Helicopter

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral statement of 19 February, *Official Report,* columns 331-32, when he will be placing a contract to convert the Royal Navy's Lynx mark three helicopter to mark eight standard; how much this will cost; how much money will be spent in each of the next three years on this conversion; and when it will be completed.

Mr. Alan Clark: Subject to the agreement of acceptable contractual terms, we expect to sign a contract with Westland for conversion of the first seven Lynx mark three airframes to mark eight standard by the end of this month. The work is planned to be completed within three and a half years. The overall cost will be in the order of £20 million. It is not our practice to publish details of our future expenditure plans on a year-by-year basis.

Sea King Helicopters

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral statement of 19 February *Official Report,* columns 331-32, when he intends to order a further six Sea King helicopters; and how much money will be spent in each of the next four years on this order.

Mr. Alan Clark: Subject to agreement of acceptable contractual terms, we expect to sign an initial contract with Westland in April and the main contract before the end of the year. It is not our practice to publish details of our future expenditure plans on a year-by-year basis.

Recruitment

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his letter of 3 March relating to his answer of 19 December, *Official Report,* column *285,* if he will now change his policy relating to the release of information on the recruiting levels of individual units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Amphibious Forces

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral statement of 13 February, *Official Report,* column 1142, when he expects to begin the overhaul and re-equipment programme for the three landing ships logistic to begin; and how much will be spent on it in each of the next three years.

Mr. Alan Clark: Design studies are already under way. We expect work to begin in the summer of 1993. It is not our practice to publish details of our future expenditure plans on a year-by-year basis.

Private Housing

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 5 March, *Official Report,* column *293,* when he began assembling information on the private housing arrangements of Army personnel who have applied for redundancy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: December 1991.

Housing Task Force

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 5 March, *Official Report,* column 290, which representatives of local authority associations he hopes to meet.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Precise representation from the local authority associations is yet to be determined.

Satellites

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral statement of 19 February, *Official Report,* columns 331-32, how many new satellites will be ordered; in which years they will be ordered; and how much money will be spent on their procurement in each year up to 1997.

Mr. Alan Clark: We expect to place a firm-price, incentivised order for the production, launch and in-orbit testing of two Skynet 4 stage 2 satellites in autumn 1993. This order will be subject to the outcome of project definition, the contract for which was placed with British Aerospace plc. earlier this month. We expect the total cost of this programme to be in the order of £300 million at 1991 prices. It is not our practice to publish details of our future expenditure plans on a year-by-year basis.

PRIME MINISTER

Income Tax

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Prime Minister how many letters he has received in the past six months calling for cuts in the standard rate of income tax.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations on a range of taxation issues.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the number and purpose of each of his and his predecessor's visits to Liverpool in each of the years 1979 to 1991 inclusive.

The Prime Minister: I am making plans for a series of visits to all parts of the country and hope to include Liverpool among them. My right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) made four official visits to Liverpool.

Mirror Group Pension Funds

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *31*, to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, if he has now made a decision on whether to meet a deputation from the committee representing the staffs of Mirror Group Newspapers about the recovery of pension assets from the banks which are holding them; and if he will make a statment.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury will be writing to Mr. David Thompson, chairman of the committee representing the staff of Mirror Group Newspapers, very shortly.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for 12 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Northern Region

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Prime Minister whether he will list the Government's achievements in the northern region since 1987; and whether he will list by Government Department the principal aid given to the northern region since 1987.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 11 March 1992]:* The information could be provided only at disproportionate cost. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) on 16 December at columns *22-25*.

Defence Establishments (Information)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister what steps he has taken to ensure that Ministers in Departments other than the Ministry of Defence do not release information about the proposed closure of or job losses in defence establishments prior to the work force being informed of those plans by officials of the Ministry of Defence.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 11 March 1992]:* It remains the policy of the Ministry of Defence that such information should be first provided to the work forces at defence establishments by management.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Pre-fitted Plugs

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will identify any obstacles to requiring pre-fitted plugs on electrical appliances to meet the requests of disabled people including those with wasting muscle and other difficulties in manipulating appliances.

Mr. Leigh: The proposed regulations will retain the approval of safety requirement of the Plugs and Sockets Etc. (Safety) Regulations 1987. It is likely that manufacturers will ordinarily choose to fit the standard design 13 amp plug because this is the type that is commonly used in the majority of households. However, provided that the plug to be fitted has the necessary approval the proposed regulations will not prevent manufacturers from fitting plugs to their appliances that are adapted for use by the disabled.

Moreover the type of plug and devices which assist the disabled will still be available for people who wish to continue to fit them to their appliances.

Expo '92

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements he is making for United Kingdom representation at the Seville Expo '92; what sponsorship arises directly, or indirectly, from public funds; and if he will list the bodies and approximate expenditure in respect of each.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 23 January, *Official Report*, column *293*. The public expenditure was provided by £7 million from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, £7 million from the Employment Department and the balance from my Department.

Regional Assistance, Merseyside

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total amount of financial regional assistance granted to *(a)* manufacturing industry and *(b)* services on Merseyside in each of the years 1978 to 1991 inclusive.

Mr. Leigh: Financial regional assistance paid to companies on Merseyside is as follows:

£ million

	Manufacturing industry	*Services*
1978	24·8	0·5
1979	12·2	0·5
1980	6·1	0·5
1981	5·3	0·5
1982	5·2	0·5
1983	4·5	0·5
1984	6·2	0·5
1985	7·7	0·3
1986	11·1	1·8
1987	15·5	2·1
1988	30·0	2·7
1989	21·7	3·4
1990	18·9	1·9
1991	16·0	1·9

Manufacturing industry has been defined as division 2—excluding classes 21 and 23—3 and 4 of the standard industrial classification revised 1980.

Figures include expenditure on regional selective assistance; the revised regional development grants scheme which started in November 1984 and closed to new applications in March 1988 and the regional enterprise grants scheme which started in April 1988.

Grant was also paid to companies on Merseyside under the original regional development grants scheme which closed in November 1984. Information about that scheme was never recorded on a computerised data base and therefore unless the information has already been published it is available only at disproportionate cost. Published information on the scheme included a regional analysis which showed inter alia the amount of grant paid to companies in the north-west of England. For comparison purposes grant paid to those companies with projects in the north-west from 1977-78 was:

Year	*£ million*
1977-78	49·8
1978-79	64·3
1979-80	58·7
1980-81	105·7
1981-82	143·4
1982-83	97·3
1983-84	83·0
1984-85	79·9
1985-86	56·5
1986-87	82·9
1987-88	22·6
1988-89	4·9
1989-90	1·7
1990-91	1·2

Services are defined as divisions 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the standard industrial classification revised 1980.

Figures include expenditure on regional selective assistance; office and service industries scheme which closed to new applications in November 1984; the revised regional development grants scheme and regional enterprise grants.

Manufacturing Costs

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the percentage increase in manufacturing costs in each of the years 1978 to 1991 inclusive.

Mr. Leigh: Changes in wages and salaries per unit of output in manufacturing, and in the costs of materials and fuel purchased by manufacturing industry, are shown in the table.

Changes from previous year

	Manufacturing wages and salaries per unit of output Per cent.	*Materials and fuel purchased by manufacturing industry Per cent.*
1978	13·4	3·5
1979	15·3	13·1
1980	22·3	8·5
1981	9·2	9·2
1982	4·3	7·3
1983	0·4	6·9
1984	3·1	8·2
1985	5·8	1·1
1986	4·0	−7·6
1987	1·8	3·1
1988	2·5	3·3
1989	4·6	5·7
1990	8·8	−0·2
1991	8·2	−1·2

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether his Department was represented at the conference on degreasing substances that deplete the ozone layer, held on 15 October 1991 in Birmingham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: No, but a representative of the Department of the Environment, with whom my Department works closely on ozone depleting substances, did attend.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the United Kingdom consumption and production figures for hydrochlorafluorocarbons for each year from 1986 to 1991.

Mr. Leigh: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the regulatory measures that exist to prohibit the advertising, sale and export of ozone depleting substances; and whether he has any plans to strengthen or introduce such measures.

Mr. Leigh: There are no regulatory measures to prohibit the advertising of ozone depleting substances. The production, consumption and export to non-parties of these substances is regulated by the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer and, in the European Community, by EC regulation 594/91.

The Montreal protocol is due to be reviewed in November 1992 and it is likely that dates for phase out of these substances will be brought forward.

Aircraft Building, South Korea

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether his Department has been involved in discussions with British Aerospace and South Korea, to allow South Korea to build Hawk fighter/trainer aircraft, or any other aircraft, under licence in South Korea.

Mr. Leigh: My Department has not been involved in discussions with British Aerospace and South Korea on the building of any aircraft under licence in South Korea.

Expenditure, London

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the budget and forecast actual expenditure for 1991-92 and 1992-93 of *(a)* his Department's London region office and *(b)* the London city action team.

Mr. Leigh: *(a)* For the south-east regional office of the Department of Trade and Industry, which is the London region office, the estimated expenditure for the running costs for 1991-92 is £3·1 million compared with a budget of £3·3 million. For 1992-93 the budgeted expenditure for running costs is £3·6 million.

(b) The running costs of the London city action team together with the special budget for projects are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Rover Group

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action the Government will take in the light of the European Commission's announcement that it is initiating new proceedings against the United Kingdom to secure the repayment of £44·4 million of aid in connection with the sale of Rover Group to British Aerospace.

Mr. Lilley: The European Commission has formally notified the United Kingdom that it is initiating the procedure in article 93(2) of the treaty in respect of the repayment of £44·4 million of state aid provided as part of the sale of the Rover Group. This follows the recent judgement of the European Court of Justice annulling an earlier Commission decision of 17 July 1990 requiring the Government to recover this sum from British Aerospace and Rover. I can confirm that the Government will abide by and implement a new Commission decision resulting from the new procedure, in accordance with our Community obligations.

WALES

Heartbeat Wales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *34*, if he will give the names of the evaluation advisory group from within the United Kingdom with reference to Heartbeat Wales; and if he will publish their terms of reference.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Due to the complexities of analysing a community-based heart disease prevention programme, Heartbeat Wales, when established in 1985 sought advice on the development of the evaluation strategy for the programme from a wide range of people including Professor Geoffrey Rose, Professor Andrew Henderson, Professor Michael Marmot, Dr. Tom Meade, Professor Michael Oliver, Dr. Edward Coles and Dr. George Davey-Smith. Since then, the evaluation strategy has been subject to scientific peer review by Professor David Murray and Professor Bosse Haglund. Advice has also been sought from the principal researchers of other community-based heart disease prevention programmes, such as Professors Henry Blackburn, John Farquhar and Craig Lefebvre.

Data from the programme are currently being independently analysed at the school of public health, university of Sydney and the school of psychology, university of Wales college, Cardiff. Papers from the programme are reviewed prior to publication by international experts such as Professor Leif Aaro and Cheryl Perry and Drs. Les Irwig and Bob Spassof, as well as by normal academic publishing procedures which includes peer review.

In 1987, the Heartbeat Wales programme was incorporated into the work of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales which also has a remit to develop initiatives in other areas such as cancer risk reduction and healthy sexuality. Within this broader remit, the authority identified a group of researchers known as the evaluation advisory group to support its research work. The remit of this group is

> "to act as a resource for the Authority, providing scientific and technical advice concerning its research and evaluation strategies and individual studies".

Advice and support is sought from individual experts as appropriate to need. These experts include Professor Ray Hodgson, Dr. Beverley Littlepage, Mr. Robert Anderson, Dr. Gerald Hastings, Professor Geoffrey Rose, Professor Don Nutbeam, Dr. Ceri Phillips, Dr. Chris Skinner, Mr. Trefor Williams, Beaufort Research Ltd and Research and Marketing Ltd. Many other experts have been consulted informally, including the World Health Organisation which has recently designated the Health Promotion Authority for Wales, together with the university of Wales college of medicine institute for health promotion, as a joint collaborating centre, the only one of its kind in the United Kingdom and Europe.

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what contribution is being made by his Department to the United Kingdom policy proposals to be put forward to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is directly involved in the consideration of United Kingdom policy proposals to be put forward at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in June. Welsh Office officials are also being consulted on, and are making an appropriate contribution to, the Government's preparations for the conference.

Welsh Language Examinations

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show the number of students who passed Welsh language at *(a)* O-level or GCSE and *(b)* A-level in 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The numbers of students who achieved grade A to G at GCSE or grades A to E at A-level in the Welsh language in 1989, 1990 and 1991 are shown in the table[1]:

	1989	*1990*	*1991*
GCSE	8,673	8,337	8,740
A-level	541	638	733

[1] Centres in Wales.

Source: Welsh Joint Education Committee.

Planning Inspectorate Agency

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made in establishing a joint planning inspectorate agency for England and Wales under the "next steps" initiative.

Mr. David Hunt: I am pleased to say that the planning inspectorate will be launched as an executive agency in the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office on 1 April 1992. The agency will have a distinct Welsh team to deal with planning inspectorate work in Wales.

A framework document setting out the organisational, financial and management structure of the agency will be published on 1 April. The Welsh Office will pay for the service provided by the agency in Wales.

Key objectives for the agency will be to preserve the impartiality and quality of the inspectors' work while seeking to improve efficiency. A range of performance targets which will measure the efficiency and value-for-money of the service in Wales will be set out in the business plan for 1992-93.

The agency's key performance targets in Wales will be:

Timeliness

Eighty per cent. of planning appeals by written representation to be decided within 19 weeks and to provide an inspector for local plan inquiries on request within six months of the end of the objection period;

Volume

To determine 1,340 planning and enforcement appeals subject to intake not declining;

In addition the activities of the inspectorate in Wales will contribute to the achievement of the following joint England and Wales targets:

Financial

Unit costs (average) of these appeals not to exceed £706 per case;

Efficiency

Generate a 2 per cent. efficiency improvement in the use of gross running costs compared with 1991-92;

Quality

High Court appeals and/or other justified complaints allowed against Inspectors' decisions not to exceed 1 per cent. of intake;

Information and guidance

To complete a customer survey by 31 December 1992.

Separate timeliness and volume targets for the agency's work in England are being announced today by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning.

Land Drainage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *534*, what consultations he has had with the Cardiff Bay development corporation on feasibility studies into the remedial land drainage measures required in residential areas affected by the proposed Cardiff Bay barrage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I do not expect my personal involvement in the technical issue of remedial drainage measures to extend beyond my acceptance in principle of the concept. The development corporation is pursuing this matter with its consultants and will keep my officials informed of developments.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Cardiff Bay development corporation concerning the feasibility study being undertaken into de-watering wells as a remedial measure against groundwater rise in the areas affected by the proposed Cardiff Bay barrage; when he expects to receive a copy of the initial study report; when he expects the terms of reference for the full-scale study to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My officials have discussed the terms of reference for the feasibility study with officers of the development corporation. I understand that initial computer modelling has been carried out, which will inform the further feasibility work now in hand. The report of the feasibility study is expected next month. Whether further work will be carried out depends on consideration of that report.

Hackney Carriage Licences

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on *(a)* the number of hackney carriage licences issued by each district council, *(b)* the ratio per head of population in each and *(c)* the charge made by each district for the licence and associated annual charges.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not collected centrally.

Wentloog Wading Birds

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Countryside Council for Wales, the Cardiff Bay development corporation and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds regarding the search for an alternative site to the proposed Wentloog wading birds feeding lagoon.

Mr. David Hunt: My officials have held meetings with officers of the Countryside Council for Wales, Cardiff Bay development corporation and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to discuss mitigation measures for the birds which will be displaced from Cardiff bay by the construction of the barrage. These discussions are continuing.

Council Tax

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish his estimate of the total number of discounts for *(a)* single person households and *(b)* other eligible groups he expects to be available under his council tax proposals.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: It will be for billing authorities to decide which households qualify for discounts under the council tax. The Welsh intercensal survey estimated that in 1986 there were about 256,000 single-adult households in Wales. The other information requested by the hon. Gentleman could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the numbers of single people with incomes of over £40,000 per annum who will qualify for a 25 per cent. discount under his council tax proposals.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I have made no estimate of the number of single people with income over £40,000 per annum who will qualify for a 25 per cent. discount under the council tax.

Ambulance Authorities

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each year since 1987 and for each ambulance authority the number of complaints lodged.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not held centrally.

Waiting List Initiative

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent financial provision he has made for the expenditure of waiting list initiative money on long waiting-list elective surgery cases at the Prince of Wales orthopaedic hospital, Rhydlafar near Cardiff; what arrangements he has made with the South Glamorgan health authority; and what the comparable follow-on arrangements will be for the same category of cases after 1 April.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The total level of funding made available in 1991-92 for the treatment centre at the Prince of Wales hospital, Rhydlafar is £654,777. This will enable a total of 250 operations to be performed. Under the waiting times initiative a further 40 operations have been funded at a cost of £64,000. The treatment centres will continue to be centrally funded in 1992-93 and district health authorities will shortly be informed of the arrangements.

Signposts

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he intends to erect signposts, indicating the way to the Pembrokeshire national park, on the western end of the M4, in line with similar signposting for English National Parks.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Pembrokeshire Coast national park covers several geographical areas. This presents problems as to where drivers should be directed after leaving the M4.

Watershed Training Centre

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *536*, what proposals he has for the allocation of expenditure on the Cardiff Bay development corporation watershed training centre in 1992-93; when he expects further details of his 1992-93 spending proposals to be agreed with the training and enterprise councils; and when he expects to lay such details before the House.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department has no plans for direct expenditure on the proposed Watershed project. Details of the training and enterprise councils 1992-93 spending proposals are in the final states of preparation and my officials anticipate allocating funds shortly. Details of provision for training programmes for 1992-93 have been presented to Parliament in the Welsh Office departmental report, Cm 1916.

Children's ENT Hospital, Cardiff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the South Glamorgan health authority regarding the alteration of the date of closure of the children's ear, nose and throat hospital, Cowbridge road west, Ely, Cardiff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: None.

Emergency Calls (Wales)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give, for 1987 and 1991, and for each ambulance service in Wales, the percentage of emergency calls responded to within *(a)* seven to eight minutes and *(b)* 14 to20 minutes.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The available information is shown in the table:

	1987-88[1] *per cent. response time within*		*1990-91* *per cent. response time within*	
	0-8 minutes	*0-20 minutes*	*0-8 minutes*	*0-20 minutes*
Clwyd	62	99	59	96
East Dyfed	54	91	54	92
Gwent	61	98	50	100
Gwynedd	54	95	54	94
Mid Glamorgan	48	98	47	82
Pembrokeshire	33	68	37	92
Powys	46	86	44	82
South Glamorgan	66	99	56	95
West Glamorgan	55	94	64	97
Wales	83	99	83	97

[1] Data not available prior to 1987-88.

Higher Education Funding Council

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce the membership of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The following have accepted invitations to become members of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

Professor Sir John Cadogan CBE FRS
Mr. Alan Cox CBE
Professor Sir Sam Edwards FRS
Mr. Michael Griffith CBE
Professor Richard Griffiths
Sir Philip Jones CB
Dr. Alfred Morris
Dr. Brynley Roberts
Dr. Ann Robinson

I expect that the appointments will be for three years from the date on which the council is established.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Malawi

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what ways Her Majesty's Government's policy of linking aid and good government has been applied to Malawi.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Lady to the answers to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr.

Kirkwood), on 14 February 1992, at column *649*; and on 2 March 1992, to my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), at column *2*.

As my right hon. and noble Friend, the Earl of Caithness said in another place on 20 November 1991, we have already cut our programme aid to Malawi from £10 million to £5 million because of lack of progress on human rights and good government. The Malawi Government are aware that we will place increasing emphasis on adherence to these principles in determining future aid levels.

Angola

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom aid and assistance for the Angolan peace process.

Mrs. Chalker: Following a troika visit by EC Development Ministers to Angola in February, the European Commission is preparing an assistance plan for consideration by Community representatives later this month. We shall be contributing our normal share of the cost of Community aid to be provided under the plan. Bilaterally, we have provided food and other assistance for soldiers awaiting demobilisation; we are assisting, through British non-governmental organisations, with resettlement and agricultural rehabilitation; and we expect to provide financial and technical assistance for the planned election process. Under military assistance arrangements, Britain is also helping with the formation of a new integrated army.

Food Aid

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much has been contributed by the United Kingdom towards the European Community's programme of food aid credit and food aid grants; how much the EC programme is in total; how much has so far been spent; and what representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the European Commission to prevent delays in allocating money to British companies willing to assist the former Soviet Union.

Mrs. Chalker: The Community programme for the former Soviet Union comprises:

(a) Technical assistance of 400 million ecu (£280 million) in 1991 which has been fully committed, and 450 million ecu (£315 million) in 1992 which is so far unallocated.

(b) Food grants of 450 million ecu (£315 million), which is mostly distributed.

(c) Loans and credits totalling 1·75 billion ecu (£1·225 billion), the first tranche of which is about to be distributed.

The United Kingdom's share of the aid and grants is some 18 per cent. The loans have made no charge on the EC budget. The United Kingdom has repeatedly pressed for both humanitarian food aid and technical assistance for the former Soviet Union to be released rapidly once a clear need has been established, and for companies in the United Kingdom to play a full role in these programmes.

Aid and Trade Provisions

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 27 November, *Official Report*, column *553*, what further measures he proposes to take to promote the use of United Kingdom companies under the aid and trade provisions.

Mrs. Chalker: The aid and trade provision is currently the subject of an interdepartmental policy review.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Eritrea

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in Eritrea and the extent to which it is practicable for child refugees from that territory to be reunited with their families in safety.

Mrs. Chalker: Eritrea has enjoyed a very large measure of peace and stability since the collapse of the Mengistu regime in May 1991. The economy continues to suffer from drought and the consequences of the civil war, but I am not aware of any general factors which now need prevent Eritrean children refugees wishing to return, from being reunited with their families in safety. Cases of Eritrean children who have sought asylum in the United Kingdom will continue to be assessed on their individual merits.

Angola

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in Angola and the extent to which it is practicable for child refugees from that country to be reunited with their families in safety.

Mrs. Chalker: Peace offers the potential for recovery in Angola and should be cemented by free and fair elections in September this year. But though the fighting has stopped there remains a serious law and order problem, the criminal activity plus the danger from unexploded mines still hamper the return home of people displaced by the war. The return of such people, especially children separated from their families, plus troop demobilisation are the highest priorities for international aid. We very much admire the excellent work of non-governmental organisations, such as Save the Children Fund which has a successful and expanding programme of child tracing in Angola. The European Community has just committed a substantial sum for assistance in these areas.

Ethiopia

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in Ethiopia and the extent to which it is practicable for child refugees from that country to be reunited with their families in safety.

Mrs. Chalker: Since the end of the civil war and the collapse of the Mengistu regime in May 1991, Ethiopia has enjoyed relative peace and stability. There is still some insecurity in the east of the country, but I am not aware of any special factors which need prevent Ethiopian child refugees wishing to return, from being reunited with their families in safety. Cases of the Ethiopian children who have sought asylum in the United Kingdom will continue to be assessed on their individual merits.

Uganda

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in Uganda and the extent to which it is practicable for child refugees from that country to be reunited with their families in safety.

Mrs. Chalker: Since President Museveni came to power in 1986, the security and economic situation has improved considerably in Uganda. Peace and stability prevail in most regions of the country, although there are still isolated pockets of rebel activity in parts of the north and north-east.

Cases of Ugandan children who have sought asylum in the United Kingdom will continue to be assessed on their individual merits, but I am not aware of any general factors which need prevent Ugandan child refugees from returning to that country to be reunited with their families in safety.

European Union

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the articles in the draft treaty on European union which affect the prerogatives of the Crown of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The prerogatives of the Crown will remain unaffected by the treaty on European union.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the earliest and latest dates respectively when he expects the treaty on European union to be published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office; and what arrangements he has made for members of the public to obtain, or to peruse, copies before those dates.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The treaty on European union will be published as a Command Paper as soon as it is possible to do so, and in any case before any legislation is put before the House. We expect it to be ready by the end of April. Members of the public will be able to obtain copies through Her Majesty's Stationery Office. In the meantime, copies have been made available to Parliament and may be obtained by members of the public on request.

Guyana

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what actions are being taken to ensure that free and fair elections are held in Guyana; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Guyanese Government have introduced electoral reforms and invited a team of international observers. We take every opportunity to impress upon Guyanese Ministers the importance that Her Majesty's Government attach to the holding of free and fair elections in Guyana as soon as possible.

Western Sahara

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to ensure that the United Nations sponsored referendum on the future of the western Sahara takes place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We remain concerned that a UN supervised referendum should be held soon and are encouraging the secretary-general in his efforts towards that goal. We have also made our views clear to the parties to the dispute.

Albania

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the holdings in the United Kingdom of gold owned by the current or former Albanian Governments so far as the affect United Kingdom-Albanian relations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There is gold bullion and coin in the account at the Bank of England of the tripartite commission for the restitution of monetary gold. Some of this gold has been earmarked for eventual delivery to Albania.

El Salvador

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what role is being played by representatives of Her Majesty's Government in the monitoring of the El Salvador ceasefire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Our ambassador in San Salvador is closely following developments in the peace process there, and is in regular contact with the chief of mission of ONUSAL, the body established by the United Nations to monitor all the elements of the peace agreement including the ceasefire.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current position in respect of the quota arrangements for the import of wine from the six republics which formerly constituted Yugoslavia; if he will seek a review of these arrangements within the European Community in order to ensure an even-handed approach as between these republics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: As part of the European Community's positive measures programme for those republics considered to be co-operating with the peace process, the European Community has restored to Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro the quota arrangements which previously applied to Yugoslavia as a whole. The republics share a quota of 545,000 hectolitres. The extension of these privileges to Serbia or a review of these arrangements depends on Serbia's attitude to the peace process.

HEALTH

General Practitioners (Budgets)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated over or undershoot in cash and percentage terms of general practitioner indicative prescription budgets nationally and in each FHSA area.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Copies of the Prescription Pricing Authority's breakdown of the total basic price of drugs and appliances prescribed by general practitioners in England and in each family health services authority showing monthly spend to January 1992; cumulative spend; projected annual outturn and percentage projected over/underspend, have been placed in the Library.

Eye Tests

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department has been taking to monitor the pattern of referrals by general practitioners to consult ophthalmologists since the introduction of eye test charges.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Patients are referred for out-patient consultation, usually in a consultant clinic. The majority of referrals are made by GPs, although the referrals may be made by others, including self-referral by the patient. The information collected centrally on referrals is given in the table.

Consultant ophthalmology clinics
National health service hospitals
England

Year	*Number of referrals seen*	*Did not attend*	*Total*
1987-88	588,973	76,286	665,259
1988-89	574,532	82,822	657,354
1989-90	579,693	83,948	663,641
1990-91	599,520	82,626	682,146

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department has commissioned into the long-term effects of charges for eye tests.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Questions on sight tests have appeared in the general household survey in 1987 and in each year since 1990. In addition, figures on referrals to the hospital eye service are collected on a regular basis. These show that referrals rose by 3·6 per cent. in 1988-89, fell slightly by 1 per cent. in 1989-90 and rose again by 3·3 per cent. in 1990-91.

Blood Cholesterol Testing

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to be in a position to respond to the report of the standing medical advisory committee on blood cholesterol testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The report of the Standing Medical Advisory Committee on blood cholesterol testing raised many complex issues and we decided that it should go out for public consultation. A large number of comments were received. The subject of cholesterol levels is also part of the wider issue of limiting the levels of coronary heart disease. This was one of the areas of health highlighted in the "Health of the Nation" Green Paper issued last June, on which more than 2,000 responses were received and are now being studied. A high proportion of these included comments on coronary heart disease in general and the relevance of cholesterol. In the light of these two consultation exercises, and continuing medical debate relating to cholesterol, the Government will publish their conclusions as soon as possible.

Opticians (Referrals)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of patients who were referred to doctors by opticians for each year since 1981.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Barking, Havering and Brentwood Health Authority

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 28 November 1991, *Official Report,* column *591*, whether he can now give the total expenditure by the Barking, Havering and Brentwood health authority in the year 1990-91; and what estimate he has made of total expenditure in the year 1991-92.

Mr. Dorrell: Total expenditure attributable to the area covered by Barking, Havering and Brentwood health authority amounted to £148·2 million, cash, in 1990-91. This figure represents a cash increase of 9·8 per cent. on 1989-90.

The information for 1990-91 is derived from annual accounts on the same basis. Expenditure information from the 1991-92 accounts should be available in the autumn.

Non-cosmetic Surgery

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will indicate, for non-cosmetic surgery undertaken at Sheffield hospitals from outside the Sheffield health authority boundary within the Trent region *(a)* how many operations have been performed, *(b)* how many operations are planned, *(c)* the average waiting time for such operations and *(d)* how much money has been spent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. J. Neill, chairman of Sheffield health authority, for details.

Skin Cancers and Cataracts

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the current cost of treating a patient with *(a)* non-melanoma skin cancer and *(b)* an eye cataract.

Mr. Dorrell: Based on hospital in-patient average lengths of stay, the estimated costs are:

	Cost per case (1990-91 prices) £
Non-melanoma skin cancer	1,200
Cataract	1,200

Health Staff, Wiltshire

Sir Charles Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors, dentists and nurses there were in Wiltshire in 1979; and how many there were in 1991.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information required is not collected by county boundaries. The earliest and latest available information in respect of Wiltshire family health services authority is given in the tables.

General Medical Practitioners
(Unrestricted Principals)

1 October 1979—224
1 October 1990—288

Dentists
(includes Principal Assistants and Vocational Trainees)

1 September 1979—117
1 September 1991—158

Practice Nurses

1 October 1988—48·6[1]
1 October 1990—101·9[1]

[1] Whole time equivalents

Private Health Care

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to reply to the letter of 18 February from the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby on the subject of Norwich Union health care.

Mr. Dorrell: A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 9 March.

Organ Transplants

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give details of the number of people currently awaiting for organ transplants in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and in each of the health regions in England; and if he will state the number of successful transplants carried out in those regions during 1991.

Mr. Dorrell: Information on the place of residence of patients awaiting transplants is not collated centrally. The table gives, by United Kingdom territory and English region, the numbers of people registered for transplantation according to the location of the unit with which they are registered and the numbers of transplants performed according to the location of the unit.

	People waiting [As at 28 February 1992 by location of unit where registered]	*Organs transplanted[1] [During 1991 by location of transplant unit]*
Scotland	473	130
Northern ireland	76	47
Wales	113	65
England—Regions		
Northern	317	199
Yorkshire	244	126
Trent	366	121
East Anglian	238	223
North West Thames	586	238
North East Thames	537	176
South East + South West Thames	407	387
Wessex	111	83
Oxford	100	83
South Western	230	90
West Midlands	415	274
Mersey	135	70
North Western	415	140
TOTALS	4,763	2,452

Based on information supplied by the United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority.

[1] Provisional figures for transplants from cadaveric donors.

Whittington Hospital, Islington

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has received for a trust hospital at the Whittington in Islington; when he expects to consider them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has approved the Whittington hospital's expression of interest in becoming an NHS trust, operational from 1 April 1993. A draft application is expected by the end of March and, in line with other applicants, the Whittington hospital will submit its final application by the end of April. All applications for NHS trust status are subject to a statutory public consultation period.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the annual consumption of CFCs used for essential medical purposes; if he will detail these individually; and if he will make a statement about how many of these uses could be replaced by non-ozone destroying products.

Mr. Dorrell: The figures of anual CFC consumption for essential medical purposes are not held centrally, but are believed to be a small proportion of total CFC consumption.

The three main volatile anaesthetic agents for major surgery are CFCs, for which no acceptable alternatives are available. However alternatives are increasingly used for some day surgery procedures. The other essential medical use of CFCs is as propellants for certain pharmaceutical aerosols where measured dosage is an essential requirement. Pharmaceutical use of CFC propellants only accounts for ½ per cent. of all CFC aerosol use. The Department is supporting industry's efforts to find suitable alternatives which do not have adverse effects on drug stability, clinical efficacy, measured dose control and have acceptable overall development costs relative to use.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for the years 1987 to the latest available year and for each ambulance authority in England, the number of complaints lodged with each authority.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not collected centrally.

Meningitis

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will tabulate the number of incidents and fatalities for each type of meningitis *(a)* per district health authority and *(b)* per regional health authority, for each of the last 10 years, or the most convenient period.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 9 March 1992]:* The information is not available in the form requested. Cases of infectious diseases are notified by the doctor in attendance to the proper officer for each local authority area. Notifications of meningitis are therefore not generally available at the district health authority level. However, the number of cases notified for each type of meningitis at regional health authority level for the years 1981 to 1990, is shown in the tables. The data for 1991 are not yet available.

The information in respect of fatalities could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Irregular and unexplained upsurges of meningitis, particularly of meningococcal infection, occur in the United Kingdom. The location of outbreaks cannot be predicted, although it is known that most cases occur in the winter months.

A vaccine—"Hib"—against invasive haemophilus disease, one of the major causes of bacterial meningitis, is to be added to the United Kingdom infant immunisation schedule from next October. This should help to reduce considerably the overall total reports of deaths and illness from meningitis.

Notifications of meningitis by Regional Health Authority 1981

Regional Health Authority	*Meningitis meningococcal*	*Meningitis pneumococcal*	*Meningitis influenzal*	*Meningitis viral*	*Meningitis other specified*	*Meningitis unspecified*	*Meningitis all forms*
Northern	25	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	12	13	50
Yorkshire	43	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	32	107	182
Trent	27	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	35	58	120
East Anglian	14	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	7	7	28
North West Thames	33	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	28	22	83
North East Thames	35	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	48	21	104
South East Thames	34	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	74	39	147
South West Thames	18	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	65	17	100
Wessex	38	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	18	11	67
Oxford	16	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	20	5	41
South Western	26	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	20	5	51
West Midlands	37	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	33	35	105
Mersey	24	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	55	12	91
North Western	53	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	60	27	140
Wales	41	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	28	15	84

Notification of meningitis by Regional Health Authority 1982

Regional Health Authority	*Meningitis meningococcal*	*Meningitis pneumococcal*	*Meningitis influenzal*	*Meningitis viral*	*Meningitis other specified*	*Meningitis unspecified*	*Meningitis all forms*
Northern	20	3	9	17	0	11	60
Yorkshire	39	6	19	72	13	24	173
Trent	26	8	15	11	27	17	104
East Anglian	14	4	5	14	4	3	44
North West Thames	22	4	8	13	10	14	71
North East Thames	35	8	11	13	11	12	90
South East Thames	49	12	19	26	11	9	126
South West Thames	11	5	11	17	3	5	52
Wessex	25	3	10	4	6	4	52
Oxford	16	2	5	8	2	1	34
South Western	22	4	6	7	2	8	49
West Midlands	30	8	16	31	9	7	101
Mersey	30	4	13	36	10	10	103
North Western	48	10	18	42	6	14	138
Wales	23	6	12	10	17	6	74

Notification of meningitis by Regional Health Authority 1983

Regional Health Authority	*Meningitis meningococcal*	*Meningitis pneumococcal*	*Meningitis influenzal*	*Meningitis viral*	*Meningitis other specified*	*Meningitis unspecified*	*Meningitis all forms*
Northern	11	7	11	12	7	5	53
Yorkshire	37	4	27	91	17	20	186
Trent	41	4	15	5	9	17	91
East Anglian	11	4	4	6	1	2	28
North West Thames	28	3	8	17	16	11	83
North East Thames	26	8	7	12	3	7	63
South East Thames	26	8	13	3	1	7	58
South West Thames	19	5	12	12	5	3	56
Wessex	29	3	10	4	3	7	56
Oxford	13	4	4	12	1	5	39
South Western	50	4	10	4	5	6	79
West Midlands	27	5	17	28	12	8	97

Regional Health Authority	*Meningitis meningococcal*	*Meningitis pneumococcal*	*Meningitis influenzal*	*Meningitis viral*	*Meningitis other specified*	*Meningitis unspecified*	*Meningitis all forms*
Mersey	46	7	8	34	10	5	110
North Western	32	4	18	63	7	32	156
Wales	32	4	19	5	9	2	71

Notifications of meningitis by Regional Health Authority 1984

Regional Health Authority	*Meningitis meningococcal*	*Meningitis pneumococcal*	*Menginitis influenzal*	*Menginitis viral*	*Meningitis other specified*	*Meningitis unspecified*	*Meningitis all forms*
Northern	17	9	4	6	3	5	44
Yorkshire	19	6	21	75	23	23	167
Trent	33	3	21	12	21	13	103
East Anglian	16	1	11	0	7	3	38
North West Thames	33	6	10	13	2	7	71
North East Thames	35	9	12	16	10	5	87
South East Thames	31	7	18	14	14	16	100
South West Thames	20	1	8	12	0	6	47
Wessex	17	2	12	8	4	3	46
Oxford	13	2	12	16	5	12	60
South Western	20	2	12	11	9	14	68
West Midlands	37	5	21	17	14	4	98
Mersey	43	7	19	21	11	14	115
North Western	33	11	23	13	11	17	108
Wales	34	7	13	10	7	7	78

Notifications of meningitis by Regional Health Authority 1985

Regional Health Authority	*Meningitis meningococcal*	*Meningitis pneumococcal*	*Meningitis influenzal*	*Meningitis viral*	*Meningitis other specified*	*Meningitis unspecified*	*Meningitis all forms*
Northern	20	6	6	5	9	10	56
Yorkshire	40	9	16	60	34	26	185
Trent	44	8	23	20	23	17	135
East Anglian	20	3	13	13	6	6	61
North West Thames	43	5	9	13	5	7	82
North East Thames	38	5	7	26	9	8	93
South East Thames	41	3	12	15	6	13	90
South West Thames	30	6	15	15	3	8	77
Wessex	32	6	13	9	5	5	70
Oxford	21	2	22	24	3	11	83
South Western	35	5	9	16	31	9	105
West Midlands	49	5	10	30	14	17	125
Mersey	41	5	12	33	10	10	111
North Western	56	7	28	31	22	30	174
Wales	39	7	11	13	6	8	84

Notification of meningitis by Regional Health Authority 1986

Regional Health Authority	*Meningitis meningococcal*	*Meningitis pneumococcal*	*Meningitis influenzal*	*Meningitis viral*	*Meningitis other specified*	*Meningitis unspecified*	*Meningitis all forms*
Northern	59	8	14	26	6	14	127
Yorkshire	95	15	19	113	46	28	316
Trent	69	13	22	17	26	23	170
East Anglian	15	5	9	13	4	3	49
North West Thames	43	6	19	20	6	15	109
North East Thames	47	10	11	15	8	8	99
South East Thames	56	4	16	23	11	13	123
South West Thames	40	5	13	31	8	6	103
Wessex	42	4	19	32	3	9	109
Oxford	18	5	17	17	9	9	75
South Western	67	6	12	26	16	11	138
West Midlands	93	29	25	32	16	42	237
Mersey	66	8	22	31	15	17	159
North Western	93	16	22	33	23	24	211
Wales	67	9	28	21	12	10	147

Notification of meningitis by Regional Health Authority 1987

Regional Health Authority	*Meningitis meningococcal*	*Meningitis pneumococcal*	*Meningitis influenzal*	*Meningitis viral*	*Meningitis other specified*	*Meningitis unspecified*	*Meningitis all forms*
Northern	71	6	19	30	9	18	153
Yorkshire	104	16	21	75	26	29	281
Trent	72	15	13	44	25	17	186
East Anglian	20	2	12	12	4	7	57
North West Thames	62	10	19	23	12	13	139
North East Thames	55	8	13	43	14	24	157
South East Thames	89	12	36	40	22	28	227
South West Thames	47	5	27	42	6	13	140
Wessex	62	9	21	11	15	7	125
Oxford	51	7	38	17	12	13	138
South Western	58	9	9	24	15	9	134
West Midlands	104	13	35	75	27	24	278
Mersey	95	11	18	23	10	9	166
North Western	119	7	34	25	14	24	223
Wales	71	6	29	9	13	10	138

Notification of meningitis by Regional Health Authority 1988

Regional Health Authority	*Meningitis meningococcal*	*Meningitis pneumococcal*	*Meningitis influenzal*	*Meningitis viral*	*Meningitis other specified*	*Meningitis unspecified*	*Meningitis all forms*
Northern	72	12	28	20	21	13	166
Yorkshire	103	11	40	59	49	27	289
Trent	111	30	27	90	24	26	308
East Anglian	31	4	11	7	6	8	67
North West Thames	82	15	32	29	8	8	174
North East Thames	71	11	22	25	6	20	155
South East Thames	109	14	31	46	18	24	242
South West Thames	55	12	25	29	7	14	142
Wessex	44	11	24	14	8	3	104
Oxford	44	13	34	21	12	11	135
South Western	87	15	28	34	33	11	208
West Midlands	160	18	32	37	27	33	307
Mersey	104	15	22	24	14	15	194
North Western	129	19	46	34	28	27	283
Wales	102	9	34	21	34	13	213

Notifications of meningitis by Regional Health Authority 1989

Regional Health Authority	*Meningitis meningococcal*	*Meningitis pneumococcal*	*Meningitis influenzal*	*Meningitis viral*	*Meningitis other specified*	*Meningitis unspecified*	*Meningitis all forms*
Northern	59	14	29	15	13	17	147
Yorkshire	67	13	20	56	48	31	235
Trent	105	11	44	54	20	26	260
East Anglian	18	2	17	7	4	13	61
North West Thames	81	9	27	19	13	10	159
North East Thames	65	8	21	10	18	22	144
South East Thames	105	17	38	22	11	29	222
South West Thames	38	5	21	19	12	14	109
Wessex	43	12	33	19	11	14	132
Oxford	57	7	27	20	7	14	132
South Western	79	11	45	40	32	13	220
West Midlands	130	25	57	48	21	30	311
Mersey	75	9	18	24	8	15	149
North Western	119	19	32	36	25	22	253
Wales	91	12	41	8	27	8	187

Notification of meningitis by Regional Health Authority 1990

Regional Health Authority	*Meningitis meningococcal*	*Meningitis pneumococcal*	*Meningitis influenzal*	*Meningitis viral*	*Meningitis other specified*	*Meningitis unspecified*	*Meningitis all forms*
Northern	76	10	23	13	9	15	146
Yorkshire	100	9	29	77	19	20	254
Trent	104	17	42	34	12	13	222
East Anglian	34	5	15	5	6	11	76
North West Thames	67	11	23	28	12	8	139
North East Thames	66	13	35	12	19	23	168
South East Thames	71	16	32	18	12	19	168
South West Thames	46	7	18	16	10	8	105

Regional Health Authority	Meningitis meningococcal	Meningitis pneumococcal	Meningitis influenzal	Meningitis viral	Meningitis other specified	Meningitis unspecified	Meningitis all forms
Wessex	49	5	24	8	10	11	107
Oxford	42	7	30	20	6	10	115
South Western	85	8	20	35	17	23	188
West Midlands	116	17	49	28	20	32	262
Mersey	78	7	22	28	13	14	162
North Western	133	11	36	21	22	34	257
Wales	71	13	33	20	40	26	203

Health Service, York

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many full-time equivalent national health service *(a)* ancillary staff, *(b)* professional and technical staff and *(c)* administrative and clerical staff were employed by York health authority, and previously in York health district, in 1974 and each year since then.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 11 March 1992]:* The available data are in the following table:

NHS directly employed staff by specific staff groups in post at 30 September each year
York district health authority—whole time equivalents

	Ancillary staff[1]	Professional and technical[2]	Administrative and clerical[3]
1982	980	300	420
1983	930	300	510
1984	870	330	530
1985	780	340	460
1986	660	360	470
1987	610	360	490
1988	560	370	500
1989	400	370	520
1990	380	390	550

Source: Department of Health (SM13) Annual Census of NHS Non-medical Manpower.

[1] All figures are rounded to the nearest ten whole-time equivalent.

[2] Includes Professions Allied to Medicine, and Scientific and Professional.

[3] Includes General Managers.

Information is not available prior to 1982.

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* registered private residential home beds and *(b)* part III home beds there were in (i) North Yorkshire and (ii) the York health authority area, and previously in York health district, in 1979 and each year since then.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 11 March 1992]:* The information is not available in the form requested.

The available information on the number of residential care places in registered private and voluntary homes, and local authority staffed homes in the North Yorkshire local authority and the York health authority area are set out in the table.

Number of residential care places in local authority staffed homes and private and voluntary homes in the North Yorkshire local authority and the York health district area 1981-1991

	Places in North Yorkshire			Places in the York health district area		
As at 31 March	Local authority staffed homes	Private homes	Voluntary homes	Local authority staffed homes	Private homes	Voluntary homes
1981	2,148	867	838	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1982	2,185	1,005	808	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1983	2,180	1,198	822	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1984	2,212	1,528	862	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1985	2,218	2,088	781	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1986	2,181	2,474	813	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1987	2,197	3,147	846	813	511	174
1988	2,163	3,555	865	785	640	184
1989	2,130	3,717	925	778	709	199
1990	2,079	3,757	880	755	806	198
1991	2,023	3,843	938	742	843	235

Bone Marrow Transplants

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether those waiting for bone marrow transplants are included within waiting lists of patients for national health service treatment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 11 March 1992]:* Yes. If there is no suitable related donor available, an unrelated donor has to be found before a patient can be treated, and this can delay treatment.

Northern Regional Health Authority

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many operations were carried out by the Northern regional health authority in 1979, 1987 and the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 5 March 1992]:* Operating theatre cases and sessions data have been collected annually since 1987-88 although the figures are not necessarily equivalent to the number of surgical operations carried out. Theatres are sometimes used for medical procedures requiring a sterile environment; some minor operations are performed outside a theatre.

Year	*Operating theatre activity figures* Cases	*Cases treated in surgical acute specialties, Northern Regional Health Authority* In-patients	Day cases
1979	—	[1]137,014	[1]29,718
1987-88	235,444	[1]175,281	[2]—
1988-89	243,403	[3]174,101	[3]51,996
1990-91	250,864	[3]183,851	[3]58,688

[1] Hospital discharges.

[2] The quality of 1987-88 figures for day cases was adversely affected by the introduction of new collection systems in the National Health Service.

[3] Finished consultant episodes.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Job Losses (East Antrim)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action is being taken to reverse continuing job losses in East Antrim and to create alternative employment in manufacturing industry for those who have lost their jobs as a result of factory closures.

Mr. Needham: The east Antrim area benefits from the wide range of measures currently undertaken by the Government to promote economic and industrial development throughout Northern Ireland. Following the closures of GEC Alsthom in Larne, the Industrial Development Board is continuing to search for a viable project which could utilise the site of the former GEC operation.

Youth Training

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many young people have been engaged in employer-based YTP courses in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: The number of trainees fluctuates during the year but the average number was as follows:

Financial year	*Average Occupancy*
1987-88	1,495
1988-89	1,949
1989-90	2,864
1990-91	3,170
[1]1991-92	3,473

[1] April to January.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many young people have been engaged in YTP courses in community-based workshops in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: The number of trainees fluctuates during the year but the average number engaged in the YT programmes in community-based workshops was:

	Average occupancy
1987-88	3,291
1988-89	3,039
1989-90	3,229
1990-91	3,746
[1]1991-92	4,427

[1] April to January.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many teachers have been employed by each of the education and library boards in YTP provision in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The numbers are as follows:

Academic Year

Education and Library Board	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Belfast	144	147	150	156	116
North-Eastern	97	100	100	100	61
South-Eastern	94	101	101	101	77
Western	75	79	79	80	52
Southern	76	79	78	78	50

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many young people are presently engaged on youth training courses in Northern Ireland; and how many have been engaged in such courses in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: The number of young people participating in the youth training programme at 31 January 1992 was 14,702. The numbers engaged in such courses in each of the last five years were as follows:

	Average occupancy
1987-88	8,778
1988-89	8,881
1989-90	9,818
1990-91	12,914
[1]1991-92	15,688

[1] April-January.

In addition, the average numbers in employment with training under the former YTP workscheme during each of the last five years were:

	Average occupancy
1987-88	2,841
1988-89	4,447
1989-90	2,411
1990-91	911
[1]1991-92	4

[1] April-January.

Social Security

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total spend on social security in 1979-80, 1983-84, 1987-88 and 1991-92 in current and real terms; and what percentage that is of total Government spending.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Social Security expenditure—£ million

Year	*Expenditure in current terms*	*Expenditure in real terms*	*Expenditure as percentage of total public spending*
1979-80	589·7	1,371·0	23·7
1983-84	1,084·1	1,733·0	28·8
1987-88	1,491·8	1,976·4	30·9
1991-92	2,099·0	2,099·0	32·6

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list, for each year since 1978-79 the total number of households claiming for social security benefit, excluding the national insurance retirement pension and child benefit.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the total administration costs as a percentage of benefit expenditure for social security for each year from 1978-79 to the latest year available.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows. Administration costs for the years 1978-79 and 1979-80 are not available. The figures for administration cost include the costs of services provided by other Departments.

Year	*Total benefit expenditure* *£ million*	*Total administration costs* *£ million*	*Administration costs as percentage of total benefit expenditure*
1980-81	674	46	6·8
1981-82	815	56	6·9
1982-83	938	61	6·5
1983-84	1,033	64	6·2
1984-85	1,128	69	6·1
1985-86	1,248	74	5·9
1986-87	1,354·5	81	6·0
1987-88	1,403·6	89	6·3
1988-89	1,465·6	87·5	6·0
1989-90	1,557·1	95·6	6·1
1990-91	1,704·9	106·5	6·3
1991-92	1,977·8	115·6	5·8

The figures for 1991-92 are estimates only.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of *(a)* claimants and *(b)* partners and dependent children on supplementary benefit or income support in each year from 1979 to the latest available date.

Mr. Hanley: The information is as follows:

	Number of Claimants	*Number of Dependent Partners*	*Number of Dependant Children*	*Total Number of Dependants*
1979	115,400	26,300	64,800	91,100
1980	129,000	32,400	80,300	112,700
1981	150,000	38,100	93,600	131,700
1982	164,900	44,900	109,900	154,800
1983	174,500	48,800	117,000	165,800
1984	18[illegible]800	49,100	116,300	165,400
[1]1985	184,200	—	—	—
1986	184,400	52,800	135,300	188,100
1987	190,800	51,800	134,000	185,800
1988	184,100	44,900	111,900	156,800
1989	183,400	42,400	121,900	164,300
1990	179,000	38,500	118,600	157,100

[1] The number of claimants based on 100 per cent. count of caseload at November 1985. Statistical information on dependants is not available for the 1985 year.

Source: annual statistical exercise—five per cent. sample of caseload.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his latest estimate of the average percentage rise in the number of claimants receiving the main social security benefits, or expected to claim, in the years 1978-79 to 1992-93.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Caseload*	*Percentage yearly rise*
1978-79	982,000	—
1979-80	974,000	−0·8
1980-81	1,011,900	+3·9
1981-82	1,054,200	+4·2
1982-83	1,019,300	−3·3
1983-84	1,290,200	+1·0
1984-85	1,311,200	+1·6
1985-86	1,316,000	+0·4
1986-87	1,323,300	+0·6
1987-88	1,342,200	+1·4
1988-89	1,305,500	−2·7
1989-90	1,299,600	−0·5
1990-91	1,308,700	+0·7
1991-92	1,431,300	+5·4
1992-93	1,509,600	+5·5

The average percentage yearly rise is +1·5 per cent.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list, for each year since 1978-79 the total amount spent on social security, excluding expenditure on the unemployed, at current prices and in 1991-92 prices, showing the real terms percentage increase or decrease.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested, which is available only for the years 1983-84 onwards, is as follows:

Expenditure on Social Security excluding the unemployed

Year	*Current prices £'000s*	*1991-92 prices £'000s*	*Percentage increase or decrease*
1983-84	835·2	1,335·1	
1984-85	945·3	1,439·1	+7·9
1985-86	1,027·2	1,482·1	+3·0
1986-87	1,108·2	1,548·1	+4·5
1987-88	1,198·2	1,587·4	+2·5
1988-89	1,255·7	1,552·1	−2·2
1989-90	1,393·4	1,617·4	+4·2
1990-91	1,536·4	1,643·9	+1·6

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total amount spent on social security, in current prices and at 1991-92 prices, for each year since 1978-79; and what was the percentage real-terms increase or decrease in each year.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Social Security Expenditure

Year	*Current prices £ million*	*1991-92 prices £ million*	*Percentage Real-terms Increase/ Decrease*
1978-79	497·0	1,348·2	
1979-80	589·7	1,371·0	1·7
1980-81	716·9	1,408·6	2·8
1981-82	865·0	1,549·9	10·0
1982-83	994·5	1,663·4	7·3
1983-84	1,084·1	1,733·0	4·2
1984-85	1,191·0	1,813·2	4·6
1985-86	1,298·7	1,873·8	3·3
1986-87	1,411·5	1,971·7	5·0
1987-88	1,491·8	1,976·4	0·2
1988-89	1,555·0	1,922·1	−2·8
1989-90	1,659·7	1,926·6	0·2
1990-91	1,814·1	1,941·1	0·8

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for the years 1979-80 and the latest year available, in cash terms and at 1991-92 prices, the social security spending on *(a)* elderly people, *(b)* sick and disabled people, *(c)* families, *(d)* unemployed people and *(e)* orphans and widows indicating the number of claimants in each category, and dependants in the household, and the percentage change in spending in real terms.

Mr. Hanley: The information available is as follows:

Social security spending in cash terms and at 1991-92 prices—£000

			Cash prices		
Year	*Elderly*	*Sick and disabled*	*Families*	*Unemployed*	*Widows and orphans*
1979-80	219,475	115,892	128,492	71,320	22,136
1990-91	578,000	374,000	338,000	251,000	31,000

1991-92 prices and percentage change in spending in real terms

Year	*Elderly*	*Sick and disabled*	*Families*	*Unemployed*	*Widows and orphans*
1979-80	595,386	314,389	335,009	193,475	60,050
1990-91	618,460	400,180	361,660	268,570	33,170
Change	+3·9	+27·3	+8·0	+38·8	−44·8

Mortgage Repossessions

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* families and *(b)* individuals accepted as homeless by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive became homeless as a result of mortgage repossessions; and what percentage of the total in each category and in total these figures represent.

Mr. Needham: I am advised by the chief executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that in the period April to December 1991, 122 families, including couples with no children, were accepted as homeless or threatened with homelessness because of mortgage difficulties. This represents 6 per cent. of all families accepted and four per cent. of all applicants accepted. In the same period eight single applicants were accepted as homeless or threatened with homelessness because of mortgage difficulties. This represents 1 per cent. of all single applicants accepted and 0·2 per cent. of all applicants accepted.

Noise

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when circular 10/73 "Planning and Noise" will be adopted in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland has drawn the advice contained in circular 10/73 to the attention of divisional planning officers in Northern Ireland and has issued guidance of its own to them on the question of noise as a planning consideration.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he proposes to implement in Northern Ireland, the Noise Insulation Regulations which apply in Great Britain.

Mr. Needham: It is planned to introduce noise insulation regulations relating to road schemes in Northern Ireland towards the end of this year.

Medical Cards

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the number of persons in Northern Ireland who still hold a medical card issued by the Northern Ireland general health services board and do not hold the more recent type of medical card issued.

Mr. Hanley: It is not possible to estimate accurately the number of people who still hold a medical card issued by the former Northern Ireland general health services board.

Airports Authority

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the present term of appointment of the chairman of the Northern Ireland airports authority ends; and when he will announce the name of the chairman for the next period of office.

Mr. Needham: The present term of appointment of the chairman of Northern Ireland Airports Limited expires on 30 June 1992. The name of a chairman for the next period of office will be announced at a suitable time before that date.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the status of the Maryfield secretariat of the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference during the present periods of inter-party talks in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: In my statement of 26 March 1991 I made it clear on behalf of the two Governments that, during the period when the Anglo-Irish conference would not be meeting, the secretariat at Maryfield would not be required to discharge its normal role of servicing such meetings, as provided for in article 3 of the agreement. Since the new talks are to be conducted on the basis of the terms of my 26 March 1991 statement, the same arrangement will apply again.

ENVIRONMENT

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number and location of sites of special scientific interest in the County of Durham.

Mr. Baldry: I am advised by English Nature that there are currently 76 sites of special scientific interest in Durham. I am writing to the hon. Member with the details.

Shops (Security)

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last consulted *(a)* the Civic Trust and *(b)* English Heritage on the best way to halt the spread of security shuttering in retail outlets.

Mr. Yeo: There have been no consultations with the Civic Trust or English Heritage on security measures to protect shops and no approaches from these bodies on this matter.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 10 March *Official Report,* column *443* to this question on the establishment of a working group on security in city shopping centres.

Public Buildings (Security)

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with architects and relevant experts on improving the design of public buildings following the recent terrorist attacks.

Mr. Yeo: Measures to improve the design of public buildings so as to reduce the risks of injury from terrorist attacks are kept under review by my Department in consultation with others. Architects and relevant experts are consulted as part of this ongoing review.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to encourage the fitting of laminated glass in public buildings to reduce injuries caused by flying glass in terrorist bombings.

Mr. Yeo: The use of laminated glass in public buildings is kept under review and general advice on this and other protective measures is issued from time to time. Individual advice is also available.

Terrorist Attacks

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken since January 1984 to eradicate the danger of flying glass injury as a result of terrorist attacks.

Mr. Yeo: Protection against the danger of flying glass injury is kept under review, together with assessments of the efficacy of the protective measures available. General guidance is issued from time to time. Individual advice is also provided.

City Challenge

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional cash resources he proposes to make available to those authorities successful in the second wave of city challenge applications; what percentage of those resources will be new cash; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: A total of £150 million per year, for up to five years from 1993-94, has been allocated to fund the 20 winning authorities' action plans in round two of city challenge. This is additional to the £82·5 million allocated to fund the 11 round one 'Pacemaker' city challenge action plans. Round one resources are being top-sliced from DOE funding regimes which currently spend in inner cities. It is expected that similar arrangements will apply for round two.

Debt Statistics

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give, for the City of Coventry, for each year since 1979, if available, or for the most convenient years *(a)* outstanding debt, *(b)* debt service charge, *(c)* debt repayment, *(d)* adult population, *(e)* debt per adult and *(f)* debt service charge per adult, in current and 1992 prices.

Mr. Key: The available information is given in the table. The figures for the outstanding loan debt are as at the end of each financial year, debt repayments are as made during the course of each financial year, population figures are mid-year estimates. Figures for earlier years are not available. Figures for outstanding debt at 31 March 1991 have been returned on an external debt basis, and are not comparable with previous years.

Coventry: Debt figures—at current prices

Year	*Outstanding debt £ million*	*Debt service charge £ million*	*Debt repayment £ million*	*Population 000s*	*Debt per capita £*	[1]*DS per capita £*
1990-91	342·181	25·764	12·915	231	1,481	112
1989-90	427·832	21·972	63·123	231	1,852	95
1988-89	487·659	21·882	7·080	231	2,111	95
1987-88	383·880	18·633	7·262	232	1,655	80
1986-87	294·779	16·804	n/a	234	1,260	72
1985-86	266·919	13·349	n/a	234	1,141	57
1984-85	243·990	11·855	n/a	235	1,038	50
1983-84	234·504	10·250	n/a	235	998	44

Coventry: Debt figures—at 1992 prices

Year	*Outstanding debt £ million*	*Debt service charge £ million*	*Debt repayment £ million*	*Population 000s*	*Debt per capita £*	*[1]DS per capita £*
1990-91	366·134	27·567	13·819	231	1,585	119
1989-90	496·621	25·505	73·272	231	2,150	110
1988-89	602·778	27·048	8·751	231	2,609	117
1987-88	508·576	24·686	9·621	232	2,192	106
1986-87	411·767	23·473	n/a	234	1,760	100
1985-86	385·113	19·260	n/a	234	1,646	82
1984-85	371·454	18·048	n/a	235	1,581	77
1983-84	374·876	16·386	n/a	235	1,595	70

[1] Debt Service Charge.

Coal Clough Farm

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to decide whether to call in the proposed wind farm development of Coal Clough farm, Cliviger; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend hopes to make a decision soon. When the decision is made, I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the proposed wind farm at Coal Clough farm, Cliviger; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend has received five representations direct from amenity groups and individuals against the latest proposal. Also, Burnley borough council has sent him copies of representations that it received following the public notice.

Private Rented Sector

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of housing was accounted for by the private rented sector for *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1990.

Mr. Yeo: Estimates of total stock by tenure are shown in table 9.3 of "Housing and Construction Statistics: Great Britain: 1980-1990". A copy is in the Library.

Humber Estuary

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will designate the Humber estuary as a special protection area.

Mr. Baldry: Consultations with Government Departments and land owners are continuing on those parts of the Humber estuary which have been proposed as a special protection area. A decision on designation will be made as soon as these are satisfactorily completed. The announcement yesterday of the designation of the Exe estuary, Lindisfarne and Old Hall marshes illustrates the Government's firm commitment to the designation of further special protection areas.

Wild Birds

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the nature of the last three communications received by him from the European Commission on the subject of special protection areas under the wild birds directive.

Mr. Baldry: The European Commission is in regular contact with officials over special protection areas under the EC birds directive. Such communications are confidential between Government and the Commission.

Travelling Showpeople

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what requirements his Department places on local authorities to assist travelling showpeople regarding winter quarters; how many local authorities provide sites; how many sites are known to be in dispute regarding planning permission; and what proposals he has to assist in the securing of suitable land for sites.

Mr. Yeo: My Department's circular 22/91—"Travelling Showpeople"—gives advice to local planning authorities about planning consideration relating to travelling showpeople. Information about sites is not held centrally.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what advice he gives to consumers on purchasing ozone-friendly fridges;

(2) what advice he makes available to consumers who wish to avoid purchasing products that contain, or have been manufactured, by using ozone-depleting chemicals.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) on 10 March 1992, *Official Report*, columns *450-51*.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to use his powers under part I, section 3 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to prohibit the production and release of ozone-depleting chemicals.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend does not intend to do so—the production and consumption of ozone-depleting substances is controlled by EC regulation 594/91, which is directly applicable in United Kingdom law.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount in tonnes of chlorofluorocarbons recycled in the United Kingdom in each year from 1985 to 1991 inclusive.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not available.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish annually the United Kingdom consumption and production of ozone-depleting chemicals.

Mr. Trippier: Figures for United Kingdom production of ozone-depleting substances are supplied to the Government on a confidential basis. Consumption figures are collected on a European Community basis and not broken down between member states. However, a 1990 Department of Trade and Industry study indicated that United Kingdom consumption fell by 50 per cent. between 1986 and 1989, a rate faster than that claimed by any other developed country.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining his policy on the production and emission of hydrochlorofluorocarbons.

Mr. Trippier: The Government have proposed a phase-out of hydrochlorofluorocarbons early next century, together with controls on the level of consumption and on applications in which these substances can be used. These proposals will be considered by the EC Environment Council on 23 March.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all essential uses of ozone-depleting chemicals that would be exempt from currently proposed EC legislation.

Mr. Trippier: Decisions on any essential use exemptions from the regulations controlling ozone-depleting substances will be made closer to the final phase-out dates. These will be taken at the European Community level, and no member state will be able to make unilateral decisions.

Council Tax

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the numbers of single people with incomes of over £50,000 per annum who will qualify for a 25 per cent. discount under his council tax proposals.

Mr. Portillo: I have no estimate of the numbers of single people with incomes of over £50,000 per annum who will qualify for a 25 per cent. discount when the council tax is introduced.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the size of the council tax bill on a property located in Westminster worth £1,000,000 in April 1991 with *(a)* two or more adults and *(b)* one adult.

Mr. Portillo: Illustrative council tax bills based on 1991-92 budgets were published and placed in the Library on 23 April 1991. I have made no subsequent estimates.

Air Pollution

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department will publish the results of the recent national nitrogen dioxide diffusion tube air pollution survey.

Mr. Trippier: I hope these will be available by the end of next month.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been his response to the complaint by Commissioner Ripa di Meana in the European Parliament of 27 November 1991 regarding the adequacy of the United Kingdom air pollution monitoring network.

Mr. Trippier: Signor Ripa di Meana's remarks related to the United Kingdom network for monitoring nitrogen dioxide for purposes of European Community directive 85/203/EEC. They were made in answer to a question in the European Parliament and were not addressed to the Government. The basis on which monitoring sites were selected for this purpose has been explained to the Commission in previous correspondence.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many times, and where, the EC directive limits for nitrogen dioxide have been breached since 1980.

Mr. Trippier: The EC directive on nitrogen dioxide has been breached once at the west London monitoring site in 1989, in exceptional circumstances which were not truly representative of local air quality.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the planned enhanced urban network will meet the regulations of the EC directive 85/203/EEC for monitoring nitrogen dioxide.

Mr. Trippier: In the Government's view the existing arrangements for monitoring nitrogen dioxide already comply with the requirements of the directive. The enhancement of the urban monitoring network will however usefully supplement the data currently available on concentrations of nitrogen dioxide and a range of other air pollutants.

Environment Agency

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make available a list of the responses to the recent consultation paper on the Government's proposals for an environment agency.

Mr. Trippier: A list of the responses received has been placed in the Library of the House. Copies of individual responses may be obtained through the Library of the Department. In addition, responses were submitted by six individuals and bodies on a confidential basis.

Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to bring into force the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: A commencement order has now been made, and regulations laid before the House, which enable the provisions of the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990 to be brought into force on 1 June 1992.

The Act paved the way for important new planning controls over the storage and use of hazardous substances. It requires consent to be obtained from local authorities for the presence of these materials in prescribed quantities. This will give authorities the opportunity to consider whether the storage or use of a significant quantity of a hazardous material is acceptable in a particular location. The regulations define the substances and amounts to be controlled and contain detailed procedures for obtaining consent and for enforcement. These regulations will be followed by an explanatory circular for local authorities and a guidance booklet for industry.

Planning Inspectorate

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made in establishing the planning inspectorate executive agency under the "next steps" initiative.

Sir George Young: The planning inspectorate will be launched as an executive agency on 1 April 1992. A framework document setting out the organisational, financial and management structure of the agency will be published at that time.

The key objectives for the agency will be to preserve the impartiality and quality of the inspector's work while seeking to improve efficiency. A board of visitors will be established to ensure that quality standards are maintained. In addition I have set the following key targets for the agency's work in England for 1992-93:

Timeliness: Eighty per cent. of planning appeals by written representation to be decided within 22 weeks and to provide an inspector for local plan inquiries on request within 26 weeks of the end of the objection period;

Financial: Unit costs (average) of these appeals not to exceed £706 per case;

Efficiency: Generate a 2 per cent. efficiency improvement in the use of gross running costs compared with 1991-92;

Quality: High Court appeals and/or other justified complaints allowed against Inspectors' decisions not to exceed 1 per cent. of intake;

Volume: To determine 24,600 planning and enforcement appeals subject to intake not declining;

Information and Guidance: To complete a customer survey by 31 December 1992.

These and other performance targets for the agency will be included in its business plan for 1992-93 which will be published shortly.

Separate targets for the agency's work in Wales are being announced today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to take his capping decisions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: On 26 November 1991 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, announced his proposed capping criteria for 1992-93. On 23 January 1992 he reaffirmed that he was minded to adopt those criteria, and they remain his firm intentions for criteria for 1992-93.

However, under the statute my right hon. Friend cannot take his decisions on the criteria to select authorities for capping, and the level of proposed caps for any authority designated, until he has considered authorities' budgets. Information on authorities' budgets must be submitted to the Secretary of State by 8 March in the case of precepting authorities and 18 March in the case of charging authorities.

My right hon. Friend intends to take his capping decisions as soon as is practicable and appropriate after the receipt of budget information. However, such decisions are of a kind which by convention Ministers do not take during an election campaign. My right hon. Friend therefore does not intend to consider these matters until the earliest practical opportunity after the election.

When he comes to take his decisions my right hon. Friend will have regard to all appropriate considerations including the budgets which authorities have set and his provisional criteria. In the light of information on the budgets he will decide on the principles for capping which he should adopt, on which his present intention is set out in the provisional criteria. On the basis of those principles he will designate authorities for capping. For each designated authority he will decide on a proposed cap. The proposed cap which he will set for any designated authority will represent my right hon. Friend's view of the appropriate and achievable level for that authority's budget in the light of all its circumstances.

At that point each authority may accept either its proposed cap, and proceed with re-billing if that is necessary, or challenge the proposed cap seeking that the Secretary of State should vary his proposal as to the amount of the cap. Authorities have 28 days from designation in which to challenge their cap.

Outdoor Advertisements

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to issue the planning policy guidance on outdoor advertisement control, of which a consultative draft was circulated in July 1991.

Mr. Yeo: We are today publishing planning policy guidance note 19 about outdoor advertisement control in England and Wales. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

Derelict Land Grant

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total amount of derelict land grant made available by his Department in each of the last five years; and how many acres have been brought into use as a result for *(a)* housing, *(b)* industry, *(c)* recreation and *(d)* public buildings.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 11 March 1992]:* The information requested is as follows. Statistics are not held on land brought back into use for public buildings.

1. Derelict Land Grant paid 1986-87 to 1990-91.

	£ million
1986-87	68·359
1987-88	75·295
1988-89	67·126
1989-90	90·804
1990-91	71·300

2. Land reclaimed for housing, industry and sport and recreation 1986-87 to 1990-91 (acres)

	Residential	*Industry*	*Recreation/ Public Open Space*
1986-87	131	595	1,161
1987-88	124	615	1,635
1988-89	185	1,077	1,228
1989-90	104	842	1,252
1990-91	22	316	1,005

EMPLOYMENT

Disabled People (Employment Quotas)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table of the percentage of *(a)* private sector employers and *(b)* public sector employers satisfying their quota obligations under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, in each of the last five years; and if he will also give the most recent available figures.

Mr. Jackson: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. However, tables showing the number and percentage of registered disabled people employed by a wide range of individual public sector employers are published in the *Employment Gazette*, copies of which are in the Library. The most recent complete published set of figures, is in the February 1991 gazette and relates to June 1990, A partial set of figures, relating to June 1991, is in the February 1992 gazette.

The percentage of registered disabled people employed, on average by employers whose individual figures are in the gazette, together with estimated comparisons for the private sector, for the years 1986 to 1990, are in the table. later comparable information is not yet available.

Percentage of registered disabled people employed

	1986 per cent.	*1987 per cent.*	*1988 per cent.*	*1989 per cent.*	*1990 per cent.*
Private sector (approximate figures)	1	1	1	0·9	0·9
Public sector (based on gazette figures)	0·8	0·8	0·8	0·8	0·8

Training Schemes

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of youth training leavers in the London borough of Newham were unemployed immediately after leaving in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jackson: Information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the unit price for youth training places in each training and enterprise council and local enterprise company.

Mr. Jackson: Unit prices per training week delivered and per national vocational qualification achieved in YT are agreed in contracts between the Departmental and individual TECs and are commercially confidential. Matters relating to LECs are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of employment training leavers in the London borough of Newham in each of the last five years were unemployed within three months of leaving; and what percentage obtained qualifications.

Mr. Jackson: Information is not available in the precise form requested.

Employment training started in September 1988 and national follow-up of leavers started in July 1989. Results are given for the East London TEC area which includes the London borough of Newham. Those show that for the period July 1989 to June 1990, 57 per cent. of leavers were unemployed three months after leaving and 14 per cent. of all leavers gained a qualification or a credit towards one. For the period April 1990 to March 1991, 67 per cent. were unemployed three months after leaving and 23 per cent. of all leavers gained a qualification or a credit towards one.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of youth training leavers obtained qualifications in the London borough of Newham in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jackson: Reliable information is not available in the form requested. The results available are for the East London area office which included the London borough of Newham. Information is available for the periods April 1986 to March 1990 and shows that the percentage of YT leavers gaining qualifications was as follows:

April 1989-March 1990	38 per cent.
April 1988-March 1989	39 per cent.
April 1987-March 1988	25 per cent.
April 1986-March 1987	11 per cent.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently in work; what were the figures 10 and 15 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The work force in employment in the United Kingdom stood at 24,835,000 in September 1976, at 24,198,000 in September 1981 and at 25,807,000 in September 1991. The number of people in work is now 442,000 higher than in June 1979.

Earnings

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much average male earnings have increased in real terms since 1979.

Mr. Forth: Information on average male earnings in April of 1979 and of each year up to 1991 is published in table 1 of part A of the new earnings survey report for the year concerned.

Information on the retail prices index, all items, to convert 1979 figures to 1991 prices is published in table 6.4 of the latest *Employment Gazette* for April 1991, and in table 26 of the annual supplement to "Economic Trends" for April of earlier years.

Copies of the publications are available in the Library.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the new financial incentives for TECs in relation to people with learning difficulties; and whether the same unit price has been given by the Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate to TECs for the achievement of wordpower and numberpower as for any level of national vocational qualification.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 2 December 1991, *Official Report*, column 26.

TECs contract individually for an agreed rate of output-related payment. TECs will receive multiples of the agreed rate for trainees achieving national vocational qualifications. In the case of wordpower at foundation, half the agreed rate of output-related payment is payable. An identical unit price is payable for achievement of foundation level numberpower. Where it is agreed that a trainee requires both wordpower and numberpower then the TEC will receive two payments of half the agreed rate of output-related payment. In addition, TECs will receive further output-related payment for any trainees who progress to achieve national vocational qualifications.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from TECs about the training of people with learning difficulties, with particular reference to special needs training being provided outwith the remit of TECs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I have received no such representations.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide details of Government financial support to each training and enterprise council during 1990-91 and 1991-92; identifying separately resources made available after the beginning of the financial year and funding for each of *(a)* adult training, *(b)* youth training, *(c)* enterprise, *(d)* local initiatives and *(e)* management; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: *[holding answer 11 March 1992]:* The total figure allocated by the Government to training and enterprise councils in 1990-91 was £1,571·91 million and in 1991-92 £1,838·66 million.

The breakdown of these figures requested in the question is available only at disproportionate cost.

Expenditure, London

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the budget and forecast actual expenditure for 1991-92 and 1992-93 of *(a)* his Department's London regional office and *(b)* the nine training and enterprise councils operating in London.

Mr. Jackson: The total budgetary allocation for the Department's Training Enterprise and Education Directorate's London region in 1991-92 was £167·263 million.

The budgets for the nine London TECs are shown in the table:

	£ million
AZTEC	10·742
CENTEC	11·951
CILNTEC	8·124
LETEC	27·618
NLTEC	9·690
NWLTEC	5·625
SOLOTEC	18·555
STTEC	20·510
WLTEC	8·945

Footnote:

The regional total figure includes expenditure by residual TEED area offices for those areas where TECs began operations during the financial year 1991-92, experience on technical vocational and education initiative, and regional office running costs.

Forecasts of outturn expenditure are produced for internal management purposes only. Budgets for 1992-93 are still subject to negotiation.

SCOTLAND

Fur Factory Farms

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many arctic fox factory farms are currently operating in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No official statistics are kept.

Upper Solway

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will designate the upper Solway as a special protection area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The designation of the upper Solway flats and marshes as a special protection area under EC directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds is under consideration.

House Repossessions

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the annual figures for house repossessions in Scotland since 1985 by region.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not available in the form requested. The Council of Mortgage Lenders publishes statistics in its regular newsletters on various aspects of mortgage lending but this is on a GB basis and no corresponding information is available for Scotland only.

However, the Scottish Office Environment Department has recently received figures specially collated by the Committee of Scottish Clearing Bankers from the Scottish branches of the four main banks in Scotland—Bank of Scotland, The Royal Bank of Scotland, Clydesdale Bank and TSB Bank Scotland. The figures as at 31 December 1991 were 0·77 per cent. of mortgages over six months in arrears and 0·13 per cent. of houses repossessed in the six months to 31 December. This compares with UK figures produced by the Council of Mortgage Lenders, which excludes the four Scottish banks, of 2·8 per cent. and 0·40 per cent. respectively.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate how much of the money recently allocated for a decommissioning scheme for the fishing industry will be spent in Scotland in the financial year 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The arrangement announced by my right hon. Friend on 27 February will now be the subject of consultation with the industry.

Crofters

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the Crofters Union; and if he will give details.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Although my right hon. Friend has not met representatives of the Scottish Crofters Union, my noble Friend the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries in Scotland and his predecessor have had meetings with them on a number of occasions to discuss various topics of interest to crofters. The most recent meeting with the director of the Scottish Crofters Union and the hon. Member for the Western Isles Mr. Macdonald took place on 21 November 1991 when assistance for crofter housing was discussed.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of representations he has received from *(a)* the Scottish National Farmers Union and *(b)* others in relation to the MacSharry proposals for the reform of the common agricultural policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Various representations from the Scottish NFU and others have been received. We have stated clearly our opposition to the discriminatory features of the Commission's proposals, and our aim to achieve a reform which encourages a more market-oriented CAP; which applies fairly across all the agricultural sectors; which maintains financial discipline; and which builds in environmental objectives for the countryside. Discussions on CAP reform are continuing in the Agriculture Council.

SSSIs (Advisory Committee)

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now announce the membership of the Advisory Committee on Sites of Special Scientific Interest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have appointed Professor F. T. Last, FRSE as chairman of the committee along with the following members:

Dr. J. Morton Boyd, CBE, DSc, FRSE
Professor J. M. M. Cunningham, FRSE
Professor David Ingram
Professor John A. Raven, FRSE, FRS
Professor William Ritchie, FRSE
Dr. Charles D. Waterston, FRSE

The establishment of this committee fulfils an important requirement of the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991. The committee will have a significant to play role in ensuring, by its advice to Scottish Natural Heritage, that the highest scientific standards are applied in the selection and consideration of sites of special scientific interest.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much he estimates will be raised from standard community charges on empty properties and second homes in Scotland in 1992-93.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 4 February 1992]:* Such estimates are calculated from returns made by local authorities. These have not yet been received for 1992-93.

Foresterhill Hospital

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland under what authority the Foresterhill hospital NHS trust may issue press releases under the name of Mr. Reid, public relations officer of Grampian health board, purporting to be on behalf of the trust, prior to 1 April.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 6 February 1992]:* Article 7 of the Foresterhill Hospitals National Health Service Trust (Establishment) Order 1991.

Data Information Systems

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what data information systems his Department has *(a)* agreed and *(b)* been consulted about with a view to taking part in; what are the criteria for inclusion in such systems; whether they will be linked to (i) the police national computer and (ii) other computer systems; what data protection provisions apply to them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 13 February 1992]:* The Scottish Office has 95 data information systems holding personal data and all are registered under the Data Protection Act 1984. The Department complies with the data protection principles in relation to this information which is required to carry out effectively the business of the Department.

None of these data information systems is linked to the police national computer nor directly to any other computer systems, with the exception of a link to the Government payroll centre at Chessington for staff payroll purposes.

Building Security

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what total central and local government assistance has been given to Govan Initiative for its secure communities project; and if he will break that figure down to show the expenditure on business premises and housing respectively.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 10 March 1992]:* Total support through the urban programme for the secure communities project has been set at £910,000, 75 per cent. of which is met by the Scottish Office and 25 per cent. by Strathclyde regional council and Glasgow district council.

No breakdown of this figure on the basis requested is available, but I understand that, to date, £172,000 and £117,000 have been spent on housing and business premises, respectively.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is able to offer Govan Initiative additional financial assistance towards creating secure entry systems in high-rise flats.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 10 March 1992]:* Funding of secure entry systems in high flat housing is included in the secure communities project, which is funded under the urban programme. No application was received, in the current round of urban programme bids, for additional funding assistance, towards secure entry systems.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many residential properties owned by his Department are *(a)* empty, *(b)* for sale on the open market, *(c)* intended for sale on the open market and *(d)* for sale to housing associations in terms of numbers and percentage of stock.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 5 March 1992]:* The information requested is as follows:

Number	per cent.
(a) 268	12·85
(b) 55	2·64
(c) 110	5·27
(d) 6	0·29

Local Enterprise Companies

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each local enterprise company and in total, the composition of boards, broken down by *(a)* gender, *(b)* ethnicity, *(c)* industrial sector and *(d)* non-private sector representation broken down by (i) local authority (except education), (ii) local authority education, (iii) other education, (iv) trades unions, (v) voluntary sector, (vi) health employer organisations, (vii) ethnic minority organisations and (viii) others; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 11 March 1992]:* At least two thirds of the board members of local enterprise companies are required to be drawn from the private sector. Subject to that requirement, individual appointments are for the local enterprise companies themselves. Board membership is listed in the published summaries of the companies' business plans.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the budgets of each local enterprise company broken down by *(a)* adult training, *(b)* youth training, *(c)* economic development, *(d)* environment, *(e)* local initiatives and *(f)* management.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 11 March 1992]:* The responsibility for making allocations to local enterprise companies lies with Scottish Enterprise. I understand that the amounts available to local enterprise companies for their adult and youth training blocks in 1992-93 were notified to them last month; and that they were informed of the allocations for 1992-93 for the remainder of their activities earlier this week.

The total budgets of local enterprise companies will also depend on the availability of funds from sources other than Scottish Enterprise, including the European Community.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Merchant Navy Funds

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he has given to the accounts and assets of *(a)* the Merchant Navy ratings pension fund and *(b)* the Merchant Navy war memorial fund; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the accounts and assets of the organisations concerned rests with the respective trustees who have a fiduciary duty to act at all times in the interests of all the beneficiaries under the trusts.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update his answer of 2 April 1990, *Official Report*, columns *490-91*, regarding expenditure by his Department, to include 1991-92.

Miss Widdecombe: Department of Social Security spending, in cash and real terms and as a percentage of central Government spending, is given in the table.

Year	*Expenditure (cash)* £ *million*	*Expenditure (1991-92 prices)* £ *million*	*Central Government spending (cash)* £ *million*	*Percentage of Central Government spending Per cent.*
1979-80	19,416	45,143	77,600	25·0
1983-84	35,159	56,205	120,400	29·2
1987-88	48,771	64,613	142,610	34·2
1989-90	52,182	60,572	162,764	32·1
1991-92	65,116	65,116	205,000	31·8

Notes:

1. 1991-92 figures are estimated outturn.
2. Figures for 1979-80 and 1983-84 are based on the old planning total; those for 1987-88 onwards are based on the new planning total.
3. The percentage of central Government spending for 1991-92 is reduced largely as a result of the transfer of rent rebate expenditure in England and Wales to the Department of the Environment and Welsh Office programmes.

Benefit Rules

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many existing claimants of income support in *(a)* the Monmouth constituency, *(b)* Cwmbran Department of Social Security office, *(c)* Gwent and *(d)* Wales will be afforded transitional protection when the 16-hour rule is introduced;

(2) how many of the income support claimants who will get transitional protection are ineligible for family credit because they have no dependent children;

(3) what is his estimate of the reduction in registered unemployment in the Monmouth constituency which will result from the introduction of the 16-hour rule.

Mr. Jack: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that information showing the number of claimants entitled to protection in particular geographical areas is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Neither is it possible to say what impact the hours change may have on registered unemployment in any specific area.

We estimate that, nationally, around 45,000 families with children and 15,000 people without children are working between 16 and 24 hours a week and receiving income support. All of them will be entitled under special protection rules to continue receiving income support from April when the 16 hours rule is introduced. Of the families with children, about 30,000 are expected to be better off on family credit and so may choose to claim that benefit instead of income support.

Widows

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the assistance and benefit available to widows.

Mr. Jack: Widow's payment, widowed mother's allowance and widow's pension are available, according to circumstances, to widows aged under 60 years of age whose late husbands had met the appropriate national insurance contributions conditions. Widows aged 60 or over are in most circumstances entitled to a contributory retirement pension based upon the late husband's national insurance contribution record. Both widowed mother's allowance and basic retirement pension can attract a dependency increase for children.

My hon. Friend may like to know that the estimated expenditure on these benefits in 1991-92 is £983 million.

Under the war pensions scheme administered by the Department, war widows pensions are available, in the main, to widows of men whose deaths were due to or substantially hastened by service in the armed forces, whether in war or peacetime; additions are also payable for dependent children. These pensions are paid at preferential rates.

Further information can be found in DSS Leaflets NP45, MPL 152 and MPL 154; I will send copies to my hon. Friend.

In addition other social security benefits are available to widows who make a claim and satisfy the necessary conditions for the award of the benefit and these include child benefit and income-related benefits.

Council Tax

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will rework the table shown as figure 20—"Marginal net income deduction rates"—in his Department's published plan for 1992-93 in the light of the present proposals for council tax benefit tapers; and if he will publish the results in a similar fashion.

Miss Widdecombe: The numbers with marginal net income deduction rates calculated for benefit units in receipt of income-related benefits, where at least one partner works 24 hours a week and where council tax benefit replaces community charge benefit are as follows:

Percentage	*1991-92 Thousands*
100 and above	0
90 and above	55
80 and above	220
70 and above	390
60 and above	395
50 and above	395

Note: Estimates are cumulative and rounded to the nearest 5,000.
Source: Projections based on the 1987 and 1988 Family Expenditure Surveys, and are not directly comparable to Figure 20 in the Departmental Report, which is based on Family Expenditure Surveys for 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what conditions need to be fulfilled by participants in the employment training scheme to be able to claim in-work benefits including family credit; if he will explain what conditions the scheme has had to satisfy so that participants are able to make successful claims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Participants in the employment training scheme can claim housing benefit if they are liable for rent and community charge benefit if they are liable for the full personal community charge in the same way as any other person. To claim family credit the claimant, or his partner, must be in remunerative work of at least 24 hours a week 16 hours a week from 7 April and responsible for at least one child. For family credit purposes the employment training scheme counts as remunerative work only if the participant has employee status. Under the terms of their contracts with the Employment Department, training and enterprise councils are responsible for ensuring that trainees are informed of their status while undergoing training.

Child Benefit

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of youngsters between 16 years and 18 years of age whose parents claim child benefit for them in each year since 1981.

Mr. Jack: The information is not available in the precise form requested. The following information has been compiled from table G1.06, formerly table 30.36, of "Social Security Statistics". The table gives the estimated numbers of 16 to 18-year-olds for whom child benefit was in payment at 31 December in each year. This includes those in full-time non-advanced education and those who have left such education but for whom child benefit is still payable.

	Thousands
1981	1,012
1982	1,005
1983	967
1984	939
1985	924
1986	913
1987	925
1988	956
1989	952
1990	961
1991	[1]n.y.a.

[1] Not yet available.

Students Benefit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to alter or remove the access to income support and housing benefit of students who take a year out from their studies.

Miss Widdecombe: Students who temporarily suspend their studies should normally look to the education system for support. Those in vulnerable groups may qualify for income support and housing benefit. We have no plans to change the present arrangements.

Social Fund

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether there is a full social fund section service in every benefit office in every benefit agency district.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and Public Information Office.

Income Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of income support are aged *(a)* 18, *(b)* 19, *(c)* 20, *(d)* 21, *(e)* 22, *(f)* 23 and *(g)* 24 years.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the table.

Age	*Number of recipients Thousands*
18	81
19	109
20	101
21	103
22	92
23	102
24	100

Source: annual statistical inquiry May 1990
Note: All figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of income support who are responsible for mortgage etc. interest are aged *(a)* 18-19, *(b)* 20, *(c)* 21, *(d)* 22, *(e)* 23 and *(f)* 24 years.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the table.

Age group	*Number of recipients in thousands*
18-19	0
20	1
21	1
22	2
23	4
24	4

Notes:

1. Figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.
2. Number of claimants 0 denotes fewer than 499.

Source: Income support statistics annual inquiry May 1990.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secetary of State for Social Security what proportion of claimants in *(a)* residential homes and *(b)* nursing homes have had their fees met in full by income support, discounting the personal expenses allowances, in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 10 March 1992]:* The information requested is in the table.

Year	*Fees met in full*	
	RCH per cent.	*NH per cent.*
1986-87	79	70
1987-88	52	68
1988-89	65	51
1989-90	61	53
1990-91	61	67

Notes:

1. Figures to nearest whole per cent.
2. Figures for 1987-88 are based over three quarters.
3. All other figures are based over four quarters.
4. Source Quarterly Statistical Enquiries February 1986-November 1991.

OPCS Disability Survey

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total gross cost of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys survey on disability in Great Britain at cash prices and at 1991-92 prices, respectively.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* The total gross cost was £2·47 million at cash prices and £3·62 million at 1991-92 prices.

Tax and Benefit

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures similar to those in his Department's tax/benefit model table, showing net weekly spending power for a lone mother with two children aged four and six years under the benefit system based on upratings already announced for April 1992, and in each of the following circumstances *(a)* not working, after one year on benefits, *(b)* earning £20 a week from part-time working and *(c)* working full-time and earning (i) £60, (ii) £70, (iii) £80, (iv) £90, (v) £100, (vi) £110 and (vii) £120 per week.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* The information requested is set out in the table. This takes into account the upratings announced for April 1992 in respect of family credit, child benefit, housing benefit, community charge benefit and income support, but all other data and assumptions are as for the published October 1991 tax benefit model tables.

All tables of this kind are illustrative only and do not, except by chance, reflect the actual circumstances of the population at large. In particular, the hypothetical rents used do not reflect the wide range of housing costs individuals may pay. But the tables do indicate that, as a result of successive improvements in the tax and social security systems, it is now almost impossible for someone to be worse off as a result of an increase in gross pay.

Lone parent with two children aged 4 and 6

	£
(a) not working, after one year on benefit	
Income support	67·57
Child benefit	23·30
Rent rebate	26·03
Community charge benefit	3·76
Total net income	120·66
Income after rent and community charge	89·93
(b) earning £20 per week from part-time earnings	
Income support	62·57
Child benefit	23·30
Rent rebate	26·03
Community charge benefit	3·76
Earnings	20·00
Total net income	135·66
Net income after rent and community charge	104·93

Notes:

1. Child benefit includes one parent benefit.
2. Net income after rent and community charge includes the notional value of free school meals and welfare foods.

Lone parent with 2 children aged 4 and 6
Tax threshold = £96·44
Basic Tax rate = 25 per cent.
Total net income on Income Support = £120·66
Net income after Rent and Community Charge on Income Support = £89

	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Gross earnings	60·00	70·00	80·00	90·00	100·00	110·00	120·00
Tax	·00	·00	·00	·00	·89	3·39	5·89
N.I.	1·76	2·66	3·56	4·46	5·36	6·26	7·16
Take home pay	58·24	67·34	76·44	85·54	93·75	100·35	106·95
Family credit	61·80	61·28	54·91	48·54	42·79	38·18	33·55
Child benefit	23·30	23·30	23·30	23·30	23·30	23·30	23·30
Rent rebate	8·55	2·97	1·20	·00	·00	·00	·00
Community Charge benefit	·00	·00	·00	·00	·00	·00	·00
Total net income	151·89	154·89	155·85	157·38	159·84	161·83	163·80
Rent	26·03	26·03	26·03	26·03	26·03	26·03	26·03
Community Charge	4·70	4·70	4·70	4·70	4·70	4·70	4·70
Net income after Rent and Community Charge	121·16	124·16	125·12	126·65	129·11	131·10	133·07

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish tables, similar to those in his Department's tax/benefit model table, showing net weekly spending power for each of a single wage married couple *(a)* with two children aged four and six years and *(b)* with three children aged three, eight and 11 years earning (i) £60, (ii) £70, (iii) £80, (iv) £90, (v) £100, (vi) £110, (vii) £120, (viii) £130, (ix) £140, (x) £150, (xi) £160 and (xii) £170 under the benefit system taking account of the upratings already announced for April 1992.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 28 February 1992]:* The information requested is set out in the table. This takes into account [illegible] upratings announced for April 1992 in respect of family credit, child benefit, housing benefit, community charge benefit and income support, but all other data and assumptions are as for the published October 1991 tax benefit model tables.

All tables of this kind are illustrative only and do not, except by chance, reflect the actual circumstances of the population at large. In particular, the hypothetical rents used do not reflect the wide range of housing costs individuals may pay. But the tables do indicate that, as a result of successive improvements in the tax and social security systems, it is now almost impossible for someone to be worse off as a result of an increase in gross pay.

Married couple with two children aged 4 and 6

Gross earnings (£'s)	*Tax*	*National insurance*	*Take home pay*	*Family credit*	*Child benefit*	*Rent*	*Rent rebate*	*Community charge*	*Community charge benefit*	*Total net income*	*Net income after rent and community charge*
60·00	0·00	1·76	58·24	61·80	17·45	26·03	11·41	9·40	4·15	153·05	117·62
70·00	0·00	2·66	67·34	61·28	17·45	26·03	5·83	9·40	2·86	154·76	119·33
80·00	0·00	3·56	76·44	54·91	17·45	26·03	4·06	9·40	2·45	155·31	119·88
90·00	0·00	4·46	85·54	48·54	17·45	26·03	2·28	9·40	2·04	155·85	120·42
100·00	0·89	5·36	93·75	42·79	17·45	26·03	0·68	9·40	1·67	156·34	120·91
110·00	3·39	6·26	100·35	38·18	17·45	26·03	0·00	9·40	1·37	157·35	121·92
120·00	5·89	7·16	106·95	33·55	17·45	26·03	0·00	9·40	1·08	159·03	123·60
130·00	8·39	8·06	113·55	28·93	17·45	26·03	0·00	9·40	0·78	160·71	125·28
140·00	10·89	8·96	120·15	24·31	17·45	26·03	0·00	9·40	0·48	162·39	126·96
150·00	13·39	9·86	126·75	19·69	17·45	26·03	0·00	9·40	0·19	164·08	128·65
160·00	15·89	10·76	133·35	15·08	17·45	26·03	0·00	9·40	0·00	165·88	130·45
170·00	18·39	11·66	139·95	10·46	17·45	26·03	0·00	9·40	0·00	167·86	132·43

Married couple with three children aged 3, 8 and 11

Gross earnings (£'s)	*Tax*	*National insurance*	*Take home pay*	*Family credit*	*Child benefit*	*Rent*	*Rent rebate*	*Community charge*	*Community charge benefit*	*Total net income*	*Net income after rent and community charge*
60·00	0·00	1·76	58·24	79·05	25·25	26·03	9·04	9·40	3·60	175·18	139·75
70·00	0·00	2·66	67·34	78·53	25·25	26·03	3·46	9·40	2·31	176·89	141·46
80·00	0·00	3·56	76·44	72·16	25·25	26·03	1·69	9·40	1·90	177·44	142·01
90·00	0·00	4·46	85·54	65·79	25·25	26·03	0·00	9·40	1·49	178·07	142·64
100·00	0·89	5·36	93·75	60·04	25·25	26·03	0·00	9·40	1·12	180·16	144·73
110·00	3·39	6·26	100·35	55·43	25·25	26·03	0·00	9·40	0·83	181·86	146·43
120·00	5·89	7·16	106·95	50·80	25·25	26·03	0·00	9·40	0·53	183·53	148·10
130·00	8·39	8·06	113·55	46·19	25·25	26·03	0·00	9·40	0·23	185·22	149·79
140·00	10·89	8·96	120·15	41·56	25·25	26·03	0·00	9·40	0·00	186·96	151·53
150·00	13·39	9·86	126·75	36·95	25·25	26·03	0·00	9·40	0·00	188·95	153·52
160·00	15·89	10·76	133·35	32·33	25·25	26·03	0·00	9·40	0·00	190·93	155·50
170·00	18·39	11·66	139·95	27·71	25·25	26·03	0·00	9·40	0·00	192·91	157·48

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the level of gross earnings in April 1992 taking into account upratings already announced for that time at which *(a)* a single householder, *(b)* a married couple and *(c)* a single parent with one child, aged three years, will lose in housing benefit, assuming full take-up of family credit, average rent and rates and other assumptions, as in his reply to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay), *Official Report*, 1 December 1987, column 566.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 28 February 1992]*: The information requested is set out in the table. This takes into account the upratings announced for April 1992 in respect of family credit, child benefit, housing benefit, community charge benefit and income support, but all other data and assumptions are as for the published October 1991 tax benefit model tables.

All tables of this kind are illustrative only and do not, except by chance, reflect the actual circumstances of the population at large. In particular, the hypothetical rents used do not reflect the wide range of housing costs individuals may pay. For these examples, the rents are as follows:

Single person: £22 a week.
Married Couple: £26 a week.
Lone Parent with one child aged three: £24.

Family type	*Gross earnings at which housing benefit is lost (£ per week)*	*Gross earnings at which community charge is lost (£ per week)*
Single Parent	92·00	80·00
Married Couple	123·00	150·00
Lone Parent with one child aged three	[1]85·00	62·00

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[1] Assumes Child Benefit of £9·25. One Parent Benefit of £5·85 and Family Credit of some £41·00 a week are in payment, in addition to Gross Earnings above, which would provide a total gross income of £141·50.

[2] Assumes Child Benefit of £9·65, One Parent Benefit of £5·85 and Family Credit of some £51 a week are in payment, in addition to gross earnings above.

TRANSPORT

Road Improvement Programme

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost to his Department's road improvement programme of the increase in VAT from 15 per cent. to 17·5 per cent.

Mr. Chope: It is estimated that, in 1991-92 total expenditure on VAT of £212 million will be incurred on section A (national roads system: capital—new construction and renewal) of the national roads, England, vote. This is expected to be offset by recoveries of £79 million.

Shipping Industry

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the amount of money allocated by his Department for the Government assistance for training scheme in the shipping industry in each financial year since 1988-89; and whether the allocated amount was duly spent in each of the above years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The money allocated by the Department for GAFT since the commencement of the scheme in 1988 is as follows:

Year	*Allocation £ million*	*Spend £ million*
1988-89	2·5	0·847
1989-90	3·5	1·756
1990-91	3·5	2·342
1991-92	2·754	[1]2·665

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[1] To date.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of what proportion of the total allocation for the Government assistance for training scheme in the shipping industry has gone towards *(a)* officer cadet recruitment and *(b)* financial assistance for existing officers to upgrade their qualifications, in each financial year since 1988-89.

Mr. McLoughlin: The proportion of expenditure on officer cadet recruitment and higher grade certificates is as follows:

Year	*Amount £*	*Per cent.*
(a) Cadet recruitment		
1988-89	612,000	24·5
1989-90	1,084,000	31·0
1990-91	1,572,000	44·9
1991-92 (to date)	2,064,000	74·9
(b) Higher grade certificates		
1988-89	94,000	3·76
1989-90	490,000	14·0
1990-91	457,000	13·1
1991-92 (to date)	418,000	15·2

The remaining amounts being accounted for publicity for the scheme in 1988-91 and the co-ordinating agents fees.

Cycling

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the local authorities which included cycle schemes in their application for transport supplementary grant.

Mr. Chope: The following local highway authorities included cycling-schemes in their transport policy and programme statements for 1992-93:

Berkshire
East Sussex
Hampshire
Isle of Wight
Oxfordshire
Surrey
West Sussex
Avon
Devon
Gloucestershire
Wiltshire
Birmingham
Solihull
Walsall
Wolverhampton
Bolton

Manchester
Oldham
Salford
Stockport
Trafford
Wirral
Cumbria
Newcastle upon Tyne
Durham
Barnsley
Doncaster
Sheffield
Leeds
Humberside
North Yorkshire
Leicestershire
Lincolnshire
Nottinghamshire
Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Norfolk
Suffolk
Brent
Camden
Croydon
Enfield
Greenwich
Hammersmith and Fulham
Haringey
Havering
Hillingdon
Hounslow
Islington
Kensington and Chelsea
Kingston upon Thames
Lambeth
Lewisham
Merton
Newham
Redbridge
Southwark
Sutton
Waltham Forest
Wandsworth
Westminster

European Community

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what transport measures he intends to pursue with the European Commission and Parliament during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community Council of Ministers and the United Kingdom chairmanship of the European Council of Transport Ministers.

Mr. McLoughlin: Our top priority during the United Kingdom presidency will be the transport measures necessary to complete the single market. We also expect to deal with transport infrastructure issues; transport external relations; and transport and the environment. Those are the issues which we intend to pursue with the European Commission and Parliament.

Passenger Deaths and Injuries

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will tabulate for 1990 the number of passengers *(a)* killed, *(b)* seriously injured or *(c)* less seriously injured on (1) British Rail and (2) buses and coaches.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is given in the table. Information on railway passenger accidents is contained in the annual report on railway safety, copies of which are in the House Library. There are no separate figures for British Rail as the statistics for injuries relate to all railways.

Number of passengers involved in injury accidents on the railways and buses and coaches: Great Britain 1990

	Killed (fatal)	*Seriously injured (major injury)*	*Slight (minor injury)*	*Total*
Railways				
Train accidents	0	13	144	157
Movement accidents	37	107	2,551	2,695
Sub-total	37	120	2,695	2,852
Non-movement accidents	2	104	3,543	3,649
Total	39	224	6,238	6,501
Buses and coaches	16	721	8,555	9,292

Notes:

Train accidents are accidents to trains and rolling stock.

Movement accidents are accidents to people caused by the movement of rail vehicles, other than train accidents. The largest types of incident are falls from trains and from platforms. (The sum of train and movement accidents would be the equivalent of the accidents to passengers in buses and coaches).

Non-movement accidents are accidents to people on railway premises not connected with the movement of rail vehicles (eg slipping on staircases etc.).

For definitions of railway casualties see the Railways (Notice of Accidents) Order 1986; and for definitions of casualties on buses and coaches see Road Accidents Great Britain 1990.

Buses and Coaches

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of buses and coaches involved in road accidents in 1990.

Mr. McLoughlin: The total number of buses and coaches involved in injury road accidents in 1990 was 12,200.

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of buses and coaches failed their MOT test at the first attempt in the year 1990-91.

Mr. McLoughlin: Thirty-five per cent. of public service vehicles, which account for the great majority of buses and coaches, failed the public service vehicle roadworthiness test in 1990-91.

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total fuel duty rebate available to buses and coaches for the fiscal year 1991-92; by how much this has changed in percentage terms since 1986-87; and how this subsidy is communicated in his Department's statistics.

Mr. McLoughlin: The forecast outturn for fuel duty rebate on local bus services in 1991-92 is £200 million, 55 per cent. higher than the outturn in 1986-87, reflecting increases in both mileage operated and the rate of duty. Figures for the rebate are given in "The Government's Expenditure Plans for Transport 1992-93 to 1994-95" (Cm. 1907) and in the statistical pubications "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1991" and "Bus and Coach Statistics Great Britain 1990-91".

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress in the allocation of resources for measures to promote bus use in the London borough of Tower Hamlets.

Mr. Freeman: I am pleased to announce the allocation of £200,000 of supplementary credit approvals in 1992-93 for bus priority measures in the London borough of Tower Hamlets. Further allocations will be considered in 1993-94.

Marchioness Inquiry

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the name and qualifications of any assessor appointed to assist Mr. Hayes in his inquiry into the Marchioness disaster; if he will indicate the manner in which that inquiry will receive representations and conduct its business; and if it will be in public.

Mr. McLoughlin: Mr. Hayes has two advisors assisting him with his inquiry. His safety advisor is Mr. Mike Henderson, who is the site manager of the north Tees works of ICI Petrochemicals. He is a chartered engineer, a fellow of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, and a member of the Institute of Petroleum. Captain Nic Rutherford is the inquiry's marine advisor, and is retired, after a seagoing career with BP. He is a past master of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners, and is a former general secretary of the International Federation of Ship Masters Associations. He has been assessor for the Court of Appeal and the Admiralty court.

The inquiry is not being held in public. Mr. Hayes has sought written submissions from interested parties and individuals and has invited interested parties and individuals to offer oral evidence to the inquiry. The precise conduct and form of the inquiry are a matter for Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will add to the list of incidents to be considered by the Hayes inquiry into the Marchioness disaster the collision of the dredger Bowtrader with the northern terminal of the Woolwich free ferry on 30 January 1988.

Mr. McLoughlin: I shall be pleased to draw this incident to the attention of Mr. Hayes.

Vehicle Ownership

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the figures for vehicle ownership in Greater London for each year since 1980; and what his projections are for the future.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is as follows:

Currently Licensed Vehicles with Registered Keeper in Greater London

Year	*Number Thousands*
1980	2,387
1981	2,410
1982	2,449
1983	2,493
1984	2,547
1985	2,583
1986	2,628
1987	2,653
1988	2,737
1989	2,796
1990	2,831

My Department does not forecast the total number of vehicles in Greater London. However, provisional estimates for 1990, the latest year for which figures are available, show that the proportion of households in Greater London with one car was 42 per cent. and with two cars or more, 19 per cent. It is forecast that by the year 2001, car ownership in Greater London will increase to between 64 and 68 per cent. of households.

London Regional Office

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the budget and forecast actual expenditure for 1991-92 and 1992-93 of his Department's London regional office.

Mr. Chope: Expenditure under the roads vote for 1991-92 is forecast at £202·5 million against an April 1991 budget of £208·6 million. The budget for 1992-93 is £241 million.

Passenger Journeys

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will tabulate in percentage terms for each of the last five years the number of passenger journeys outside London undertaken *(a)* by bus and coach and *(b)* by British Rail.

Mr. McLoughlin: Passenger journeys by British Rail are not available by area.

Figures for local bus services outside London are available in "Bus and Coach Statistics Great Britain 1990-91", as follows:

Local bus passenger journeys (million)
Great Britain outside London

Year	
1986-87	4,179
1987-88	4,081
1988-89	4,001
1989-90	3,881
1990-91	3,654

Radioactive Materials

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what proportion of irradiated fuel flasks imported into the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* 1991, were monitored on arrival by (i) the radioactive materials transport division of his Department, (ii) the National Radiological Protection Board and (iii) employees of Pacific Nuclear Transport Ltd and Nuclear Transport Ltd;

(2) how many consignments of irradiated fuel flasks were imported into the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: One hundred and eight irradiated fuel flasks containing power reactor fuel were imported into the United Kingdom during 1990 and 92 during 1991. Three flasks of irradiated research reactor fuel were also imported during 1991. All flasks imported into the United Kingdom by Pacific Nuclear Transport Ltd. (PNTL) at Barrow are monitored by staff of PNTL or British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. before trans-shipment to rail. Flasks imported by Nuclear Transport Ltd. from Europe remain on their railwagon under a canopy and are not routinely monitored en-route. All flasks are thoroughly monitored before dispatch and on arrival at the reprocessing site. During 1990 and 1991 respectively, four and two flasks were monitored on arrival by the National Radiological Protection Board on behalf of the radioactive materials transport division.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library the report prepared by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority with regard to a contaminated flask containing irradiated research reactor fuel from India which arrived in the United Kingdom on 30 January 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive fully reported on this incident in its statement of incidents at nuclear installations for the first quarter of 1991, announced in a news release of 2 July 1991. Release of United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority documents should be for the authority.

Red Route (Islington)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the operation of the red route through the London borough of Islington.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 28 November 1991, *Official Report,* column 575. There has been very little correspondence since then.

Rail Investment

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out *(a)* the level of investment by Network SouthEast in each year since 1962 at current prices and *(b)* the total operating grant paid to (i) British Rail and (ii) Network SouthEast in each year since 1962 at current prices.

Mr. Freeman *[pursuant to his reply, 11 March 1992, c. 535]:* The information is as in the tables.

Network SouthEast Investment
(Capital and revenue)

	£ million at 1991-92 prices
[1]1982	192
1983	181
[2]1984-85	168
1985-86	162
1986-87	183
1987-88	305
1988-89	381
1989-90	414
1990-91	323
[3]1991-92	380

[1] Network SouthEast was formed in 1986. Previous comparable figures are available only from 1982.

[2] 1984-85 was a 15-month period. The figures quoted is the 12-month equivalent.

[3] Estimated.

Source: Network SouthEast.

(b) Grants paid to British Rail:
1969 to 1991-92[1]

£ million at 1991-92 prices

	PSO grant[2]	*Level crossing grant*	*PTE grant*	*Other grants*[3]	*Total*
1969	512·1	—	—	125·7	637·8
1970	490·7	—	—	95·6	586·3
1971	462·1	—	—	55·0	517·1
1972	404·1	—	55·3	452	911·4
1973	506·6	—	63·0	466·7	1,036·3
1974	899·4	—	84·6	—	984·0
1975	850·8	38·3	99·4	323·1	1,311·6
1976	1,005·7	35·3	97·0	152·6	1,290·6
1977	1,009·3	31·9	112·9	—	1,154·1
1978	1,040·1	32·3	119·4	—	1,191·8
1979	1,101·0	31·8	126·4	—	1,259·2
1980	1,111·4	32·0	131·4	—	1,274·8
1981	1,328·1	32·8	120·4	—	1,481·3
1982	1,336·2	32·8	125·2	—	1,494·2
1983	1,337·0	32·4	130·1	—	1,499·5
[4]1984-85	1,272·3	28·8	125·7	—	1,426·8
1985-86	1,161·4	29·2	110·8	—	1,301·4
1986-87	944·8	27·5	101·3	—	1,073·6
1987-88	989·2	30·0	102·8	—	1,122·0
1988-89	647·9	27·9	93·8	—	769·6
1989-90	568·2	29·8	106·0	—	704·0
1990-91	642·0	30·9	107·2	—	780·1
[5]1991-92	900·0	29·2	129·0	—	1,058·2

[1] Grant is paid to British Rail as a whole. It is for British Rail to allocate it between sectors. British Rail did not receive direct Government grants prior to 1969.

[2] Prior to 1975, grant was paid under section 39(1) of the Transport Act 1968.

[3] This comprises:

(1) Transitional freight grant—paid 1975-76.
(2) Grant paid under Transport Grant Act to compensate for Government pricing controls—paid 1972.
(3) Special grants—paid 1972-73.
(4) Grant paid under section 40 of the Transport Act 1968 for temporary maintenance of surplus track and signalling —paid 1969-1973.

[4] 1984-85 was a 15-month year. 12-month equivalents given.

[5] Department of Transport estimates.

Source: British Railways Board annual accounts.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 13 March 1992

ENVIRONMENT

Zoos

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many zoos are licensed in England and Wales under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981; if he will publish a list of these zoos; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Zoo licences are issued by local authorities. The information they have supplied to my Department indicates that 284 zoos are currently licensed in England under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981. The corresponding information for zoos in Wales is held by the Welsh Office. I have placed a list of zoos licensed in England under the 1981 Act in the Library of the House.

Homelessness

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make further statements on the measures which he has taken to reduce homelessness.

Mr. Yeo: We have spent £311 million on a two-year programme to help homeless families in the pressure areas of London and the south-east. We also plan to spend £96 million over three years to create 900 new hostel spaces and 2,500 places in permanent accommodation for single homeless people in London and £20 million on grants to organisations helping homeless people all over the country. In addition, development of low-cost housing is rising substantially as a result of increases in public expenditure through the Housing Corporation to more than £2 billion a year by 1993-94 and housing associations' ability to attract private finance. The deregulation of the private rented sector has also led to a welcome increase in private investment in rented housing.

Countryside Protection

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what effect planning policy guidance note 7 has on the Government's policy of protecting the countryside for its own sake as set out in circular 16/87.

Sir George Young: Planning policy guidance note 7 reaffirms the Government's policy that the countryside should be protected for its own sake. It states that the planning system helps to integrate development necessary to sustain the rural economy with protection of the countryside for the sake of its beauty, the diversity of its landscape, the wealth of its natural resources and its ecological, agricultural and recreational value. Planning policy guidance note 7 cancels DOE circular 16/87.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recommendations he has received from the chairman of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee on the European Commission's proposals for measures accompanying the reform of the common agricultural policy, particularly the agri-environment action programme, COM 91 415.

Mr. Baldry: None.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recommendations he has received from the chairman of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee on the European Commission's proposals for reforming the common agricultural policy, COM 91 258.

Mr. Baldry: None.

UN Conference on Environment and Development

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on *(a)* the seminar hosted by Her Majesty's Government on 5 February on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and *(b)* the reception given to his presentation to the final preparation committee meeting for UNCED in New York on 2 March.

Mr. Baldry: On 5 March my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister met representatives of leading environment, development and business organisations who made presentations on their objectives for UNCED. This was followed by a general discussion. The speech which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment gave to the meeting of the UNCED preparatory committee on 2 March was very well received.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the latest figures available, stating whether they are final outturns, provisional outturns or budget figures, for 1988-89 to 1991-92 on the statistical basis of table 1—summary of gross expenditure and income, excluding double counting of flows—table 2—capital and revenue expenditure by service—table 3—local authority income by source—and table 4—general fund revenue account by service—of "Local Government Financial Statistics, England".

Mr. Portillo: The information for 1988-89 is published in "Local Government Financial Statistics England No. 2 1990" which is in the Library of the House. The information for later years cannot be provided in this form as detailed gross expenditure and income figures on all accounts are not yet available.

Toxic Products

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will obtain for his departmental library copies of the documents *(a)* "Environmentally Sound Management of Toxic Chemicals and Prevention of Illegal International Traffic in Toxic and Dangerous Products and Wastes", *(b)* "Environmentally Sound Management of Hazardous Wastes" and *(c)* "Safe and Environmentally Sound Management of Radioactive Waste" which were submitted for consideration to the final preparatory committee meeting for UNCED in March.

Mr. Baldry: My Department already has copies of the documents.

Bushy Park

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which contractors have been appointed to work in Bushy park to maintain trees, shrubs, grass and clearance of waste; what conditions are in the contract in relation to trees and shrubs; how long is the contract; what sanctions exist to uphold quality of work; and if he will set out, in relation to the 18 former park employees, other than the gamekeeper, how many applied for interview with the contractor and how many are employed.

Mr. Yeo: Glendale Industries Ltd. has been appointed to carry out the garden and landscape maintenance work in Bushy park for a period of four years. Thirteen former parks staff applied and were interviewed for jobs with Glendale, of whom nine were successful.

The contract specification sets down in detail all the planting and maintenance duties required of the contractor for Bushy park, including maintenance of trees and shrubs. The work will be instructed and closely monitored by the Department's site supervisors, and will be approved for payment only if it has been completed to the high standards that we have specified.

Nitrous Oxide

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give an estimate of annual United Kingdom emissions of nitrous oxide broken down by source; and of the relative global warming effect of nitrous oxide in comparison with other United Kingdom emissions of gases with global warming potential.

Mr. Trippier: Provisional estimates made by Warren Spring Laboratory for my Department are as follows:

United Kingdom emissions of nitrous oxide—provisional estimates for 1990
(thousands of tonnes per year)

Source	*Emission*	*Per cent.*
Production of adipic acid for nylon manufacture	90	57
Emissions from soil	65	41
Road transport	3	2
Other fuel combustion	2	1
Total	160	100

These estimates are very uncertain, but they suggest a direct global warming effect equivalent to about 7 per cent. of that from current United Kingdom emissions of carbon dioxide.

Water Companies

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to amend the Water Act 1989 to enable the Director General of Water Services to ensure that the water companies follow a least-cost policy in respect of their environmental obligations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Under the Water Industry Act 1991, a consolidating measure, the Director General of Water Services already has a duty to promote economy and efficiency on the part of a water, or water and sewerage, company in carrying out its functions.

Planning Applications

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to issue tax amending orders for the advertising of planning applications before 20 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The need for local planning authorities to publicise planning applications under the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 will not require the issue of tax amending orders.

Planning and Compensation Act 1991

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken to implement the provisions of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 in England and Wales; which provisions are not yet in force; and when it is proposed to implement them.

Sir George Young: In the eight months since it received Royal Assent on 25 July 1991, almost all the major provisions of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 have been brought into effect in England and Wales in four commencement orders. The main compensation provisions, together with a number of the planning and development control measures, came into operation two months after Royal Assent on 25 September 1991. The Act provided for home loss payments improvements to be backdated to 16 November 1990. The bulk of the enforcement provisions commenced on 2 January 1992, and the new development plans system became operative on 10 February 1992. A direction relating to publicity for, and notification of departures from development plans came into force on 28 February.

Where appropriate, advice and policy guidance for local authorities and other agencies, and existing advice, has been brought up to date to reflect the provisions of the 1991 Act as follows:

DOE Circ 14/91	August 1991	Planning and Compensation Act 1991
DOE Circ 15/91	September 1991	Land Compensation and Compulsory Purchase.
MPG8	September 1991	Interim Development Order Permissions (IDOs) Statutory Provisions and Procedures.
DOE Circ 16/91	October 1991	Planning Obligations.
DOE Circ 23/91	December 1991	Awards of Costs in Planning Proceedings Following Late Cancellation of an Inquiry or Hearing.
DOE Circ 18/91	December 1991	New Development Plans System: Transitional Arrangements (England and Wales).
DOE Circ 21/91	December 1991	Implementation of the Main Enforcement Provisions.
PPG18	December 1991	Enforcing Planning Control.
PPG7	January 1992	The Countryside and the Rural Economy.
PPG12	February 1992	Development Plans and Regional Planning Guidance.
MPG9	March 1992	Interim Development Order Permissions (IDOs) Conditions.
PPG1	March 1992	General Policy and Principles.
PPG3	March 1992	Housing.
PPG19	March 1992	Outdoor Advertisement Control.
DOE Circ 5/92	March 1992	Town and Country Planning Control of Advertisement Regulations 1992.

The remaining provisions of the Act are scheduled to take effect in the spring and summer of 1992, within a year of Royal Assent as follows:

Remaining provisions on enforcement powers (sections 2, 4 (part) and 10).
Remaining provisions on planning obligations (section 12, sections 106A and 106B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990).
Demolition of buildings (section 13).
Notices etc. of applications for planning permission (section 16).
Land of interested planning authorities and development by them (section 20).
Simplified planning zones (section 28).

DLA and DWA

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he proposes to make to the test of resources for house renovation grants to take account of the new disability living allowance and disability working allowance.

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales and I have today given to local housing authorities advance notice of amendments to the test of resources applied to applicants for house renovation grants including those to help provide facilities for disabled people. These regulations under part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 come into force on 6 April. They introduce disability living allowance and disability working allowance as qualifying conditions for a number of premiums used to calculate the applicable amount in the test of resources. Disability living allowance will replace the current mobility allowance and, where the disability arose before age 65, attendance allowance. As with the two allowances it replaces, this new allowance will be disregarded in full as income in the test.

Pollution

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the number and type of notifiable pollution incidents in *(a)* Cornwall and *(b)* Cumbria in each year since 1979; what companies or organisations were involved; and what has been done to restore the ecological balance of the environment in each county.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 24 January 1992]:* I will write to the hon. Member.

TRANSPORT

British Rail ("Organising for Quality")

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of British Rail's reorganisation known as "Organising for Quality".

Mr. Rifkind: Substantial progress has been made with the implementation of this reorganisation. The process will be substantially completed on 6 April 1992 with the abolition of the railway regions. The British Railways Board has recently submitted a report on this reorganisation, which I have accepted. I have today laid this report before both Houses.

Vehicle Testing Fees

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes the vehicle inspectorate is proposing to make to vehicle testing fees.

Mr. Chope: On 9 March, I laid before the House a draft order which contains the fees which the vehicle inspectorate proposes to charge from 30 March. The fees will need to be reviewed again later to take account of the incorporation into the heavy goods vehicle test from 1 September of measured checks of smoke emission. I have also asked that we should seek views on a revised structure for fees which reflect more closely the increased costs to the inspectorate of vehicles with a higher number of axles. Consultation on these matters will take place in the summer.

London Underground

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the level of capital expenditure by London Underground during each of the last five years; and what is the planned level for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

London Underground investment
£ million 1990-91 prices

	£ million
1987-88	259
1988-89	234
1989-90	328
1990-91	459
1991-92	[1]353
1992-93-94	[2]—

[1] Forecast outturn.

[2] Estimated combined total for these years—over £2 billion.

M1/M62 Link

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will extend the time period for consultation on his proposals for an M1/M62 link in west Yorkshire to enable the proposals to be exhibited in the Horbury area of Wakefield.

Mr. Chope: Special arrangements have already been operated for people in the Horbury area. Nevertheless, I am arranging for additional exhibitions of the M1/M62 link road proposals to be held next week both in the Horbury and Thornhill Lees areas, subject to the availability of suitable venues.

There seems no case for extending the consultation period which does not expire until 1 May, but any comments received after that date will still be taken into account.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the projected date for announcing the preferred route for the proposed M1/M62 motorway link in west Yorkshire.

Mr. Chope: No date has been set for announcing the outcome of the public consultation, into the options for a proposed link between the M1 south-west of Wakefield and the M62 east of Huddersfield, which started on 27 February 1992. This is because it is impossible to anticipate at this stage how long it will take to assess fully the large number of responses we expect to receive from the public and representative bodies.

Initial Response Teams

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those initial response teams he expects to be operating on 1 April without official vehicles.

Mr. McLoughlin: On 1 April 1992 there will be a total of 65 initial response teams.

Initial response teams operating without official vehicles are listed below. These stations have not previously operated with an official vehicle, prior to redesignation as IRTs. The implementation period for the review is four years, and alterations to the current plan could occur over this period, should circumstances change significantly.

Aberdeen SRR:
Outskerries
Whalsey
Bressay island
Huxter
West Burra island
Noness
Gloup
Balta Sound
North Roe
Melvich
Papa Westray
Westray
Long Hope
Rousay
Eday
Stronsay
Sanday
North Ronaldsay
Flotta
Deerness
Shapinsay
Gourdon
Collieston
Portsoy
Nairn
Crail
Fisherrow
Cockburnspath
St. Abbs

Yarmouth SRR:
Holy Island
Newton
Ravenscar
Burniston
Speeton
Wrangle
Sheringham
Sea Palling
Sutton Bridge

Dover SRR:
Shingle Street

Swansea SRR:
Instow
Mortehoe
Portishead
Port Talbot
Llanstephan
Wooltack Point
Moylegrove
Penrhyn
Gwbert
Borth
Fairbourne
Harlech
Aberdaron
Cemaes Bay
Hilbre Island
New Brighton
Morecombe
Workington

Clyde SRR:
Port Ellen
Ardpatrick
Cumbrae
Stranraer
Griminish
Staffin
Dunvegan
Kilchoan

Coastguards

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the current responsibilities of Her Majesty's coastguard; and if he will implement the sector review in accordance with the definition contained in paragraph 2.12 of that report.

Mr. McLoughlin: I would refer the hon. Member to the written reply I gave to the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) on the same subject on 9 March 1992.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what preventive and educational measures are required by Her Majesty's coastguard of sector officers; and what proportion of their time they are required to spend on education and preventive work.

Mr. McLoughlin: Her Majesty's coastguard sector officers are primarily responsible for the management, training and operational efficiency of the several auxiliary coastguard companies within their sectors, including maintenance of buildings and equipment.

As part of their workload, sector officers will provide both solicited and unsolicited safety and educational advice in the course of their duties, including presentations at local schools, local public events, yachting and other organisations which use the sea, as well as routine daily contact with the general public. This is done in concert with the auxiliary coastguard companies under their charge. There is no requirement for a specific number of hours per month to be spent on this aspect of work.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of his study of auxiliary operations room assistance; what are the cost implications of employing administrative assistants to replace auxiliary coastguards; and when the recommendations will be implemented.

Mr. McLoughlin: The recommendation that a separate study of auxiliary operations room assistance be undertaken formed part of the long term aims of the coastal review. Although some preliminary work was put in hand it was considered that this item was secondary in importance to other recommendations contained in the review, and no conclusions have yet been reached.

Shipping Industry

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration has been given to increasing the total amount of money allocated to the Government assistance for training scheme for the shipping industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: In accordance with Treasury guidelines, a policy review of the Government assistance for training scheme was conducted last year by my

Department. This review highlighted GAFT's success in revitalising cadet recruitment. It did not identify an immediate need to increase the target of 500 cadets per annum for which the scheme has been designed although it acknowledged the possibility of reviewing the GAFT budget to coincide with future public expenditure surveys.

Cycling

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what directions he has given to the London traffic director concerning cycles.

Mr. Chope: The Secretary of State's draft traffic management and parking guidance which he issued for consultation on 11 March sets out his aims for cycling in London and possible measures to assist cyclists in relation to red routes. It will be for the London traffic director and the London local authorities to have regard to the final guidance when meeting their respective traffic management responsibilities.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the budget for cycle schemes within the traffic division for 1992-93; and what is the proportion of the total budget for the traffic division of cycle schemes.

Mr. Chope: The traffic policy division of the Department of Transport has no executive responsibilities for providing cycling facilities, and so has no budget for cycle schemes. Cycle schemes are funded from other budgets as is the work on the 1,000-mile cycle route for London.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what specific schemes are planned *(a)* within the Department's bypass scheme and *(b)* within the Department's trunk road programme for cycling.

Mr. Chope: The answer is:

a). The Department's bypass demonstration project was launched earlier this year. Work is being undertaken with the local authorities in six towns. It will implement measures such as traffic calming, traffic management and environmental improvements so as to show how the fullest possible benefits to the local community can be realised. The schemes are likely to include improved provision for cyclists, pedestrians and other vulnerable road users.

b) The Department takes the needs of cyclists into account from the outset when planning new trunk road construction or major reconstruction. Where demand exists, consideration is also given to measures that would enable cyclists to cross the trunk road more safely. The information asked for on individual schemes is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research is being conducted by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory on cycles and cycle safety.

Mr. Chope: The Transport and Road Research Laboratory has begun to evaluate the effectiveness of current pedal cycle helmets in reducing head injuries.

ENERGY

Dounreay Processing Plant

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the decision announced by the European Commission and EURATOM on 4 March to prohibit the reopening of the MTR 1203 reprocessing plant at Dounreay until nuclear materials accountancy procedures have been satisfactorily approved.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Commission decision of 4 March applied a "warning" to Dounreay. This requires Dounreay to rectify failures in the implementation of accounting and records systems before the plant resumes normal operations. To this end, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority is vigorously implementing the recommendations of its internal inquiry, and is consulting with the Commission as necessary.

Gas-fired Power Stations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the licences he has issued for gas-fired power stations giving the location and date in each case.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 24 February at columns *398-400*.

Since then, four further section 36 consents have been granted, details of which are given herewith.

Site	*Applicant*	*Capacity*	*Date of consent*
Charterhouse Street, London EC1	Citigen Ltd.	90 MW	26 February 1992
Spondon	Derwent Cogeneration Ltd. (formerly Courtaulds)	318 MW	10 March 1992
Medway	Medway Power Ltd.	450 or 660 MW	10 March 1992
Sutton Bridge	Independent Power Generators Ltd.	700 MW	11 March 1992

PRIME MINISTER

Nurses and Midwives Pay Review Body

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Prime Minister when the supplement to the ninth report of the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and the Professions Allied to Medicine will be published.

The Prime Minister: The review body's report, which deals with the pay of senior nurses and senior midwives, is being published today. The Government are grateful to the review body for the additional work it has undertaken to prepare this report.

The report recommends that with effect from 1 September 1991 the senior nurse and senior midwife pay spine should be increased by approximately 6 per cent. to the level of the senior manager pay spine and that senior nurses should each receive a single non-superannuable cash payment of £300.

The Government have accepted the review body's recommendations but have decided that the single cash payment should be superannuable, in order to comply with the provisions of the NHS superannuation regulations.

China

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his plan to send a human rights fact-finding team to the People's Republic of China.

The Prime Minister: In January in New York I proposed to Premier Li Peng that a high-level delegation should visit China later this year to look into human rights issues. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) has agreed to lead this mission, which will take place later this year.

Planning (Countryside)

Sir Donald Thompson: To ask the Prime Minister whether he will make a statement on his approach to planning in the countryside in the light of the publication of the revised planning policy guidance note 7.

The Prime Minister: The Government are not, and never have been, in favour of uncontrolled development. Planning is essential. Our commitment to it was demonstrated through our introduction of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, and the implementation of the plan-led system it provides for. We have made clear the role of the planning system in ensuring that development and growth are sustainable.

Balanced decisions within the planning system require various points of view to be heard and weighed. The views of those who oppose development are often got across very effectively indeed to those taking planning decisions. But weight must also be given to the views of individuals submitting planning applications. For them, especially those in the farming community, success may make all the difference as to whether they can continue to live and work in the countryside. In my speech to the Oxford farming conference, I was speaking on behalf of those individuals —who sometimes feel that their voice counts for relatively little—when I encouraged planning authorities to balance the need to protect the countryside with the need for jobs and houses.

This position is clearly set out in the revised planning policy guidance note 7 on the countryside and the rural economy. This note explains this Government's policy of encouraging rural enterprise, while ensuring that the environment is protected. It reminds planning authorities of the need for a balanced approach to rural development and conservation. The planning system helps to integrate development necessary to sustain the rural economy with protection of the countryside for the sake of its beauty, its diversity of landscape, its wealth of natural resources and its ecological, agricultural and recreational value. When paragraph 2.5 of the PPG says that "little weight" should normally be attached to the loss of lower grade agricultural land it means little weight in terms of agricultural value; other factors such as landscape and nature conservation need to be taken fully into account.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Southern Africa

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution the United Kingdom is making towards the development of southern African countries faced by severe drought.

Mrs. Chalker: We have substantial and continuing programmes of development aid for countries of the southern Africa region amounting to some £165 million in 1990. As my hon. Friend is aware, I announced a package of additional assistance last week in response to the drought comprising £2½ million of balance of payments support each for Zambia and Zimbabwe plus 15,000 tonnes of food aid for Mozambique and for Mozambican refugees. I am able to announce today a further £1 million in the form of a contribution to the world food programmes's targeted feeding programme for vulnerable groups in Malawi.

Know-how Fund

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list by project the amount of know-how fund grant committed to date under the two schemes to encourage the establishment of British investment operations in central and eastern Europe, the Baltic states and the former Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: So far over £3 million has been committed to 150 successful applicants under the two schemes. The first scheme provides up to 50 per cent. grant towards the cost of pre-investment feasibility studies (PIFS) into proposed British investment operations; the second scheme finances, on a pump-priming basis, the costs of providing training in management and business skills to key indigenous personnel who will run British investment operations (the training for investment personnel scheme—TIPS). There has been a good response from a wide cross-section of British industry and service sector firms and organisations and the schemes appear to be achieving their aims. Forty-nine pre-investment feasibility studies supported by the know-how fund have so far been completed; in 35 of these, applicants have decided definitely to proceed with their investment; in a further five a final decision has not yet been taken.

Information on the grant committed by project is as follows:

Pre-investment feasibility studies (PIFS) scheme

Proposed Investment Operation	*Grant Approved £*
Poland	
Airport terminal	41,000
Bulk liquids storage terminal	12,500
Interpreter/translation service	2,946
Poultry breeding	14,350
Fuel efficiency etc instrumentation	13,383
Coffee production	21,725
Engineering consultancy	5,097
Bulk sugar terminal	50,000
Disposable medical equipment	43,996
Business/accountancy forms	11,775
Bulk liquid storage terminal	47,500
Carpet manufacture	50,000
Printing inks manufacture	20,215

Proposed Investment Operation	*Grant Approved £*
Business Centre	11,323
Training/consultancy for financial sector	6,656
Technology (CAD/CAM) centres	50,000
Navigation, surveying and vehicle products	35,484
Soft drinks production plant	22,325
Handbags manufacture	12,950
Joint venture with survey, mapping etc company	24,190
Non-woven material manufacture	11,970
Medical indemnity insurance joint venture	20,670
Fruit, vegetable processing plant	6,924
Environmental management consultancy	12,122
Management consultancy	4,925
Mining equipment manufacture	24,690
Hungary	
Gas-fired generation plant	15,000
Bed manufacture	8,244
Poultry breeding	10,740
Rack shelving	23,815
Technology transfer/development	25,000
Project consultancy	9,736
Business centre/consultancy	10,500
Business intelligence service	9,500
Water/environmental engineering consultancy	13,010
Alcoholic beverages	50,000
Management training	6,676
Corrugated board manufacture	50,000
Pre-fabricated housing	8,425
Tractor manufacture	50,000
Consulting engineering/environmental consultancy	17,643
Knitwear, knitted fabric manufacture/trading	27,911
Training/consultancy for financial sector	5,625
Timber building system manufacture	9,031
Water control, monitoring equipment joint venture	3,348
Financial advisory service	1,400
Pig breeding	21,210
Leisure/learning project	50,000
Funeral services joint venture	27,611
Czechoslovakia	
Architectural practice	19,395
Castings	20,393
Warm air ducting	2,260
Coal tip washing	6,631
Clothing manufacture	14,992
Quarrying	50,000
Plasterboard manufacture	50,000
Software development	41,737
Hotel	50,000
Business centre	11,088
Electronic and technology training equipment	4,061
Copper smelting	50,000
Investment castings foundry	23,842
Hand tools manufacture	26,542
Deer breeding	7,654
Diesel engines manufacture	50,000
Historic residential property restoration/development	13,126
Electronic components manufacture	50,000
Mining venture	32,986
Dolomite etc. mining	15,435
Chemical manufacture	50,000
Clay production	47,954
Commercial TV channel consortium	40,037
Motor industry research and development etc. joint venture	40,603
Clay production	21,508
Bulgaria	
Industrial training joint venture	29,035
Technical training joint venture	3,945
Waste oil reclamation plant	47,625
Consultancy joint venture with institute	6,167
Ski resort development	46,553
Electronic products (civil markets)	36,800
Healthcare company	33,125
Offshore exploration support facility	2,750
Romania	
Mushroom farming	2,950
Diesel engines manufacture	50,000
Plant hire joint venture	20,413
Russia	
Oil/gas industry training centre	18,049
Small business development	50,000
Advertising/marketing etc. consultancy	34,726
Mining industry software	6,467
Dairy food processing equipment manufacture	10,162
Vehicles manufacture	18,385
Vehicles joint venture	22,019
Food processing joint venture	27,354
Agricultural spray equipment etc. joint venture	10,289
Bakery operation	33,857
Ukraine	
Coal washing plant	31,477
Bakery operation	32,743
Kazakhstan	
Poultry breeding	14,264
Mining project	50,000

Training for investment personnel scheme (TIPS)

Investment operation	*Grant approved £*
Poland	
Bulk packaging manufacture	6,050
Language/business skills training	8,420
Boiler manufacture	8,644
Consulting engineers practice	8,900
Management training school	25,642
Open learning centres	50,000
Dental products manufacture	8,966
Property/asset valuation, consultancy	4,139
Pharmaceutical products	50,000
Business computer systems	25,921
Hungary	
Management consultancy	33,264
Water and effluent consultancy	18,922
Marble quarrying	28,276
Pallet racking/shelving manufacture	22,862
Quantity surveying	23,961
Printing business	12,388
Bed manufacture	24,120
English language training	14,185
Sewing thread manufacture	26,424
Business centre/consultancy	29,205
Property development	7,165
Risk assessment consultancy	17,480
Bar code systems	5,835
Management consultancy	12,269
Shopping complex joint venture	8,500
Medical indemnity insurance operations	16,205
Czechoslovakia	
Machine tool manufacture	1,646
Warm air ducting	4,000
Business consultancy	7,550
Property consultants/chartered surveyors	28,839
Management/engineering consultancy	23,900
Mechanical seals manufacture	50,000
Building and construction joint venture	10,916
Bar code systems	4,690
Pipe and cable locating equipment	14,434
Mineral water bottling plant	8,104
Plant and tool hire joint venture	40,000
Investment castings foundry	45,234
Investment consultancy	9,376

Investment operation	*Grant approved £*
Bulgaria	
CAD/CAM sytems	11,863
Romania	
Mushroom farming	27,380
Estonia	
Retail fabric shop	15,600
Russia	
Machinery design and manufacture	30,610
Fuel filtration systems manufacture	23,984
Supermarket bakery	22,311
Bar code systems	8,345
Design, management services consultancy	30,312
Home study language training joint venture	15,523
Tourism joint ventures	24,776
Ukraine	
Tampon manufacture	29,064
Ex-German Democratic Republic (approved before unification in October 1990)	
Consulting engineers practice	20,265

Western Samoa

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the assistance given by the United Kingdom to western Samoa.

Mrs. Chalker: We do not have a regular country aid programme for western Samoa, but have provided disaster relief after recent cyclones. This included £115,000 for emergency supplies, help with reconstruction and 1,125 tonnes of rice following cyclone Ofa in February 1990; and £120,000 for emergency supplies and other relief activities following cyclone Val in December 1991.

China

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on how the overseas aid criterion about good government is applied to the People's Republic of China.

Mrs. Chalker: In allocating aid we consider recipient countries' needs, their ability to use aid well, their economic and social policies, other good government considerations and the scope for supporting activities which promote better government. These considerations apply to China where our programme includes a project to improve investment appraisal methodology and introduce social and environmental analysis into project appraisal and United Kingdom training in a range of subjects including public administration and law. We also discuss human rights concerns frequently with the Chinese Government, including most recently during the Chinese Foreign Minister's meeting with the Secretary of State on 9 March.

EMPLOYMENT

Training Programmes

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment since 1979, what has been the annual expenditure on the programmes: *(a)* work experience on employers' premises, *(b)* youth opportunities programme, *(c)* youth training scheme, *(d)* community programme, *(e)* job training scheme, *(f)* employment training, *(g)* technical and vocational education initiative, *(h)* local collaborative programme and *(i)* open tech and open college, expressed (i) in cash terms, (ii) in constant 1991 prices and (iii) as a figure which indicates the amount of EC funding included in each programme.

Mr. Jackson: The table shows expenditure for Great Britain at cash and constant 1990-91 prices in each year from 1979-80 to 1990-91 on youth opportunities programme (which includes work experience on employers premises), youth training scheme (which includes training credits), community programme, job training scheme (which includes new job training scheme), employment training (which includes the Gateshead garden festival), technical and vocational education initiative, local collaborative projects and open tech and the Open college. I will write to the hon. Member separately on the question of the EC funding.

£

Years	*Youth Opportunities Programme*	*Youth Training Scheme*	*Community Programme*	*Job Training Scheme*	*Employment Training*	*Technical and Vocational Education Initiative*	*Local Collaborative Project*[1]	*Open Tech/ Open Learning*	*Open College*
1979-80									
Cash	123	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Constant price	268	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1980-81									
Cash	214	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Constant price	392	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1981-82									
Cash	396	—	57	—	—	—	—	—	—
Constant price	662	—	145	—	—	—	—	—	—
1982-83									
Cash	543	—	160	311	—	—	—	—	—
Constant price	849	—	251	486	—	—	—	—	—

Years	*Youth Opportunities Programme*	*Youth Training Scheme*	*Community Programme*	*Job Training Scheme*	*Employment Training*	*Technical and Vocational Education Initiative*	*Local Collaborative Project*[1]	*Open Tech/ Open Learning*	*Open College*
1983-84									
Cash	349	427	403	241	—	7	—	5	—
Constant price	522	638	602	360	—	11	—	7	—
1984-85									
Cash	—	836	534	233	—	26	—	18	—
Constant price		1,190	760	331	—	37	—	26	—
1985-86									
Cash	—	870	686	245	—	41	—	18	—
Constant price	—	1,173	925	331	—	55	—	24	—
1986-87									
Cash	—	939	1,073	287	—	72	—	15	2
Constant price	—	1,226	1,401	375	—	94	—	19	3
1987-88									
Cash	—	1,065	1,118	339	—	61	—	16	10
Constant price	—	1,319	1,384	420	—	75	—	20	12
1988-89									
Cash	—	994	674	—	425	88	5	—	6
Constant price	—	1,148	779	—	491	102	5	—	7
1989-90									
Cash	—	976	—	—	1,107	129	1	—	4
Constant price	—	1,059	—	—	1,201	140	2	—	4
1990-91									
Cash	—	844	—	—	1,076	135	—	—	5
Constant price	—	844	—	—	1,076	135	—	—	5

Notes:

1. Figures for each year up to 1987-88 include programme administration costs on a pro rata basis except for CP where all years include administration costs and Open college which includes no administration costs.
2. Constant prices were calculated by the use of the GDP deflator index from the Chancellor's Autumn Statement published in November 1991.

[1] Expenditure on the local collaborative projects is not separately identifiable between 1987-88 and 1990-91.

City of Durham

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons under 18 years are in full-time employment in the City of Durham constituency.

Mr. Jackson: The 1981 census of population figures represents the latest available. In 1981 there were 2,413 16 to 19-year olds in full-time employment in the then City of Durham constituency.

Training Guarantee

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what response he proposes to make to the representation by the London East training and enterprise council in appendix 3 to his evidence to the Employment Committee on 27 November—House of Commons Paper 92-i—on the non-fulfilment of the training guarantee for 16 and 17-year-olds mentioned in paragraph 3.8 of Cm 1810 "People, Jobs and Opportunity".

Mr. Jackson: Our officials have been in regular contact with London East training and enterprise council (LETEC). As LETEC's evidence to the Employment Committee indicated, agreement was reached on two occasions on additional funds to enable LETEC to contract for more training places. The position on the supply of and demand for youth training continues to be closely monitored in east London as elsewhere. Under its contract with the TEC the Department stands ready to discuss any further measures that may be needed to ensure that the guarantee of the offer of a suitable training place to all unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds who want one is met.

Employment and Training

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of people benefiting from special employment and training measures at the latest available date in the constituency of Bury, North; and what is the average cost per person under each.

Mr. Jackson: This Department has a number of employment and training measures in the Bury area but it is not possible to provide figures on a constituency basis, and data on different measures is collected on different bases.

The total number of people who participated in employment service measures (restart and 13-week interviews of claimants, jobclub entrants, participants in restart courses, job review workshops and job search seminars) in the Bury area, in the period April 1991 to February 1992 inclusive was 3,501. In the period April 1991 to 7 February 1992, a total of 610 unemployed people in the Bolton and Bury area were also assisted by the job interview guarantee scheme.

The number of people participating in measures delivered through the Bolton and Bury training and enterprise council (youth training, employment training, and employment action), at 5 February 1992, was 2,732.

Information on the average cost per person under each measure is not readily available.

Youth Training

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what response he expects to make to the representations made by young people from the Canning Town and Beckton area of east London in the course of the ministerial interview on 10 March concerning the lack of quality and effectiveness of his youth training scheme.

Mr. Jackson: I had a constructive and positive meeting with these young people about a range of concerns going much wider than youth training. I invited them to write further to me through their Member of Parliament, and action will be taken in response.

TECs

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils in London have not yet signed their 1992-93 operating agreements.

Mr. Jackson: As at 12 March none of the London training and enterprise councils had signed their 1992-93 operating agreements.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Social Fund

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated full cost of implementing all of the Social Security Advisory Committee's recommendations on the social fund in Northern Ireland in 1992.

Mr. Hanley: The recommendations of the Social Security Advisory Committee would entail wide-ranging changes to the social fund and the full information needed to produce a reliable estimate of the cost is not readily available.

Fund Holding

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the NHS management executive's efforts to canvass interest in general practitioner fund holding in Northern Ireland, detailing dates and venues of presentations to general practitioners or officials, names and roles of experts from Scotland, England or Wales brought over to advise interested parties and the scope of the activity of such consultants or advisers.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 19 February, *Official Report*, Vol. 204, column *211*. Since then, the management executive has held one seminar, on 26 February 1992, for practices expressing an interest in becoming fund holders. Dr. John Steyn, a general practitioner fund holder from Scotland, and Mr. Mark Miller, a deputy director with the NHS management advisory service, spoke to the seminar about the preparatory period and the first year of fund holding.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether general medical practices which are granted fund holding status will have to specifically inform each patient of this fact and its consequences.

Mr. Hanley: Practices which become fund holders are not required to inform their patients; however it is likely that fund-holding practices will wish to explain the details of the scheme to their patients and they will receive every encouragement to do so.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate he makes for each year since 1979 of *(a)* the total population of working age regardless of whether or not they were in work and *(b)* the percentage of the population which was not in work whether or not they were looking for work.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Population of working age in Northern Ireland percentage not in employment 1979-1991[1]

Year	*Population of working age (000s)*[2]	*Percentage not in employment*[3]
1979	859	35·5
1981	874	38·8
1983	888	41·5
1984	898	41·5
1985	906	41·8
1986	915	40·1
1987	923	40·6
1988	927	38·6
1989	932	37·2
1990	938	36·2

[1] Population of working age figures are general registrar's office mid-year estimates. The percentage not in employment is based on estimates from the labour force survey. This surve was not conducted in 1980 and 1982.

[2] Men aged 16-64 and women aged 16-59.

[3] Unemployed plus economically inactive as a percentage of population of working age.

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the value of the contracts received by the Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast in 1991 from Pacific Nuclear Transport Ltd. for modification of ships owned by PNTL.

Mr. Needham: This is a commercial matter between the Harland and Wolff group and Pacific Nuclear Transport Ltd. The hon. Member should address his inquiry to one of those companies.

Road Accidents, Ards Peninsular

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many road accidents in the Ards peninsular during the 24 hours of Tuesday 10 March were reported to the Royal Ulster Constabulary; how many involved injuries; at which locations did these injuries occur; from which locations other ambulances were required to attend each of these road accidents in which personal injuries were involved; and how long it took for the ambulance in each instance to deliver the injured persons to hospital from the time of the initial report of a need for an ambulance.

Mr. Hanley: Two. The first occurred in Portaferry road, Cloghy, the second in Ballyvester road, Donaghadee. Both involved injuries. An ambulance from Bangor station attended the Cloghy accident. One hour and 47 minutes elapsed between the initial request for an ambulance and its arrival at the Ulster hospital. Twenty-two minutes were spent at the scene of the accident stabilising the casualty, and a further 52 minutes transporting him to hospital at a restricted speed necessitated by the nature and severity of his injuries. An ambulance from the Donaghadee area attended the second accident. Thirty-two minutes elapsed between the initial request for an ambulance and its arrival at the Ards hospital.

Social Security

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, persuant to his answer of 9 March 1992 *Official Report,* columns *399-400,* on staff administering the social security programme, if he will give the answer per 1,000 claimants.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Number of staff per 1,000 claimants*
1984	3·8
1985	3·8
1986	3·8
1987	3·9
1988	3·9
1989	3·7
1[illegible]	3·6
199[illegible]2	3·2

Child Benefit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what would have been the gross additional cost, in cash terms and at 1991-92 prices of uprating child benefit fully in line with inflation, assuming each child in the family receives the same rate, in April of each year from 1988 to 1992.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 27 February 1992]*: The information requested is set out.

	Additional Cost	
	In Cash Terms	*At 1991-92 Prices*
	£ million	£ million
1988-89	7·3	9·0
1989-90	18·0	20·8
1990-91	32·8	35·1
1991-92	34·8	34·8
1992-93	30·3	29·0

THE ARTS

Book Statistics

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will list the expenditure on books for public libraries in the United Kingdom for each year since 1981.

Mr. Renton: Public library statistics collected by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and supplemented with material from local authorities will shortly be published by my Library and Information Services Council (England). They show expenditure on books as follows:

	£ million
1981-82	44·0
1982-83	49·9
1983-84	54·3
1984-85	56·3
1985-86	60·7
1986-87	64·2
1987-88	68·2
1988-89	75·2
1989-90	81·4

Galleries (Admission Charges)

Mr. Stanbrook: To ask the Minister for the Arts by what percentage rise or fall attendances at public galleries charging for admission have changed since the charges were introduced.

Mr. Renton: The national galleries which I sponsor—the National gallery, the Tate gallery, the National Portrait gallery and the Wallace collection—do not charge for admission to their core collections. Information on charges and attendances relating to other public galleries is not held centrally.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Department of the Environment

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Lord President of the Council what proportion of time *(a)* on the Floor of the House of Commons and *(b)* in Standing Committee, has been spent on matters under the auspices of the Department of the Environment in the current Session.

Mr. MacGregor: The total time spent on the Floor of the House this Session up to the adjournment of the House on Friday 6 March 1992 was 649 hours and 37 minutes.

The amount of time spent on the Floor of the House on matters falling within the responsibilities of the Department of the Environment was 75 hours and 30 minutes, or 11·6 per cent. of total time on the floor.

The total time spent in Standing Committees up to the adjournment of the House on Friday 6 March 1992 was 491 hours and 13 minutes.

A total of 137 hours and 7 minutes were taken up by matters under the auspices of the Department of the Environment[1]. This amounts to 28 per cent. of time spent in Standing Committee this Session.

[1] This figure does not take account of suspensions in Standing Committee. It includes time "shared" with other Departments when a number of statutory instruments are grouped together for debate in a Standing Committee.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Buildings

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from local education authorities seeking approval for urgent building work for schools.

Mr. Fallon: We have received representations from six local education authorities about urgent building work at schools since our announcement last December of the distribution of annual capital guidelines to LEAs and the voluntary-aided grant allocations for 1992-93.

It is for LEAs to ensure that their schools are in a satisfactory condition. They do not need our approval to undertake building work they judge necessary.

Margaret Ward RC High School

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will reconsider the case of building work approved for St. Margaret Ward RC high school, Stoke-on-Trent.

Mr. Fallon: Grant for capital expenditure and repairs at voluntary-aided schools for 1992-93 will increase by 15 per cent., compared with the current year, to £151 million. However, it is not possible to provide grant for all the projects submitted by local education authorities. Whilst my right hon. and learned Friend cannot reconsider his decision, it is open to Staffordshire county council to submit the project again next year.

Stratford School

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the *(a)* pupil roll, *(b)* cost per pupil and *(c)* annual maintenance grant at Stratford school in each month since April 1990.

Mr. Eggar: The school began to receive annual maintenance grant (AMG) only on being incorporated as grant maintained on 1 April 1991: it was funded until that date by Newham local education authority.

The school's total AMG for the period 1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992, which has been paid in 12 instalments, £1,533,311. There were 574 pupils registered at the school in January 1992 as recorded on its annual departmental return: we do not collect monthly pupil data. The school's total AMG divided by 574 pupils produces a per pupil figure of £2,671.

Performance Levels

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the testing of performance levels of children with special education needs.

Mr. Eggar: The Government's objective is that the national curriculum testing arrangements should be accessible to pupils with special educational needs. My right hon. and learned Friend and I receive many helpful representations from parents and teachers about how this objective can be met.

GCSE

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many letters he has recently received from *(a)* right hon. and hon. Members and *(b)* members of the public about GCSE coursework.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has received 740 letters from Members of Parliament and 2,110 letters from members of the public about GCSE coursework.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received from *(a)* the National Association for the Teaching of English, *(b)* the Northern Examining Association, *(c)* the Joint Matriculation Board, *(d)* the National Association of Advisers in English and *(e)* the joint council for the GCSE, about GCSE coursework; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has received various representations from all but the Joint Matriculation Board about GSCE coursework. He is convinced that limits on coursework are needed in order to maintain public credibility in the GCSE, and is satisfied that the limits which he has set will secure that confidence whilst giving sufficient scope for the innovative assessment techniques facilitated by coursework.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement giving details of the evidence which he has considered in reaching his conclusion that changes should be made to GCSE coursework.

Mr. Eggar: My decision to limit the coursework element of the GCSE in order to maintain public confidence in that qualification was taken in the light of advice from the School Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC) and based on evidence in the HMI report "The Introduction of the GCSE in Schools 1986-88", the SEAC report "Examining GCSE: First General Scrutiny Report", and the "Report of the Independent Appeals Authority for School Examinations". All three reports stressed the difficulty of ensuring standardising marking and adequate moderation in coursework. The first also drew attention to the unfairness caused by coursework not being conducted under uniform conditions.

Barnet

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many out of borough pupils have been educated at Barnet schools during each of the last five years.

Mr. Fallon: The information requested is as follows:

	Number
January 1987	5,296
January 1988	5,392
January 1989	4,747
January 1990	5,023
January 1991	5,377

Pupil Expenditure

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much was spent per pupil in *(a)* primary, *(b)* secondary and *(c)* special schools in Durham in each year since 1981.

Mr. Fallon: School based spending per pupil in nursery and primary schools, secondary schools and special schools in Durham is shown in the table. The figures show spending from 1980-81 until 1989-90, the latest year for which actual expenditure figures are available.

School based spending per pupil

Year	Nursery and Primary £	Secondary £	Special £
1980-81	565	730	2,700
1981-82	635	810	3,030
1982-83	705	866	3,345
1983-84	735	905	3,735
1984-85	750	965	4,180
1985-86	840	1,095	4,640
1986-87	935	1,225	5,045
1987-88	1,050	1,405	5,405
1988-89	1,160	1,575	6,825
1989-90	1,225	1,735	8,150

Notes:

1. School based spending covers the direct costs in schools of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the costs of school meals, home to school transport, LEA central administration, and financing costs of capital expenditure.
2. The figures in the table are derived from Durham local education authority's returns of its spending to the Department of the Environment and of its pupil numbers to the Department of Education and Science.
3. Spending on nursery and primary schools was not collected separately for years after 1986-87, so the figures for the years shown in the table cover both nursery and primary schools.

Local Education Authority Property

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library a specimen agreement of a type he has approved between a college of further education and a local education authority regarding the college's leasing of local education authority property.

Mr. Eggar: The agreements that have been approved to date have been specific to the particular case. We expect governing bodies and local education authorities, in agreeing arrangements, to cover the following: the length of time the college is to remain on the site concerned; the nature of the occupancy—eg. lease or licence; whether any rent is to be paid; the responsibility for repairs and other outgoings; and the terms for cessation of the occupancy.

Nursery Education

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list of nursery school provision by local education authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. Eggar: I have arranged that details of nursery provision for each local education authority in England for January 1991 will be published shortly. Details of nursery provision as at January 1990 were published last year in the DES "Statistical Bulletin 7/91", copies of which are available in the Library

Nursery provision in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

After-school Clubs

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to fund after-school clubs in primary schools in Wigan local education authority.

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) announced on 1 March the Government's intention to expand child care for school age children. The Government plan, through Department of Health programmes, to support a number of new development posts in voluntary organisations, which will work with schools and others to pilot the development of innovative schemes.

It is important that local education authorities and schools should play their part in the development of out of hours care schemes, and we have encouraged schools to respond accordingly by opening up their premises to meet local needs.

Technology Schools

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will state the total number of individual applications he received for his technology schools initiative, the number successful and unsuccessful, and of the latter the number he regarded as being of a satisfactory standard and the additional cost to his allocated £25 million of agreeing to those applications, together with the criteria he adopted to distinguish the categories of application referred to in the ministerial speech made at Shenley Wood school on 14 February;

(2) on what date and in what manner he informed all local education authorities of his schools technology initiative; what criteria he laid down for applications; what maximum costs in capital and revenue were indicated; and what account was taken of existing provision in maintained schools in the authorities containing successful applicants;

(3) if he will state the number of local education authorities making applications in respect of the technology schools initiative together with the number of authorities gaining all, some, or none of their applications, respectively, and the names of those authorities whose applications were satisfactory but unsuccessful.

Mr. Eggar: On 5 December 1991 chief education officers of local education authorities (LEAs) in England were invited in writing to submit up to two projects for funding under the technology schools initiative (TSI). The letter explained that proposals were to be normally for projects in the region of £250,000, although consideration would exceptionally be given to projects costing up to a maximum of £500,000. Priority would be given to bids from schools committed to making good technology provision whatever their existing level of resources. Amongst the factors stated which would be taken into account in assessing bids were:

(i) the track record of the school in technology including its use of the technical and vocational education initiative; clear evidence of a commitment to the development of teaching in technology, including plans to develop vocational courses at 14 to 16 and for older pupils;

(ii) Existing links with industry—where they are demonstrably effective, including the availability of industrial or business funding to match grant; or resources from within the schools budget;

(iii) Existing skills of the school's teaching staff and their enthusiasm for the project; and evidence of high quality school management.

Eighty-nine LEAs submitted proposals in respect of 164 schools. In addition, 30 schools submitted projects directly to the Department. In the face of intense competition, the most worthy projects at 62 schools in 50 LEAs have been approved up to a total of £15 million: 12 LEAs received approval for two bids; 38 LEAs received approval for one bid and 39 LEAs were unsuccessful. The remaining £10 million was allocated for projects at VA and GM schools.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the schools in Gravesham which have opted to become grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Eggar: There are two schools in Gravesham operating as GM and a third has recently been approved to become GM in September. The total number of schools operating or approved for GM status in Kent is now 26. I am delighted that so many schools in this area will enjoy the benefits of grant-maintained status.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many pupils applied to go to Hendon grant-maintained school in the years beginning September 1991 and September 1992; and what was the corresponding number of applicants in 1987.

Mr. Eggar: The Department does not collect centrally information on applications for admissions to grant-maintained schools. However, I understand from Hendon school that it has received 386 applications for admission in September 1992. At this time last year the school had 308 applications for admission to the school in September 1991. The corresponding number in March 1987 was 110.

Student Grants

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether in assessing borrowers' claims for deferment, the Student Loans Company will disregard income from disability living allowance and disability working allowance when those benefits are introduced.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Yes. We have today laid before Parliament regulations amending the Education (Student Loans) Regulations 1991 to ensure that these allowances are fully taken into account.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will arrange for the booklet "Student Grants and Loans—a brief guide" to be published in braille.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I am delighted that the Royal National Institute for the Blind has produced, at my Department's expense, a braille edition of the booklet. I have placed a copy in the Library. The Royal National Institute for the Blind's Peterborough office (PO Box 173, Peterborough PE2 0WS) will make further copies available on request.

Student Fees

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the cost of extending an entitlement to student fees to part-time students on first degree courses, assuming a maximum fee entitlement of £750 and that all such students would be eligible for fees support.

Mr. Alan Howarth *[holding answer 10 March 1992]:* Approximately £87 million, with some 115,000 students—the number of part-time first degree students in England and Wales in 1990, including Open university students, and representing some 29 per cent. of the 401,000 part-time students in higher education that year. This assumes that all students are personally eligible for support.

WALES

Local Government Reform

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if the Vale of Glamorgan is to be one of the unitary authorities in Wales under his recently announced proposals for local government reform.

Mr. David Hunt: Yes, the Vale of Glamorgan is one of the 23 authorities listed in my proposals.

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the reasons why the boundaries of the Vale of Glamorgan were not specified in his recently announced proposals for local government reform in Wales; and how he intends to determine them.

Mr. David Hunt: The boundaries of the Vale of Glamorgan were marked with dotted lines on the map illustrating my proposals so that I can listen to any further representations on their precise locations.

Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table, covering the years 1986-87 and consistent with Cm 1916, showing by sub-programme *(a)* total local authority expenditure in Wales, *(b)* local authority expenditure in Wales on services for which he has policy responsibility and *(c)* an analysis of the differences between *(a)* and *(b)*.

Mr. David Hunt: Consistent with appendix 3 of Cm 1916, the information is as follows:

Local authority expenditure in Wales 1986-87
Local authority expenditure within the responsibility of the Secretary of State

		£ million
Agriculture		
160107	Other agriculture and fisheries	—
160108	Support fishing industry	1
160114	Land drainage and flood prevention	1
160115	Coast protection	2
160117	Land drainage and flood prevention	9
160118	Coast protection	—
Total agriculture		13
Industry		
160209	General labour market—capital	—
160211	General labour market—current	5
Total industry		5
Roads and Transport		
160405	Roads new construction and improvement	67
160406	Other transport capital	3
160407	Road maintenance	82
160408	Other transport current	29
Total roads and transport		181
Housing		
160503	Administration	7

		£ million
160504	Expenses of rent officers	1
160505	Rate fund contribution to HRA	2
160506	Local authority improvements	79
160507	Enveloping	9
160508	New dwellings	23
160509	Land	3
160510	Municipalisation	1
160511	Repurchase of defective dwellings	2
160512	Slum clearance	1
160513	Low-cost home ownership	1
160514	Improvement grants	61
160515	Reinstatement grants	3
160516	Home insulation grants	2
160518	Local authority lending to others	4
160519	Sales	−53
160520	Repayments loans—former tenants	−16
160521	Repayments loans—others	−13
Total housing		115
Other environmental services		
160604	CADW grants to local authorities	1
160605	Tax and rate collection	8
160606	Records, registrations and surveys	1
160607	Urban programme	5
160609	Other local environmental services	178
160610	Urban programme	21
160612	Derelict land	13
160613	Water services grants to local authorities	—
160614	Gypsy sites	—
160615	Other local environmental services	76
	Total other environmental services	304
Education		
160702	Higher and further education	119
160735	Youth service	7
160737	Other education services	5
160742	Primary and nursery education	235
160743	Secondary education	291
160744	Special education	28
160745	Administration and inspection	32
160746	Other education support services	2
160747	School catering	29
160741	Capital expenditure	40
	Total education	789
Arts and libraries		
160804	Libraries capital	2
160805	Libraries current	18
160806	Museums and art galleries capital	—
160807	Museums and art galleries current	2
	Total arts and libraries	22
Personal social services		
160910	Personal social services capital	8
160911	Personal social serrvices current	134
160912	Port health sevice current	—
	Total personal social services	143
Total local authority expenditure within the responsibility of the Secretary of State		1,572

Local authority expenditure outside the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales

		£ million
Intervention board for agricultural produce		
030102	EC subsidy for school milk	—
030103	EC subsidy for school meals	1
Total intervention board		1
Employment		
040602	Consumer protection	5
040702	Sheltered employment and workshops	2
Total Department of Employment		7
Transport		
060401	Ports and piers	—
060601	Airports	—
Total Department of Transport		—
Home Office		
090110	Magistrates courts	10
090111	Other courts	1
090203	Probation and after care	9
090204	Probation—bail hostels	—
090301	Police	148
090304	School crossing patrols	2
090400	Civil defence	1
090601	Fire service	40
090804	Registration of electors	2
Total Home Office		214
Department of Education and Science		
100203	Universities—EC student fees	—
100205	Mandatory student awards	46
Total Department of Education and Science		46
Department of Social Security—Housing benefits		
121102	Rent allowances	48
121104	Rent rebates—discretionary	1
121105	Rent allowances—discretionary	—
121109	Rent rebates	134
121111	Administration of housing benefit	7
Total Department of Social Security		190
Total Local authority expenditure outside the responsibility of the Secretary of State		458
Total Local authority expenditure in Wales		2,030

Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table analysing the data in appendix 1 of Cm 1916, showing separately for each line for the years 1986-87 to 1994-95, *(a)* expenditure within the Welsh block and *(b)* other expenditure.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh block comprises all Welsh Office programmes apart from agriculture, industry and nationalised industries. With the exception of local authority unhypothecated current grants and credit approvals, expenditure is identified on a programme basis in appendix 1 of Cm 1916. The unhypothecated current grants cannot be allocated to specific programmes. The breakdown of credit approvals between block and other programmes is as follows:

£ million

	Block	Other	Total
1986-87	266	2	268
1987-88	283	4	287
1988-89	283	3	286
1989-90	297	4	301
1990-91	252	3	255
1991-92	306	4	310
1992-93	332	5	337
1993-94	302	4	306
1994-95	293	4	297

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the latest figures available, stating whether they are final outturns, provisional outturns or budget figures, for 1988-89 to 1991-92 on the statistical basis of table 1.1 (summary of revenue expenditure and income), table 1.2 (summary of capital expenditure and income), table 1.3 (revenue accounts outturn summary), table 1.4 (capital accounts outturn summary) and table 2.3 (revenue account summary) of Welsh local government financial statistics.

Mr. David Hunt: The tables to which the hon. Gentleman refers are based on final outturn information received from local authorities. Outturn figures for 1988-89 and 1989-90 have already been published in Welsh Local Government Financial Statistics volume 14 1990 and volume 15 1991 for these years respectively. Outturn figures for later years are not yet available. Provisional or budget based figures are not available centrally at this level of detail for all accounts.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a reconciliation between *(a)* the local authority expenditure and its financing figures contained in figures 1.03 and 1.04 and appendices 1 and 3 of Cm 1916 and *(b)* the figures announced in the latest revenue support grant and other settlements.

Mr. David Hunt: Within the aggregate external finance package of £2,352 million for 1992-93 the revenue support grant—RSG—element is £1,621 million, the distributable amount from the non-domestic rating—NDR—account is £536 million and the allocation for revenue specific grants is £195 million.

The Welsh revenue support grant report 1992-93 (revised) (HC 247), approved by the House on 12 February, set out my decisions on the level of RSG and NDR for 1992-93. The RSG total includes the additional resources of £3·5 million that I am making available in recognition of the school teachers' review body recommendations. This additional sum was announced too late to be included in Cm 1916. Appendix 1 of Cm 1916 refers therefore to my original proposal for an RSG allocation of £1,617 million and provides details of the NDR distributable amount and other revenue grants to local authorities for 1992-93.

The unhypothecated support to local authorities for 1992-93 of £2,230 million in figure 1.03 of Cm 1916 includes my original proposals for RSG and the distributable amount of NDR together with the other grants itemised in the table.

Wales summary cash plans: 1992-93 (Cm 1916)
Unhypothecated support to local authorities

	£ million
Revenue Support Grant	1,617
Non-domestic rating: distributable amount: 1992-93	536
Non-domestic rating collection costs	4
Community Charge Grant	27
Community Charge Reduction Scheme Grant	40
Council Tax Preparation Cost Special Grant	6
	2,230

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish tables, covering the years 1986-87 to 1994-95 and consistent with Cm 1916, analysing *(a)* the Welsh block by economic category within spending sector and *(b)* the Welsh programme by economic category within spending sector.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is set out in tables 1 and 2. The definition of economic categories referred to is as follows:

A10	Pay and pension costs of staff employed in central government departments which are subject neither to central government trading body or trading fund treatment.
A20	Pay and pension costs of Ministers, staff of the Northern Ireland civil and court services, staff of other public bodies (eg NHS, fringe bodies, local authorities), locally engaged staff overseas, and the armed forces.
B20	Current expenditure on goods and services ("general administrative expenses") of central Government Departments, the armed forces, the Northern Ireland civil and court services including receipts from central government departments' general administrative expenses and VAT refunds of running costs expenditure.
B30	Receipts covering general administrative expenses which come from outside the government sector.
B40	Current expenditure on goods and services (other than the general administrative expenditure of central government departments) including receipts for the provision of goods and services by one part of government to another where the corresponding payment is classified as B40.
B50	Receipts from the provision of goods and services other than those rendered exclusively to another part of general government (ie covered by B20 and B40) or covering general administrative expenses (ie included under B30).
C10	Subsidies to the private sector.
C20	Subsidies to central government and local authority trading bodies.
C40	Subsidies to other public corporations.
D10	Current grants to the private sector.
E10	Expenditure on the purchase of land an existing buildings.
E20	Expenditure on the construction of new dwellings and improvements to existing dwellings.
E30	Expenditure on other new construction.
E40	Expenditure on the purchase of vehicles, plant, machinery and equipment.
G10	Capital grants to the private sector—companies.
G20	Capital grants to the private sector—persons and non-profit making bodies.
G30	Capital grants to nationalised industries.
G40	Capital grants to list I and II public corporations.
H10	Net lending to the private sector—companies.
H20	Net lending to the private sector—persons and non-profit-making bodies.
H30	Long term net lending to nationalised industries and issue of public dividend capital (PDC).
H40	Net lending to list I and II public corporations.
J10	Long term market and overseas borrowing and financial leasing by nationalised industries.
J20	Market and overseas borrowing and financial leasing by list I public corporations.
J30	Net temporary borrowing by nationalised industries (from the national loans fund, the market and overseas).
J40	Deposits by nationalised industries (bank deposits and transactions in interest-bearing securities) plus all borrowing/lending transactions with other nationalised industries and with public corporations.
M10	Current grants to local authorities within AEF/AEG (excluding EC grants and those covered by M20).
M15	Current grants to local authorities outside AEF/AEG (excluding EC grants and those covered by M20).
M30	Current grants made by the European Communities to local authorities
M40	Non-domestic rates.
N10	Capital grants to local authorities (excluding EC grants and those covered by N20).
N40	Credit approvals.

1. Welsh office block

£ million

		1986-87 Outturn	*1987-88 Outturn*	*1988-89 Outturn*	*1989-90 Outturn*	*1990-91 Outturn*	*1991-92 Forecast outturn*	*1992-93 Plans*	*1993-94 Plans*	*1994-95 Plans*
1. Central Government's own expenditure[1]	A10	25	27	29	32	36	42	46	49	50
	A20	526	588	662	701	785	897	933	975	999
	B20	10	11	12	14	14	16	18	19	19
	B30	−1	−2	−2	−2	−2	−3	−2	−3	−3
	B40	463	512	571	620	703	781	922	978	1,055
	B50	−34	−37	−42	−48	−53	−23	−24	−25	−26
	C10	1	1	1	2	4	7	9	9	9
	C20	12	11	11	18	22	12	14	45	51
	D10	17	17	19	23	26	34	87	81	82
	E10	2	3	2	−2	6	−0	−0	−1	−1
	E20	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
	E30	133	165	178	174	217	223	249	290	301
	E40	26	18	26	39	39	51	61	35	29
	G10	3	11	6	14	8	11	11	12	12
	G20	59	61	69	99	153	175	171	168	171
	G30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	H10	−0	−0	0	−0	0	0	0	0	0
	H20	−0	10	13	1	−19	−48	−38	−22	−22
	Total	1,246	1,397	1,556	1,686	1,939	2,175	2,454	2,610	2,727
2. Local authority elements of the planning total	M10	889	966	1,035	1,071	1,166	1,530	1,672	2,348	2,449
	M15	8	9	12	13	184	234	249	211	220
	M40	308	338	368	414	443	525	536	0	0
	N10	30	31	29	30	149	140	190	196	210
	N40	268	287	286	301	255	310	337	306	297
	Total	1,503	1,631	1,729	1,829	2,197	2,739	2,984	3,060	3,176
3. Nationalised Industries	C30	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	G30	1	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	H30	13	70	44	15	0	0	0	0	0
	J10	2	−59	−36	−34	0	0	0	0	0
	J30	5	−7	−6	0	0	0	0	0	0
	J40	−4	6	5	33	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	17	17	9	15	0	0	0	0	0
4. Other public corporations	C40	0	2	3	3	2	4	3	3	3
	E10	−4	−21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E20	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E30	6	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	G40	0	10	15	26	31	29	32	42	46
	H20	−1	−0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	H40	−2	1	0	−2	−1	0	0	0	0
	J20	−3	1	1	3	2	0	0	0	0
	Total	−2	−3	19	29	34	32	35	45	50
	Grand Totals	2,764	3,043	3,312	3,559	4,170	4,946	5,473	5,714	5,953

[1] Excluding finance to public corporations.

2. Welsh office programme

£ million

		1986-87 Outturn	*1987-88 Outturn*	*1988-89 Outturn*	*1989-90 Outturn*	*1990-91 Outturn*	*1991-92 Forecast outturn*	*1992-93 Plans*	*1993-94 Plans*	*1994-95 Plans*
1. Central Government's own expenditure[1]	A10	25	27	29	32	36	42	46	49	50
	A20	526	588	662	701	785	897	933	975	999
	B20	10	11	12	14	14	16	18	19	19
	B30	−1	−2	−2	−2	−2	−3	−2	−3	−3
	B40	463	512	572	622	705	783	924	981	1,057
	B50	−34	−37	−42	−48	−53	−23	−24	−25	−26
	C10	83	66	77	76	101	143	163	175	177
	C20	12	11	11	18	22	12	14	45	51
	D10	17	18	19	23	27	34	87	81	83
	E10	2	3	2	−2	6	−0	−0	−1	−1
	E20	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

		1986-87 Outturn	*1987-88 Outturn*	*1988-89 Outturn*	*1989-90 Outturn*	*1990-91 Outturn*	*1991-92 Forecast outturn*	*1992-93 Plans*	*1993-94 Plans*	*1994-95 Plans*
	E30	133	165	178	174	218	226	251	292	303
	E40	26	18	26	39	39	51	61	35	29
	G10	116	90	101	81	61	87	78	85	87
	G20	78	73	80	110	165	187	182	179	183
	G30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	G40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	H10	−0	−0	0	−0	0	0	0	0	0
	H20	−0	10	13	1	−19	−48	−38	−22	−22
	Total	1,461	1,553	1,738	1,840	2,104	2,405	2,693	2,866	2,987
2. Local authority elements of the planning total	M10	890	968	1,037	1,073	1,167	1,532	1,674	2,350	2,451
	M15	8	9	12	12	183	233	248	210	219
	M30	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
	M40	308	338	368	414	443	525	536	0	0
	N10	32	33	30	33	152	144	195	200	215
	N40	268	287	286	301	256	310	337	306	297
	Total	1,506	1,635	1,732	1,832	2,201	2,746	2,990	3,066	3,182
3. Nationalised Industries	C30	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	G30	1	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	H30	13	70	44	15	0	0	0	0	0
	J10	2	−59	−36	−34	0	0	0	0	0
	J30	5	−7	−6	0	0	0	0	0	0
	J40	−4	6	5	33	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	17	17	9	15	0	0	0	0	0
4. Other public corporations	C40	6	9	11	7	9	12	13	13	13
	E10	−4	−21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E20	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E30	6	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	G10	0	0	0	−0	0	0	0	0	0
	G40	36	63	80	103	118	121	110	108	114
	H20	−1	−0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	H40	−0	5	2	−4	−1	−1	2	2	2
	J20	−1	2	3	4	5	3	2	2	2
	Total	43	63	97	111	132	135	127	125	132
	Grand Totals	3,028	3.268	3,575	3,797	4,437	5,286	5,809	6,056	6,300

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[1] Excluding finance to public corporations.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish tables analysing for the years 1986-87 to 1994-95 the data in figure 1·03 of Cm 1916, analysing the component parts of *(a)* the Welsh block and *(b)* other expenditure, by (i) public expenditure (sub)-programme and (ii) the functional classification used in the identifiable expenditure figures (appendix E of Cm 1920).

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Public expenditure sub-programmes
Welsh Block

£ million

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
Roads and transport									
160401 Motorways and trunk roads new construction/ improvement	97	116	137	118	163	146	174	—	—
160402 Freight facilities and other grants	—	—	1	—	—	1	1	—	—
160403 Motorways and trunk roads maintenance	15	14	15	15	19	20	21	—	—
160404 Other central government	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—
160405 Principal roads grant	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
160405 Industrial Development Act grant	—	—	—	1	1	1	2	—	—
160408 Loss of redundancy rebate	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
160409 Transport grant	20	21	20	20	27	36	37	—	—
161301 Credit approvals	24	24	69	65	54	62	62	—	—
161213 New towns—capital expenditure on roads	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total roads and transport	159	179	242	220	264	267	298	329	342
Housing									
160501 Subsidies—central Government to local authorities	12	10	10	16	—	—	—	—	—

		1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
160502	Subsidies—other	1	1	1	1	3	6	8	—	—
160504	Other current expenditure	2	2	2	2	4	4	5	—	—
160506	Renewal areas, OIA's and HAM's	—	—	—	—	1	1	3	—	—
160507	Group repair and enveloping	—	—	—	—	19	14	13	—	—
160511	Repurchase of defective dwellings	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	—	—
160512	Slum clearance	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	—
160513	Improvement for sale	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
160514	Improvement grants	—	—	—	—	75	54	104	—	—
160515	Reinstatement grants for defective dwellings	—	—	—	—	4	3	3	—	—
160516	Homes insulation grant	2	2	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
160522	Miscellaneous central Government capital expenditure	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
160523	Housing for Wales—grant-in-aid	1	1	1	2	2	3	3	—	—
160524	Housing for Wales capital grants to housing association	48	49	56	86	130	158	155	—	—
160525	Housing for Wales lending to housing associations	3	15	17	4	−14	−41	−32	—	—
160526	Housing for Wales grant redemption fund surpluses	−1	−1	−1	−2	−1	—	−1	—	—
160527	Housing for Wales redemption of grant following sale	−1	−1	−2	−3	−4	−3	−1	—	—
160528	Housing for Wales—receipts other	−3	−5	−4	−3	−5	−8	−6	—	—
160529	New housing revenue account subsidy	—	—	—	—	179	170	210	—	—
160530	Housing for Wales—HAG on deferred interest	8	7	8	7	8	8	4	—	—
161212	New towns capital expenditure	−1	−6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
161301	Credit approvals	140	151	114	114	84	115	154	—	—
	Total housing	210	225	203	226	486	485	625	673	697
Other environmental services										
090400	Civil defence	—	—	1	1	1	1	1	—	—
160301	Promotion of tourism	8	9	9	10	10	11	14	—	—
160601	Ancient monuments and historic buildings—CADW	5	7	7	7	9	10	12	—	—
160602	Central environmental services—cash limited	6	6	6	7	7	23	30	—	—
160603	Central environmental services—non-cash limited	2	9	4	10	3	3	3	—	—
160604	CADW grants to local authorities	1	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—
160607	Urban programme/urban development grant—current	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	—	—
160609	Storm and flood damage	—	—	—	—	2	1	—	—	—
160410	Urban programme/urban development grant—capital	8	7	6	8	21	29	26	—	—
160613	Grants for rural water services	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
160614	Gypsy sites grants	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—
160615	Clean air grants	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
160616	Land Authority for Wales	−5	2	1	1	1	—	—	—	—
160617	Urban regeneration grant	—	—	—	—	2	3	4	—	—
160618	Council tax and rating	—	—	—	1	1	11	12	—	—
160619	National parks supplementary grant	2	3	3	3	3	4	5	—	—
161214	New town capital expenditure	1	−14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
161215	Urban development corporation	—	11	18	29	33	32	35	—	—
161301	Credit approvals	65	59	42	60	53	60	46	—	—
	Total environmental services	98	104	104	143	152	197	194	193	199
Education, arts and libraries										
160731	Schools	2	4	3	4	5	6	7	—	—
160732	Access funds	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	—
160733	Higher education	2	2	2	2	2	3	45	—	—
160734	Further education	2	2	2	2	2	2	5	—	—
160735	Youth service	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—
160736	Welsh language	2	2	2	3	4	5	6	—	—
160737	Other educational services	1	1	2	3	5	9	8	—	—
160738	Education support	3	8	11	12	13	14	15	—	—
160739	Bilingual education	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	—	—
160748	Other specific grants	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
161301	Credit approvals (education)	28	39	49	48	50	57	55	—	—
160801	National Library of Wales	3	4	4	4	5	6	6	—	—
160802	National Museum of Wales	8	9	12	16	16	15	14	—	—
160803	Other arts and libraries	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—
161301	Credit approvals (arts and libraries)	2	3	1	2	1	2	3	—	—
	Total education and arts and libraries	56	76	91	99	107	122	168	167	168
Health and personal social services										
160901	Hospitals and community health services	728	807	894	962	1,077	1,232	1,363	—	—
160902	Other health services	1	—	—	1	1	1	1	—	—

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
160904 Other centrally funded health	19	23	30	39	52	68	81	—	—
160905 Personal social services	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	—	—
160906 Family practitioners services administration	5	5	5	7	10	12	12	—	—
160907 Family practitioners services	229	254	254	305	342	368	402	—	—
160908 Welfare food and EC medical costs	7	7	6	6	7	6	7	—	—
160909 NHS contributions, cost of collection	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	—	—
160911 Child care training, etc.	—	—	—	—	1	1	2	—	—
160913 GP practice funds	—	—	—	3	—	10	10	—	—
161301 Credit approvals	6	8	7	6	9	10	11	—	—
Total health and personal social services	995	1,106	1,228	1,333	1,501	1,713	1,892	1,960	2,053
Departmental/Central Administration									
161001 Departmental running costs	34	36	38	43	48	55	60	—	—
161002 Contracted-out VAT refunds	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
161003 Central administration receipts	−1	−1	−1	—	−2	−1	−1	—	—
161004 Central administration capital	2	1	2	3	2	2	3	—	—
161005 Other current expenditure	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total departmental/Central administration	34	36	39	45	49	55	61	64	66
Unhypothecated support to local authorities									
160620 National non-domestic rate collection cost	—	—	—	—	3	3	4	—	—
161302 Revenue support grant	—	—	—	—	1,411	1,236	1,617	—	—
161303 Rate support grant	576	950	1,015	1,049	—	4	—	—	—
161304 National non-domestic rate payments	308	338	368	414	443	525	536	—	—
161312 Community charge grant	—	—	—	—	—	268	27	—	—
161305 Rate rebates to disabled people	4	4	6	7	—	—	—	—	—
161306 Rate rebates in enterprise zones	3	3	4	5	—	—	—	—	—
161307 Community charge transitional relief	—	—	—	—	20	—	—	—	—
161311 Community charge reduction scheme	—	—	—	—	—	62	40	—	—
161312 Community charge rebilling and administration	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—
161314 Council tax preparation costs	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	—	—
Total Unhypothecated Support to Local Authorities	1,193	1,296	1,392	1,474	1,608	2,102	2,230	2,324	2,425

(b) Other Programmes

£ million

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food									
160101 Market support under CAP	39	22	38	33	54	82	103	—	—
160102 National supplement to market support under CAP	2	2	2	4	4	3	3	—	—
160104 Grants and lr j 7-2oans for capital and other improvements	13	9	8	8	9	9	13	—	—
160105 Support for agriculture in special areas	36	35	33	34	35	45	42	—	—
160106 Animal health	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
160107 Other agricultural and food services	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	—	—
160108 Support for the fishing industry	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
160109 Support for the fishing industry and other fishery services	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
160110 Other agriculture and food—EC	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	—
160111 Support—fishing industry EC	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
160112 Compensation to sheep producers	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—
160114 Arterial drainage grants to LAs	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	—	—
160115 Coast protection	1	1	1	2	3	4	4	—	—
160116 Arterial drainage grants to WRA	—	—	—	1	—	2	2	—	—
161301 Credit approvals	2	4	3	3	3	4	5	—	—
Total Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	99	77	86	87	112	154	175	185	186
Industry									
160201 Regional development grants	86	51	57	29	22	20	5	—	—
160202 Regional selective assistance	34	34	41	42	35	60	54	—	—
160206 Regional enterprise grants	—	—	—	1	2	2	2	—	—
160207 Other support services	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
160208 Small firms measures	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
160210 Careers strengthening scheme	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	—	—
161201 Development Board for Rural Wales (DBRW)	8	7	10	10	10	12	13	—	—
161203 DBRW—housing subsidies	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	—	—
161204 Welsh Development Agency	35	57	66	69	85	89	76	—	—
161301 Credit approvals	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total—Industry	167	152	178	155	158	190	166	160	164

	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95
Nationalised Industries									
161101 Welsh Water Authority External Finance Limits	17	17	9	15	—	—	—	—	—

(ii) Identifiable General Government Expenditure

It is not possible to analyse the data shown in figure 1.03 of Cm 1916 in terms of the functional classifications used in the identifiable general Government expenditure tables which appear in appendix E of Cm 1920.

The main reason for this is that, for the local authority sector, general Government expenditure has a different coverage than the planning total (which underlies figure 1.03 of Cm 1916).

General Government expenditure measures the net expenditure of the local authority sector, including that which is financed from local authorities' own resources, such as income from the community charge and from capital receipts. The planning total covers those elements of local authority spending over which central government has control—grants, non-domestic rate payments and credit approvals.

Whereas the net out-turn expenditure of local authorities is allocated across the various functions shown in appendix E of Cm 1920, it is not possible to do the same with several components of the planning total, such as revenue support grant.

Specialised Employment Initiative

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from the Welsh initiative for specialised employment on the effect of residential costs on the livelihood of people with learning difficulties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Welsh Office officials have received a letter from the Welsh Initiative for Specialised Employment—WISE—principally concerned with the relationship between income support and earnings in employment. A reply will be sent when consultation with the Department of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has been completed.

Monmouth Borough Council

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much is allocated for 1991-92 by Monmouth borough council for bed-and-breakfast accommodation for homeless persons.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The amount budgeted by local authorities for bed-and-breakfast accommodation for homeless persons for 1991-92 is not held centrally.

Mrs. Maria Hill

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had from Mrs. Maria Hill, Burnt Barn road, Bulwark, Chepstow, Gwent regarding the imminent repossession of her property; and what response he has made.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: No representations have been received from Mrs. Maria Hill about the repossession of her property. However, following discussions with the Government last December, mortgage lenders have introduced a range of measures to reduce the number of repossessions and Mrs. Hill should be advised to contact her lender as a matter of urgency.

Felinteli (Port Dinorwic) Bypass

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to the statement by the Minister of State on 27 February, *Official Report*, column 1206, on what date work on the Felinteli (Port Dinorwic) bypass will commence; what is the estimated target date for completion; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Tenders have been invited. Work is expected to start later this year although the precise date is contingent on the management of the trunk road programme as a whole. The scheme will take approximately two years to complete.

Community Hospitals

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his statement of 27 February, *Official Report*, column 1152, how much money has been earmarked specifically for the new east Dwyfor and north Meirionydd community hospital whether a location has been determined; what is the planned date to commence work on this hospital; when it will be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: A sum of £598,000 has been reserved in the 1992-93 all Wales major capital building programme for the proposed new east Dwyfor and north Meirionydd community hospital. Management responsibility for this development rests with the Gwynedd health authority. It is for the authority initially to determine its location and the planning and construction time scale subject only to the approval in principle of the Welsh Office. No submission has yet been made.

Agricultural Investment

Mr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales further to his answer of 9 March, *Official Report*, column *420*, if he will give the figures for investment in fixed capital in agriculture in Wales for each of the last eight years.

Mr. David Hunt: Estimates of investment in gross fixed capital formation in agriculture in Wales in the last eight years for which information is available are as follows:

Year	*£ million Wales*
1982	113
1983	123
1984	133
1985	114
1986	119
1987	94
1988	96
1989	89

Singleton Hospital

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he received for and against the West Glamorgan health authority's proposal to stop funding the night casualty service at Singleton hospital.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Fifty-one letters and a petition opposing the proposal have been received.

Government

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received about the government of Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Very few individuals and organisations have written to me specifically about the establishment of an elected Assembly. I have received many representations from individuals and organisations about my proposals for local government reorganisation and the establishment of a structure of unitary authorities.

Sheltered Workshops

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is *(a)* the total amount of funding currently given by his Department towards the setting up of sheltered workshops for disabled people in Wales and *(b)* the number of places made available; and what were the corresponding figures for each year from 1979 onwards.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 14 February 1992]:* Government funding for sheltered workshops is the responsibility of the employment service and details of its expenditure in Wales which it has provided are shown in the following table. These include an element from revenue support grant paid to local authority by my Department through the employment service. The employment service does not have information on expenditure before 1986-87 nor the number of places before 1981-82.

Sheltered workshops places and Government expenditure in Wales

£ million

Year	*Workshop numbers*	*Total Government expenditure (including capital)*
1981-82	416	n/a
1982-83	431	n/a
1983-84	448	n/a
1984-85	466	n/a
1985-86	479	n/a
1986-87	480	1·277
1987-88	480	1·405
1988-89	495	1·491
1989-90	486	1·483
1990-91	471	1·434

MOT Inspections

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will propose legislation to enable local authorities to tender for carrying out MOT inspections of vehicles owned by other organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No. Existing legislation provides for MOT examinations to be carried out by inspectors appointed by any council designated by the Secretary of State for Transport. There is no restriction on the ownership of the vehicles which may be tested by such councils.

National Curriculum (Arts and Music)

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to make the orders for art and music in the national curriculum in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have today laid the final orders with associated documents setting out attainment targets and programmes of study for art and music in the national curriculum for pupils aged five to 14. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House. The orders apply to Wales. My right hon. Friend has already published draft orders for England on 10 March.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bananas

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the present position of the European Commission on the question of banana exports from African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and GATT tarification, following the Commissioners' meeting on 4 March.

Mr. Gummer: I understand that no decision was reached at the meeting on 4 March and that the Commission is planning to discuss this question again on 25 March. The United Kingdom has pressed the importance of a GATT settlement in conformity with our continuing commitments to the Windward Islands and Jamaica.

Calf Rearing

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the criteria acceptable to his Department before an intensive calf rearing unit can be established in the countryside.

Mr. Curry: Anybody wishing to establish an intensive calf rearing unit in the countryside would have to comply with all the appropriate legislation including the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 (as amended) and the Welfare of Calves Regulations 1987.

Dietary Supplements

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations occurred between his Department and *(a)* the International Society for Professional Aromatherapists and *(b)* the Society for the Promotion of Natural Therapy concerning his Department's initiative on dietary supplements.

Mr. MacLean: Our officials sent the European Community discussion paper on dietary supplements to the International Society of Professional Aromatherapists and the Society for the Promotion of Nutritional Therapy and received comments from these organisations. The Department will continue to consult both them and other interested groups as EC negotiations progress.

Oilseed Rape

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is the average yield of diesel per acre from oilseed rape;

(2) how many gallons of diesel are used to produce 15 gallons of diesel from oilseed rape, taking into account that used by machinery, pesticides and fertilisers.

Mr. Curry: Diesel fuel from rapeseed oil is not in production in the United Kingdom, so only theoretical estimates can be given. Taking a five-year average (1987 to 1991) of rapeseed yields in the United Kingdom, very approximately 520 litres of diesel might be produced from an acre of rapeseed. Diesel derived from rapeseed could cost around three times as much to produce as diesel derived from inorganic sources. Calculating the ratio between the energy expended on the production of diesel from rapeseed and the energy released when that diesel is consumed is complex. In particular, the inputs are difficult to quantify comprehensively. The best assessment currently made by my Department is that the ratio of energy expended to energy obtained is possibly in the range 1:1 to 1:1·5.

Rovral

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ban all imports of French wine for vines in vineyards treated with Rovral produced by Rhône-Poulenc.

Mr. Maclean: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place Rovral on off-label approval so that it can be used on English vines in English vineyards.

Mr. Maclean: Approval for off-label use can be given only where an application supported by adequate data has been received and evaluated. The relevant data have not been received to support such an application.

Sweeteners

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what representations he has made to the EC to ensure that aspartame is not eliminated in the new European directive on additives;

(2) what representations he has received with regard to the use of high-intensity sweeteners used as flavour enhancers in sugar sweetened chewing gum; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will make representations to the European Commission to ensure that high-intensity sweeteners are not withdrawn until a suitable alternative which permits the manufacture of chewing gum that does not stick to dentures has been found;

(4) what estimate he has made of the effect on sales of sugar chewing gum of the prohibition of high-intensity sweeteners and of the impact on employment opportunities.

Mr. Maclean: The proposals currently under discussion in Brussels would permit continuation of the existing use of intense sweeteners specified by the hon. Friend. The question of a ban or of the need for representations does not, therefore, arise. My officials have, however, discussed with representatives of the industry concerned how their existing position might best be maintained should the present proposals be changed.

Organic Farming

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on conversion payments for organic farmers; and whether he has any proposals for paying farmers for organic management.

Mr. Curry: Organic farmers and those converting from non-organic to organic methods of farming can receive assistance under various MAFF grants including the farm and conservation grant scheme, nitrate-sensitive areas scheme and the set-aside scheme.

It is hoped that the European Commission's proposals for agriculture and the environment will provide a means whereby direct assistance could be given to existing organic farmers and those wishing to convert.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what recommendations he has received from the chairman of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee on the European Commission's proposals for reforming the common agricultural policy, COM 91 258;

(2) what recommendations he has received from the chairman of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee on the European Commission's proposals for measures accompanying the reform of the common agricultural policy, particularly the agri-environment action programme, COM 91 415.

Mr. Curry: None, but the Earl of Selborne's speech on reform of the common agricultural policy, delivered in the other place on 17 October 1991, was noted with interest.

Rabies

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the number of cases of rabies reported in 1991 in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Germany, Spain and Portugal; how many of these cases arose in areas within 50 km of a main port of entry; and if he will provide separate figures for the Pas de Calais area of France.

Mr. Maclean: Precise information on the locality of rabies cases in relation to main ports of entry is not available, but the number of such cases is likely to be small. The other information requested is as follows:

Number of rabies cases (1 January 1991—to 30 September 1991)

	Foxes	*Other Wildlife*	*Livestock/ Horses*	*Dogs/ Cats*	*Humans*	*Total*
Netherlands	—	[1]12	—	—	—	[1]12
Belgium	14	—	5	1	—	20
Luxembourg	6	—	2	—	—	8
France	[4]1,335	69	192	87	[2]1	1,684
Germany	2,195	238	188	272	—	2,893
Spain	—	—	—	[3]4	—	[3]4
Portugal	—	—	—	—	—	0

Source: Rabies Bulletin Europe (WHO Collaborating Centre for Rabies Surveillance and Research, Tübingen, Germany)

[1] All insectivorous bats

[2] Contracted in Mexico

[3] All in Spanish North Africa—Ceuta and Melilla

[4] Includes one case in a fox in Pas de Calais

Ostrich Farms

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guidelines he has laid down for ostrich farms on spongiform encephalopathy in ostriches.

Mr. Maclean: Following recent reports in the German scientific press of a spongiform encephalopathy-like disease in three ostriches which died in Germany in 1986, 1988 and 1989, guidance was issued to known keepers of ostriches in this country. The guidance provided information on these reports and asked that owners' veterinary surgeons be given copies so that they could monitor the birds for neurological symptoms. Procedures in cases of suspicion were recommended, which included in particular informing the Ministry. No reports have been received as a result.

Birds

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recommendations he has received from the chairman of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee relating to United Kingdom nature conservation and land use policies arising from the publication of the recent reports sponsored by the JNCC on birds and pastoral agriculture in Europe; the conservation of lowland dry grassland birds in Europe and breeding waders on wet grassland.

Mr. Curry: No recommendations arising from these reports have been received, but the reports are of interest to my Department in the development of its policies for nature conservation and land use.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total number of BSE confirmed cases by county or region for England and Scotland for the period 1 January 1992 until 28 February 1992.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his question on 10 March 1992, *Official Report*, column *453*.

Water Abstraction

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of the National Rivers Authority about the provision of funds to compensate the holders of water abstraction licences whose licences have to be revoked in the interest of maintaining river flows at an acceptable level, or to protect groundwater levels.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 12 March 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State regularly meets the chairman of the National Rivers Authority to discuss the authority's business. The provision of funds for revocation of abstraction licences has not been raised in any recent discussion.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Diplomatic Wing

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he proposes to make any further changes in his Department's diplomatic wing cash limits for 1991-92.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Subject to parliamentary approval of a late spring supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class II, vote 2—other external relations—will increase by £105,857,000 from £193,370,000 to £299,227,000. This to take account of a further contribution to the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia—UNAMIC—an initial contribution towards the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia—UNTAC—and the agreement of the transfer of gold to the Baltic states. This increase is partly offset by a reduction in the cash limit for class II, vote 1 of £4,000,000 from £637,285,000 to £633,285,000. The running costs limit on vote 1 will be decreased by £2,600,000 from £478,460,000 to £475,860,000. The remainder will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Manufactures (Exports)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the volume of exports of manufactures since the second quarter of 1979.

Mr. Mellor: Following is the available information:

United Kingdom exports of manufactures: volume index
(1985 = 100)
Balance of payments basis
Seasonally adjusted

	Index
1979	
Quarter 2	99
Quarter 3	91
Quarter 4	94
1980	
Quarter 1	96
Quarter 2	92
Quarter 3	89
Quarter 4	88
1981	
Quarter 1	83
Quarter 2	85
Quarter 3	88
Quarter 4	88
1982	
Quarter 1	88
Quarter 2	89
Quarter 3	85
Quarter 4	87
1983	
Quarter 1	86
Quarter 2	86
Quarter 3	88
Quarter 4	88
1984	
Quarter 1	93
Quarter 2	92
Quarter 3	94
Quarter 4	99
1985	
Quarter 1	99
Quarter 2	102
Quarter 3	99
Quarter 4	100
1986	
Quarter 1	101
Quarter 2	105
Quarter 3	103
Quarter 4	107
1987	
Quarter 1	112
Quarter 2	109
Quarter 3	115
Quarter 4	113
1988	
Quarter 1	113
Quarter 2	118
Quarter 3	122
Quarter 4	120
1989	
Quarter 1	127
Quarter 2	127
Quarter 3	131
Quarter 4	137
1990	
Quarter 1	138
Quarter 2	143
Quarter 3	139
Quarter 4	141
1991	
Quarter 1	141
Quarter 2	146
Quarter 3	146
Quarter 4	146

Value Added Tax

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning VAT on house renovation work; and if he will reconsider his policy on charging VAT on these works.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have received a number of representations from the construction industry and individual property owners; our obligations under the EC sixth VAT directive prevent us extending the scope of our current zero-rating.

Cider

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy in the EC Council of Ministers to resist proposals that cider should be taxed as wine.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government support the industry's case for a separate tax category for cider and perry. We shall continue to oppose any proposal which would require cider and perry to be subject to the same rates of duty as wine.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing, for the latest year available, identifiable public expenditure by function in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom expressed *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* as an index (United Kingdom total identifiable public expenditure = 100), *(c)* as an amount per capita and *(d)* as an amount per capita expressed as an index (United Kingdom amount per capita = 100).

Mr. Mellor: Identifiable public expenditure by function and territory for 1990-91 is set out in table E6 of the statistical supplement to the 1991 "Autumn Statement."

Income Tax

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 6 March, *Official Report*, columns *322-23* to the hon. Member for Mid Kent (Mr. Rowe) if he will give the answer at 1991-92 prices and at 1991-92 earnings (average gross male earnings).

Mr. Maude: The information is in the table at 1991-92 prices. It is not appropriate to apply a gross earnings deflator to total tax liabilities.

Tax liabilities 1985-86 to 1990-91 at 1991-92 prices

Year	*Total tax liability* (*£ billion*)	*Tax liability at the basic rate* (*£ billion*)	*Tax liability at the higher rate* (*£ billion*)	*of which Tax liability excess over the basic rate* (*£ billion*)
1985-86	54·6	47·2	7·4	2·9
1986-87	58·5	49·4	9·0	3·8
1987-88	59·5	49·1	10·4	4·9
1988-89	57·6	47·1	10·5	3·9
1989-90	61·3	49·3	12·0	4·5
[1]1990-91	62·2	49·1	13·2	4·9

[1] Latest estimate based on a projection of the 1989-90 Survey of Personal Income.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the increase in the basic rate of income tax which would be required to yield the same revenue as his latest estimate of the net yield from the community charge in 1992-93.

Mr. Maude: Community charge receipts in 1992-93 are expected to be £8 billion as set out in table 1.2 of the 1992 FSBR. This is equivalent to 4p on the basic rate of income tax.

Mortgages

Mr. Walden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average mortgage loan in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France and *(c)* Germany.

Mr. Maples: The average outstanding mortgage in the United Kingdom was £27,200 in 1991-92. The average new mortgage in 1991Q4 was around £45,000. No directly comparable figures are available for France and Germany. However, the average mortgage loan issued by a leading lender in France is currently in the region of 370,000 French francs, while the average new loan advanced by the German mortgage banks was 270,000 deutschmarks in 1989.

Allowances

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the revenue yield in 1992-93 from freezing *(a)* the married couple's allowance, *(b)* the additional pesonal allowance and *(c)* the widow's bereavement allowance, instead of index-linking them.

Mr. Maude: The yields in a full year at 1992-93 levels from freezing the married couple's allowance for those aged under 65 would be about £190 million. Corresponding yields for the additional personal allowance and the widow's bereavement allowance are about £10 million and under £5 million.

Valuation Reviews

Mr. Speller: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will institute a general valuation review of hotels, guest houses and holiday flats in north Devon.

Mr. Maples: I do not intend to institute a general valuation review of hotels, guest houses and holiday flats in north Devon.

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he plans to carry out a general review of the rating valuations of properties used for the accommodation of tourists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples: It is not planned to carry out a general review of the rating valuation of properties used for the accommodation of tourists although the valuation officer, Bournemouth, is reinspecting hotels in the Bournemouth area and making adjustments to the rating assessments where necessary.

National Debt

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the interest on the national debt as a percentage of gross domestic product during the past five years and in 1978-79.

Mr. Maples: Figures for both gross and net general Government debt interest during the past five years and in 1978-79 as a percentage of gross domestic product are given below:

	General Government debt interest as percentage of gross domestic product	
	Gross	*Net*[1]
1978-79	4·3	2·6
1986-87	4·5	3·0
1987-88	4·2	2·8
1988-89	3·8	2·5
1989-90	3·6	2·2
1990-91	3·3	2·1

[1] Interest payments by general government less interest receipts.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table, otherwise comparable to table 5.11 of Cm 1920, providing similar analyses for *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested for the years 1986-87 to 1990-91 is set out in the table. Corresponding data for later years are not available.

Local authority expenditure in the United Kingdom by territory[1]

	1986-87 outturn £ million	*1987-88 outturn £ million*	*1988-89 outturn £ million*	*1989-90 outturn £ million*	*1990-91 outturn £ million*
England					
Total expenditure	34,726	37,066	38,856	44,415	47,333
Less central Government support	27,207	29,136	29,549	30,783	34,357
Equals local authority self-financed expenditure	7,519	7,930	9,307	13,632	12,976
Scotland					
Total expenditure	5,026	5,394	5,724	6,228	6,696
Less central Government support	4,259	4,565	4,885	5,268	5,527
Equals local authority self-financed expenditure	767	828	838	959	1,168
Wales					
Total expenditure	2,224	2,398	2,517	2,839	3,182
Less central Government support	1,890	2,040	2,141	2,262	2,589
Equals local authority self-financed expenditure	334	358	376	577	592
Northern Ireland					
Total expenditure	130	134	152	155	163
Less central Government support	37	50	46	50	47
Equals local authority self-financed expenditure	93	84	106	106	117

[1] The split of debt interest figures between territories is partially estimated.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table, otherwise comparable to table 5.5 of Cm 1920, showing separately for local authorities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the source departments for central Government support, distinguishing current from capital.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is set out in the table:

Central Government support for Local Authorities in the United Kingdom
By Territory and Department

£ million

	1986-87 outturn	*1987-88 outturn*	*1988-89 outturn*	*1989-90 outturn*	*1990-91 outturn*	*1991-92 estimated outturn*	*1992-93 plans*	*1993-94 plans*	*1994-95 plans*
England									
Current									
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	24	26	25	−59	−118	−133	−164	−186	−207
Department of Trade and Industry	—	—	—	—	1	12	15	11	12
Department of Employment	220	238	245	330	356	404	376	390	385
Department of Transport	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
DOE—Housing	21	22	26	26	2,351	2,602	2,980	2,948	3,076
DOE—Environment	93	75	66	64	61	66	87	79	82
DOE—Local government	17,047	18,234	18,817	19,521	20,342	28,022	30,714	32,274	33,761
Home Office	1,767	1,970	2,103	2,366	2,701	3,074	3,257	3,476	3,670
Department of Education and Science	636	782	831	982	1,529	2,127	2,353	2,511	2,637
Department of Health	—	—	7	21	29	57	84	80	78
Department of Social Security	4,159	4,386	4,153	4,387	3,267	3,034	3,614	3,900	4,200
Total current	23,968	25,734	26,275	27,639	30,520	39,267	43,319	45,500	47,700
Capital									
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	36	30	28	29	31	43	43	42	43
Department of Trade and Industry	1	1	1	1	—	1	1	1	1
Department of Employment	3	3	2	2	4	5	8	4	3
Department of Transport	487	594	670	626	747	912	1,025	1,025	1,048
DOE—Housing	1,613	1,584	1,508	1,417	1,851	1,962	1,924	1,914	1,964

	1986-87 outturn	*1987-88 outturn*	*1988-89 outturn*	*1989-90 outturn*	*1990-91 outturn*	*1991-92 estimated outturn*	*1992-93 plans*	*1993-94 plans*	*1994-95 plans*
DOE—Environment	533	607	439	474	408	496	573	571	589
DOE—Local government	—	—	—	—	—	—	41	—	—
Home Office	102	113	113	121	222	297	322	345	357
Department of Education and Science	400	402	438	406	488	545	598	611	625
Department of Health	65	69	74	69	86	109	131	128	131
Total capital	3,239	3,402	3,274	3,145	3,837	4,369	4,665	4,640	4,760
Total England	27,207	29,136	29,549	30,783	34,357	43,636	47,984	50,150	52,450
Scotland									
Current									
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	4
Department of Employment	6	6	7	14	16	3	3	3	3
Department of Social Security	507	589	560	629	697	680	825	850	900
Scotland	3,034	3,165	3,533	3,820	4,000	4,912	5,214	5,495	5,728
Total current	3,551	3,763	4.103	4,466	4,716	5,599	6,046	6,350	6,650
Capital									
Department of Employment	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Department of Transport	2	2	1	1	—	1	—	—	—
Scotland	706	800	781	801	811	873	901	924	982
Total capital	708	802	783	803	812	875	901	924	982
Total Scotland	4,259	4,565	4,885	5,268	5,527	6,474	6,947	7,300	7,650
Wales									
Current									
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Department of Employment	12	10	10	14	16	17	18	17	18
Home Office	85	96	103	109	132	150	157	167	177
Department of Education and Science	38	41	44	48	78	118	133	145	153
Department of Social Security	238	246	244	251	153	127	151	150	200
Wales	1,207	1,315	1,416	1,498	1,794	2,291	2,458	2,559	2,670
Total current	1,581	1,709	1,817	1,923	2,174	2,705	2,919	3,050	3,200
Capital									
Department of Employment	—	—	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Home Office	9	11	7	5	8	12	17	18	19
Wales	300	320	316	334	407	454	531	506	512
Total capital	309	331	324	339	416	467	549	525	531
Total Wales	1,890	2,040	2,141	2,262	2,589	3,172	3,468	3,600	3,750
Northern Ireland									
Current									
Northern Ireland	31	41	41	42	44	48	50	52	55

	1986-87 outturn	1987-88 outturn	1988-89 outturn	1989-90 outturn	1990-91 outturn	1991-92 estimated outturn	1992-93 plans	1993-94 plans	1994-95 plans
Capital									
Northern Ireland	6	9	5	7	3	10	9	9	9
United Kingdom	33,393	35,792	36,621	38,363	42,521	53,340	58,458	61,050	63,900

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table, consistent with table 5.7 of Cm 1920 and showing separately for England, Scotland, Wales, Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom, the sources of finance for that expenditure, structuring the analysis to be as closely related as possible to table 5.13 where full comparability is not possible because certain adjustments are not calculated at the level of the territories.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Budgets (Gains)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the average individual cumulative gain in 1992 prices to those with incomes *(a)* under £5,000 a year, *(b)* £5,000-10,000, *(c)* £10,000-15,000, *(d)* £15,000-20,000, *(e)* £20,000-25,000, *(f)* £25,000-30,000, *(g)* £30,000-40,000, *(h)* £40,000-50,000, *(i)* £50,000-60,000, *(j)* £60,000-70,000, *(k)* £70,000-80,000 and *(l)* over £80,000 per year (i) as a result of the Budget on 10 March and (ii) cumulatively as a result of all Budgets since 1979.

Mr. Maude: Estimates of liability to income tax compared with statutory indexation and with an indexed 1978-79 regime are given in the table. The 1978-79 and 1991-92 income tax regimes have been indexed to 1992-93 level by reference to the statutory formula, and allowing for independent taxation.

Range of individuals income in 1992-93 £	*Average gain (+)/loss (−) in income tax in 1992-93* £ *Compared with 1991-92 indexed regime*	*Compared with 1978-79 indexed regime*
Under 5,000	40	200
5,000-10,000	90	420
10,000-15,000	90	730
15,000-20,000	90	1,060
20,000-25,000	90	1,430
25,000-30,000	70	1,830
30,000-40,000	−70	2,230
40,000-50,000	−90	3,570
50,000-60,000	−90	6,010
60,000-70,000	−90	9,830
70,000-80,000	−90	13,200
over 80,000	−90	45,800
Average	70	1,240

For the purpose of the calculation in the second column of the table, the indexed regime of 1978-79 has been applied directly to the income base of 1991-92. In practice, retention of the 1978-79 regime, indexed as appropriate, for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

Civil Servants (Relocation)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the terms of the alternative financial assistance offered to staff civil servants when they are relocated.

Mr. Maples: A discretionary scheme to help civil servants who are permanently transferred and who are reluctant to move for domestic reasons was announced on 15 November 1990 at columns *188-89*. The elements of the scheme are taxable. Departments and agencies discretion in offering this scheme will be further widened in 1992 to enable them to meet the cost-of the tax liability of the financial assistance, other than for the advance of salary, where this is cost-effective, and can be met within existing running costs.

CIVIL SERVICE

"Next Steps"

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on progress in the "next steps" initiative.

Mr. Renton: Progress is good. During April we expect the total of agencies launched to grow to 72. About 290,000 civil servants, half the total, will be working in agencies and other organisations operating on "next steps" lines. In addition, 27 candidates have been announced covering over 65,000 more civil servants. Many other areas are under consideration. As Cm 1760—"Improving Management in Government—the Next Steps Agencies, Review 1991"—shows, "next steps" is delivering benefits for customers, staff and taxpayers.

The list of agencies established or to be established during April 1992 is:

	Staff[1]
Accounts Services Agency	90
ADAS Agency[2]	2,500
Building Research Establishment	700
Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments)	230
Central Office of Information[3]	670
Central Science Laboratory[2]	370
Central Statistical Office	1,090
Central Veterinary Laboratory	590
Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment[4]	600
Civil Service College	230
Companies House[3]	1,070
Compensation Agency[2,5]	150
Defence Research Agency	12,150
Directorate General of Defence Accounts[4]	2,130
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency	4,580
Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency[2,5]	250
Driving Standards Agency	2,080
Duke of York's Royal Military School[2]	100
DVOIT[2]	590
Employment Service	38,400
Fire Service College[2,3]	160
Forensic Science Service	600

	Staff[1]
Historic Royal Palaces	330
Historic Scotland	630
HMSO[3]	3,250
Hydrographic Office[4]	860
Insolvency Service	1,470
Intervention Board	980
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	340
Land Registry	9,800
Medicines Control Agency	300
Meteorological Office	2,390
Military Survey[4]	1,300
National Engineering Laboratory	390
National Physical Laboratory	830
National Weights and Measures Laboratory	50
Natural Resources Institute	440
Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation[2,4]	1,510
NHS Estates	120
Occupational Health Service	100
Ordnance Survey	2,380
Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland[2,5]	210
Patent Office[3]	1,080
Planning Inspectorate[2]	630
Public Record Office[2]	440
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre	60
Queen Victoria School[2]	60
Radiocommunications Agency	520
RAF Maintenance[4]	13,300
Rate Collection Agency[5]	270
Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency	240
Registers of Scotland	1,280
Royal Mint[3]	1,020
Scottish Agricultural Science Agency[2]	140
Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency	210
Service Children's Schools (North West Europe)[4]	2,300
Social Security Agency[5]	5,350
Social Security Benefits Agency	63,100
Social Security Contributions Agency	8,000
Social Security Information Technology Services Agency	4,000
Social Security Resettlement Agency	520
Teachers' Pensions Agency[2]	300
The Buying Agency[5]	110
Training and Employment Agency	1,670
Transport Research Laboratory[2]	580
United Kingdom Passport Agency	1,250
Valuation Office	5,200
Vehicle Certification Agency	80
Vehicle Inspectorate[3]	1,820
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	80
Warren Spring Laboratory	310
Wilton Park Conference Centre	30
72 in number	210,960
Customs and Excise[6] (30 executive units)	26,800
Inland Revenue[6] (34 executive offices)	62,100
Total[7]	299,860
Number of civil servants in the above total[8]	290,490

The list of candidates for agency status announced by Ministers is as follows:

	[1]Staff
Army Logistics[9]	12,700
Chessington Computer Centre	440
Child Support Agency[5,10]	see note
Common Services Division[9]	1,700
Defence Animal Centre[9]	150
Defence Operational Analysis Establishment[9]	180
Defence Postal Courier Service[9]	600
Defence Statistics Organisation[9]	150
Directorate Information Technology Bureau Services[9]	120
Equipment Test and Evaluation[9]	2,220
Fuel Suppliers Branch	20
Her Majesty's Prison Service	34,900
Human Factors Research[9]	390
Meat Hygiene Service[11]	see note
Ministry of Defence Police[9]	4,550
Naval Training[9]	5,040
Office of Population Censuses and Surveys	2,150
Pesticide Safety Directorate	150
Property Division	120
Property Holdings Portfolio Management	460
Royal Air Force Training[9]	11,200
Royal Parks	580
Scottish Office Superannuation	160
Scottish Prison Service	4,100
Social Security Child Support Agency[12]	see note
Valuation and Lands Office[5]	350
Youth Treatment Service	220
TOTAL (27 in number)[7]	82,650
Number of civil servants in the above total[8]	66,320

[1] 1 October 1991 figures for civil servants and armed forces personnel. Casuals are excluded. Part-time staff are counted as half units.

[2] Expected to be launched in April 1992.

[3] Trading fund.

[4] Defence Support Agency.

[5] Northern Ireland civil service.

[6] Departments operating fully on "next steps" lines. Staffing figures for Inland Revenue exclude the Valuation Office, which is a free-standing agency.

[7] Figure for total staff in agencies includes 8,070 armed forces personnel in Ministry of Defence agencies and 1,300 locally engaged staff in service children's schools (north-west Europe). Figure for total staff in candidates includes 16,330 armed forces personnel in Ministry of Defence candidates.

[8] Includes in the totals 7,900 staff in agencies and 350 staff in candidates in the Northern Ireland civil service.

[9] May be launched as a Defence Support Agency.

[10] Estimated to require 550 staff by April 1993. Of these 120 will come from the Northern Ireland Social Security Agency.

[11] Estimated to require 1,800 staff, drawn from a variety of sources.

[12] From early 1993 the agency is estimated to require 4,500 staff, 1,500 of which will come from the Social Security Benefits Agency.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many chief executives of "next steps" agencies have been recruited following open competition.

Mr. Renton: The Government's objective in appointing agency chief executives is to get the right person for the job. Open competition is now the norm, and about two thirds of chief executives and chief executives-designate —47 out of 74—have been recruited in this way.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Community Charge

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many community charge defaulters have been gaoled in England and Wales since the charge was introduced.

Mrs. Rumbold: According to the records held centrally, which are approximate, one prisoner was received into a Prison Service establishment in 1990 following committal for non-payment of the community charge.

Data for 1991 are not yet complete but the provisional figure for such receptions in the year is about 110.

Prison Officers

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional hours have been worked by prison officers, in each appropriate prison establishment, above those for which they have been contracted, and for which they are currently owed time off in lieu.

Mrs. Rumbold: The latest readily available figures, for 5 January, show an average balance of 4.84 hours owed per officer. This is 34 per cent. less than the level at 1 September 1991. The situation varies in each establishment in line with a range of factors.

The overall number of net additional hours per establishment and the average balance of hours owed per officer at each establishment is as follows.

Establishment	*Balance of hours 5 January 1992 (week 41)*	*Balance of hours per officer 5 January 1992*
Category B		
Blundeston	1,266	8·17
Coldingley	−309	−2·01
Cookham Wood	272	4·86
Dartmoor	−787	−3·27
Garth	1,373	6·18
Grendon	452	2·54
Kingston	90	1·30
Maidstone	856	4·16
Nottingham	1,084	8·74
Styal	59	·52
Swaleside	−204	−·96
Total	4,152	2·40
Category C		
Acklington	−132	−·71
Aldington	146	3·04
Ashwell	196	2·15
Blantyre House	117	2·35
Camp Hill	353	1·94
Channings Wood[1]	−122	−·84
Downview	−144	−1·26
Erlestoke	434	4·72
Everthorpe	80	·85
Haverigg	230	2·23
Highpoint	874	4·14
Lancaster	535	6·15
Lindholme	−361	−1·64
Littlehey	1,331	8·27
Northeye	542	7·63
Ranby	720	6·67
Risley (F)	70	·69
Risley (M)	2,182	14·64
Send	−83	−1·69
Shepton Mallet	330	3·88
Stafford	761	3·28
Stocken	1,046	7·93
The Mount	447	3·22
The Verne	−179	−1·17
Thorp Arch	10	·14
Wayland	607	3·94
Wellingborough	241	1·96
Whatton	401	5·49
Wymott	117	·55
Total	10,749	2·96
Local and Remand		
Bedford	66	0·33
Belmarsh	2,530	6·04
Birmingham	−1,009	−2·37
Bristol	246	0·88
Brixton	18,346	27·38
Brockhill	−112	−0·93
Bullingdon	77	3·35
Canterbury	1,736	9·09
Cardiff	1,281	5·74
Chelmsford	830	3·90
Dorchester	−215	−2·01
Durham	3,712	8·78
Exeter	568	2·59
Feltham	1,471	3·89
Gloucester	1,620	12·18
Haslar	−186	−3·96
Hindley	204	1·19
Holloway	415	1·40
Hull	139	0·51
Latchmere House	75	1·27
Leeds	2,463	6·19
Leicester	4,088	17·18
Lewes	1,438	6·82
Lincoln	518	1·90
Liverpool	2,973	5·16
Low Newton	996	8·23
Manchester	3,208	8·89
Moorland	−683	−2·52
New Hall	257	2·16
Norwich	824	3·06
Oxford	1,070	9·39
Pentonville	−1,308	−4·42
Preston	270	0·90
Pucklechurch	265	4·14
Reading	260	1·76
Rochester	263	1·50
Shrewsbury	2,471	16·36
Swansea	2,047	13·74
Wandsworth	3,668	7·58
Winchester	1,269	4·63
Local and Remand	58,151	5·90
Dispersal		
Albany	4,190	12·74
Frankland	8,763	21·38
Full Sutton	1,214	2·30
Gartree	−399	−1·33
Long Lartin	4,020	11·59
Parkhurst	3,491	9·49
Wakefield	10	0·02
Dispersal Total	21,289	7·77
Open		
Askham Grange	53	1·23
Drake Hall	−305	−4·62
Foston/Sudbury	1,238	15·28
Kirkham	−28	−0·38
Leyhill	−127	−1·63
Morton Hall	117	3·53
North Sea Camp	149	3·91
Rudgate	−18	−0·34
Standford Hill	326	4·18
Open Total	1,404	2·58
Closed YOI		
Aylesbury	310	1·78
Bullwood Hall	65	0·84
Castington	−13	−0·10
Deerbolt	54	0·37
Dover	180	1·46
Eastwood Park	362	7·54
Hollesley Bay	547	2·99
Kirklevington	1,057	21·57
Northallerton	91	1·01
Onley[1]	1,771	10·42
Portland	−131	−0·83
Stoke Heath	320	2·19
Swinfen Hall	792	7·84
Usk/Prescoed	−452	−4·91
Werrington	−574	−14·00

Establishment	*Balance of hours 5 January 1992 (week 41)*	*Balance of hours per officer 5 January 1992*
Wetherby	3	0·04
Closed YOI Total	4,382	2·43
Open YOI		
East Sutton Pk	−318	−13·83
Guys Marsh	−322	−5·19
H'Combe/F'Wood	577	5·25
Hatfield	−41	−0·69
Hewell Grange	113	2·46
Thorn Cross	−96	−1·30
Open YOI Total	−87	−0·23
National Total	100,040	4·84

Community Charge Statistics

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the document which magistrates' clerks return to enable his Department to compile the quarterly progress of community charge enforcement figures and any ancillary explanatory memoranda.

Mr. John Patten: I have arranged for a copy of the last return and accompanying notes to be placed in the Library.

Departmental Expenditure

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will express the totals and sub-totals for planned expenditure given in the cash plans published in Cm 1909 in real terms as well as cash terms.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information requested is as follows. The real term figures are expressed in 1990-91 prices using the gross domestic product deflator.

£ million

Expenditure	*Terms*	*1986-87 outturn*	*1987-88 outturn*	*1988-89 outturn*	*1989-90 outturn*	*1990-91 outturn*	*1991-92 [1]outturn*	*1992-93 plans*	*1993-94 plans*	*1994-95 plans*
Home Office—central Government's own expenditure—total voted in estimates	Cash	1,072	1,194	1,369	1,631	1,966	2,155	2,227	2,376	2,433
	Real	1,399	1,478	1,581	1,769	1,966	2,014	1,992	2,048	2,036
Total other non-voted	Cash	—	22	—14	—16	2	—	1	1	1
	Real	—	27	—16	—17	2	—	1	1	1
Total central Government's own expenditure	Cash	1,072	1,216	1,356	1,615	1,967	2,156	2,227	2,377	2,434
	Real	1,399	1,506	1,566	1,752	1,967	2,015	1,992	2,049	2,037
Total central Government grants to local authorities	Cash	1,890	2,092	2,239	2,500	2,964	3,402	3,604	3,846	4,056
	Real	2,467	2,590	2,586	2,712	2,964	3,179	3,223	3,315	3,394
Credit approvals	Cash	73	97	87	101	100	131	149	161	167
	Real	95	120	101	110	100	122	133	139	140
Total central Government support to local authorities	Cash	1,963	2,190	2,325	2,601	3,064	3,533	3,753	4,007	4,223
	Real	2,563	2,712	2,686	2,822	3,064	3,302	3,356	3,454	3,534
Total Home Office	Cash	3,035	3,405	3,681	4,216	5,031	5,689	5,981	6,384	6,656
	Real	3,962	4,216	4,252	4,574	5,031	5,317	5,349	5,503	5,570
Of which is voted in Estimates	Cash	2,962	3,286	3,608	4,131	4,929	5,558	5,830	6,222	6,489
	Real	3,867	4,069	4,168	4,481	4,929	5,194	5,214	5,363	5,431
Charity Commission—voted in Estimates (administration)	Cash	5	6	7	10	15	20	22	22	23
	Real	7	7	8	11	15	19	20	19	19
Total Home Office and Charity Commission	Cash	3,040	3,411	3,688	4,226	5,045	5,708	6,002	6,406	6,679
	Real	3,969	4,223	4,260	4,585	5,045	5,335	5,368	5,522	5,590
Total current local authority spending	Cash	4,094	4,474	4,928	5,563	6,207	6,938	—	—	—
	Real	5,345	5,540	5,693	6,035	6,207	6,484	—	—	—
Local authority net capital spending	Cash	120	172	208	291	250	311	—	—	—
	Real	157	213	240	316	250	291	—	—	—
Total local authority expenditure	Cash	4,214	4,647	5,136	5,854	6,457	7,249	—	—	—
	Real	5,501	5,754	5,933	6,351	6,457	6,775	—	—	—

[1] Estimated.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the reasons for the differences between the 1991-92 expenditure plans published last year in Cm 1509 and the 1991-92 totals for estimated outturn.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The difference of £115 million between 1991-92 expenditure plans for the prisons as shown in Cm 1909 and estimated outturn as shown in Cm 1509 is because there has been additional expenditure to pay for the cost of keeping prisoners in police cells, mainly due to an increase in prison population. Extra expenditure was also necessary to meet the construction costs of new prisons, due mainly to slippage in the programme, claims from contractors and the accelerated integral sanitation programme.

Expenditure on the police has risen because estimated outturn now includes £3 million representing the cost of superannuation in the charges made for services and £4 million to meet the cost of centralising the provision of an existing service. The Forensic Science Service estimated outturn also now includes £2 million for the cost of superannuation. The increase of £3 million for miscellaneous services is mainly due to higher than anticipated levels of transfer values and pensions payments.

The increase of £13 million for immigration and citizenship is mainly attributable to the increased resources made available in the summer supplementary estimate (HC486) for the processing of asylum applications. This also accounts for the £1 million increase for community services, which covers grants to organisations assisting asylum seekers. The £1 million reduction in the estimated outturn for other broadcasting is due to the changed requirements of the loan to the Radio Authority.

Other changes to the distribution of central Government's own expenditure are caused by reallocations of resources within the overall total.

The total increases of £168 million in central Government current grants to local authorities are attributable to changed local authority estimates of expenditure and to grant adjustments for previous years. The only difference in the outturn for capital grant is to cover an increase of £1 million in capital expenditure by the Metropolitan police, and was authorised by the summer supplementary estimate (HC486).

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect the rise in the estimate of outturn for 1991-92, as recorded in Cm 1909, will have on his Department's expenditure plans for 1992-93.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Some of the developments affecting estimated outturn for 1991-92 can be expected to become a regular feature of the Department's expenditure. To the extent consistent with the resources available to my Department, such developments have been taken into account in planning expenditure in 1992-93.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what differences there are between the planned outturns for 1992-93 and 1993-94 and the planned expenditure for those years as recorded in last year's annual report; and what are the reasons for these differences.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information requested is as follows:

	1991 Departmental Report		*1992 Departmental Report*		*Changes*			
	1992-93	*1993-94*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1992-93*		*1993-94*	
	£ million	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*	*Per cent.*	*£ million*	*Per cent.*
Central Government								
Prisons	1,290	1,300	1,363	1,399	73	(6)	99	(8)
Police	110	110	146	148	36	(33)	38	(35)
Forensic Science Agency	0	0	1	2	1	(—)	2	(—)
Emergency Planning	50	40	50	41	0	(0)	1	(2·5)
Fire	10	10	15	12	5	(50)	2	(20)
Central Administration	100	110	106	111	6	(6)	1	(1)
Court Services	30	30	38	38	8	(27)	8	(27)
Criminal Injuries Compensation	130	140	137	150	7	(5)	10	(7)
Probation and Aftercare	60	60	68	80	8	(13)	20	(33)
Miscellaneous Services	10	20	19	22	9	(90)	2	(10)
Immigration and Citizenship	120	140	166	199	46	(38)	59	(42)
Passport Department	50	60	58	60	8	(16)	0	(0)
Community Services	40	40	41	43	1	(2)	3	(8)
Other Broadcasting	0	0	1	−1	1	(—)	−1	(—)
Total Central Government	2,000	2,060	2,227	2,376	227	(11)	316	(15)
Central Government grants to local authorities								
Police	2,770	2,960	2,869	3,058	99	(4)	98	(3)
Of which:								
Current	2,660	2,850	2,752	2,932	92	(3)	82	(3)
Capital	110	110	118	126	8	(7)	16	(15)
Emergency Planning	20	20	27	28	7	(35)	8	(40)
Of which:								
Current	20	20	23	24	3	(15)	4	(20)
Capital	0	0	4	4	4	(–)	4	(—)
Magistrates Courts	280	310	290	308	10	(4)	−2	(−1)
Of which:								
Current	230	250	236	252	6	(3)	2	(1)
Capital	50	60	54	56	4	(8)	−4	(−7)
Probation	270	290	287	310	17	(6)	20	(7)
Of which:								
Current	260	280	273	294	13	(5)	14	(5)
Capital	10	10	14	16	4	(40)	6	(60)
Commonwealth Immigrants	130	140	134	141	4	(3)	1	(1)
Fire	0	0	−3	0	−3	(—)	0	(0)
Total Central Government grants to local authorities	3,480	3,720	3,604	3,846	124	(4)	126	(3)
Of which:								
Current	3,310	3,540	3,414	3,643	104	(3)	103	(3)
Capital	180	190	190	202	10	(6)	12	(6)

	1991 Departmental Report		1992 Departmental Report		Changes			
	1992-93	1993-94	1992-93	1993-94	1992-93		1993-94	
	£ million	£ million	£ million	£ million	£ million	Per cent.	£ million	Per cent.
Credit Approvals	130	140	149	161	19	(15)	21	(15)
Total Central Government support to local authorities	3,610	3,860	3,753	4,007	143	(4)	147	(4)
Total Home Office	5,610	5,920	5,981	6,384	371	(7)	464	(8)

[1] Figure shown is an amalgamation of both the Fire Service College and Other Fire, which are shown separately in the 1992 Departmental Report.

The main reasons for these differences are that additional provision has been made for extra police manpower; improved security and the ending of slopping out in prisons; increased expenditure to implement the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and continue the programme of diverting offenders from custody; and strengthening the immigration control system. Further details were given in the House Office news release accompanying the Home Office aspects of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's 1991 autumn statement. A copy of this news release was placed in the Library.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional commitments which will involve spending in the years after 1994-95 he has undertaken since the publication of his Department's 1991 annual report.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In June 1991, I announced the appointment of Mr. Anthony Mullett, QPM as director-designate of the National Criminal Intelligence Service. The service will become operational on 1 April 1992 and will bring together a number of national units such as the national drugs intelligence unit and the Interpol bureau, together with several national intelligence functions at present performed by the Metropolitan police.

The Home Office will be responsible for meeting the United Kingdom's share of the cost of a new Europe-wide, computer-based information system for immigration control purposes (the European information system).

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what strategies he has to constrain expenditure if pay increases in 1992-93 are greater than allowed in departmental running costs plans.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: If pay increases in 1992-93 are greater than allowed in my Department's running costs plans. I will reconsider my priorities and seek offsetting savings.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes there have been in the 1991-92 estimated outturn compared with the 1990-91 outturn in *(a)* percentage terms and *(b)* after adjustment for the gross domestic product deflator.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information requested is as follows:

	1990-91 outturn £ million	1991-92 estimated outturn £ million	Change per cent.	Change after gross domestic product deflator per cent.
Central Government				
Prisons	1,342·0	1,447·0	8	1
Police	96·0	114·0	19	11
Forensic Science Service	18·0	2·0	−89	−89
Emergency Planning	55·0	53·0	−4	−10
Fire Service College	8·0	6·0	−25	−33
Other Fire	5·0	7·0	40	40
Central Administration	92·0	100·0	9	2
Court Services etc.	22·0	26·0	18	8
Criminal Injuries Compensation	100·0	119·0	19	11
Probation and Aftercare	39·0	49·0	26	17
Miscellaneous Services	14·0	21·0	50	40
Immigration and Citizenship	91·0	118·0	30	22
Passport Department	48·0	52·0	8	2
Community Services	36·0	39·0	8	0
Other Broadcasting	—	1·0	—	—
TOTAL	1,966·0	2,155·0	10	2
Local Authority Services				
Police[1]	2,379·0	2,783·0	17	9
Magistrates Courts[1]	261·0	294·0	13	5
Probation[1]	228·0	272·0	19	11
Emergency Planning[1]	22·8	26·8	18	10
Commonwealth Immigrants[2]	135·5	[4]116·7	−14	−20
Fire[3]	45·0	47·0	4	−2
TOTAL	3,071·3	3,539·5	15	8

[1] Current, capital and special grants, and credit approvals.

[2] Current grants.

[3] Credit approvals.

[4] Due to a change from paying grant in advance to paying grant in arrears, only three quarterly payments have been made during 1991-92.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what procedures his Department has for keeping itself informed of the regional distribution of its expenditure and for correcting any significant unintended imbalances which appear.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The nature of Home Office services is such that their provision is generally demand-led, and as the greater part of Home Office expenditure takes the form of grants to local authorities, the mechanism for achieving a fair distribution is inherently self-regulating. So far as the Home Office's own direct expenditure is concerned, it would not be feasible to adopt a policy of ensuring that such expenditure is divided proportionately between the regions because other considerations must take precedence in determining the distribution of resources. In the Prison Service, however, the vote is constructed broadly on the basis of regional structure, and each region bids for its own funds. The financial management system records expenditure against regional budgets. The position is monitored regularly by the central finance committee, which will adjust any imbalance by virement and/or by means of a supplementary estimate.

Departmental Efficiency

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of state for the Home Deparmtent what percentage growth in aggregate departmental efficiency he estimates will be achieved by the Home Office between 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The latest estimates are that between 1991-92 and 1992-93, the Prison Service will achieve efficiency savings of 1·7 per cent. and the remainder of the Department 1·9 per cent. in the use of its respective running costs.

Agencies

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to alter current financial arrangements for his Department's agencies;

(2) if it is his policy for the Passport Agency and the Forensic Science Service eventually to operate as trading funds.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: It is the policy of the Department for the two agencies to operate as trading funds as soon as they have gained sufficient experience and developed appropriate systems. In each case, work is in hand to develop improved financial and management information system.

The proposed target date for establishing the United Kingdom Passport Agency as a trading fund is 1 April 1994. Achieving this will depend on the successful development of the agency's new computerised accounting system.

The Forensic Science Service is aiming to introduce in 1992-93 an integrated IT system to support its business activities, and progress has been made in moving to a business-like basis of operation. But the further development necessary to enable the FSS to operate successfully as a trading fund is likely to take at least another three to four years.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to establish any executive agencies in 1992-93, apart from the Fire Service College.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have no plans to establish any other new agencies during the coming financial year, but, as I said in answer to a question from my hon. Friend yesterday at column *592*, I intend that the Prison Service should become an executive agency from 1 April 1993. A number of other areas of the Department are also being considered as potential agencies.

Departmental Annual Report

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what publicity was given to the publication of his Department's annual report, Cm 1909.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: A Home Office news release was issued on the publication of the Department's annual report, 1909. A copy was placed in the Library.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many copies of his Department's annual report, Cm 1909, have been sold at the latest available date.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I understand that at 5 March 1992, HMSO had sold 1,748 copies of my Department's annual report, Cm 1909.

Bomb Explosion (Victoria Station)

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many claims for compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for injury from the bomb explosion at Victoria station on 18 February 1991 have still not been settled; when the claim from a constituent of the right hon. Member for Worthing is likely to be met; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The following information about the 42 applications for compensation arising from the bomb incident at Victoria station on 18 February 1991 has been provided by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board:

Status of applications	*Number of applications*
Yet to be considered by board member	11
Currently with board member for initial decision	5
Interim payment or payments awarded	23
Final award made	3
Total	42

The board recently agreed an interim award to an applicant from Worthing and an offer letter will be sent shortly. Total compensation in this case cannot be assessed until the final medical position is established and loss of earnings has been agreed.

Research (Non-human Primates)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he received a copy of the response from the Research Defence Society dated January 1992 to the Advocates for Animals report on the use of non-human primates in research in Great Britain.

Mrs. Rumbold: A copy of the Research Defence Society analysis of the Advocates for Animals report, which it sent to Members of Parliament who had signed early-day motion 214, was received in the Department on 29 January 1992.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department published its response to the Advocates for Animals report into the use of non-human primates in research in Great Britain; and if he will name those organisations to whom it was sent.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Home Office responded to the Advocates for Animals report on 3 February 1992 after detailed consideration of its contents. The Home Office response was made available to the Animal Procedures Committee, but has not otherwise been made available to any organisation.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department consulted *(a)* the Research Defence Society or *(b)* any other pro-animal research organisation before responding to the Advocates for Animals report on the use of non-human primates in research in Great Britain.

Mrs. Rumbold: In the course of the regular contact which the Home Office has with the Research Defence Society, along with other organisations concerned with the use of animals in research, the report by Advocates for Animals was discussed. The Home Office response to the report was however formulated in the light of detailed comments from Home Office inspectors about the research work in question and was not discussed with any outside organisations.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will investigate the similarity between the wording used by his Department in its response to the Advocates for Animals' report on the use of non-human primates in research in Great Britain and that contained in the response received earlier from the Research Defence Society.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. Although the Home Office was aware of the Research Defence Society's views, the responses were prepared separately.

Crime, Manchester

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to help prevent crime in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government have set up safer cities crime prevention projects in Rochdale and Salford, and drugs prevention teams in Salford and Manchester. My right hon. Friend has also approved an additional 20 posts in Greater Manchester police from 1 April this year. In addition the Government encourage the growth and development of local neighbourhood watch schemes and there are now approximately 9,000 watch schemes in the area, covering 270,000 households.

Departmental Achievements

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the principal achievements of his Department since June 1987.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Determined efforts have been maintained and developed to counter crime. The number of police posts in England and Wales has increased by 4,257, bringing the total to 127,127. The number of civilians supporting the police has increased by 6,242 to 46,948 and since 1986-87 expenditure on the police has increased by 24·9 per cent. in real terms. Action has been put in place to develop the most efficient use of resources, to enhance the police capacity to deal with crime and the other demands on them and to improve the quality of service to the public.

Twenty safer cities projects have been set up in inner-city areas supporting over 2,300 initiatives with the objectives of reducing crime, lessening the fear of crime and creating conditions in which economic enterprise and community life can flourish. Crime prevention has been taken forward rigorously with the establishment of "Crime Concern" and initiatives, including on car crime, have been taken.

Legislation has been passed to enable the United Kingdom to ratify the United Nations convention against the illicit traffic in drugs; to enhance the control of firearms; to strengthen the country's defences against terrorism; to increase the powers available to the courts for dealing with football hooligans; to improve our ability to give effect to our policy of firm but fair immigration control; to create a new and more open and competitive framework for the licensing and regulation of independent radio and television services, leading to greater choice for viewers and listeners while maintaining proper safeguards for programme quality and standards; to remove outdated restrictions on licensing laws; to enable the United Kingdom to participate more effectively an international co-operation against crime, including a major reform of the extradition law; to make provision for courts to order the confiscation of the proceeds of profitable crime; to provide for unduly lenient sentences to be reviewed; to tighten the law on possession of knives and to ban the sale of offensive weapons which have no legitimate use; to strengthen the jury system; to reform the law on official secrets by replacing section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 with provisions protecting just six classes of official information; and to put the Security Service on a statutory basis, with the appointment of a commissioner and provision for complaints to be made to an independent tribunal.

Legislation has been passed to encourage key Hong Kong personnel and their families to remain there by giving them the assurance of British citizenship in order to help them maintain the future stability and prosperity of the territory. The Criminal Justice Act 1991 strengthened the range and effectiveness of community penalties and provides a new and more coherent legislative framework for sentencing.

Legislation has also been enacted for England and Wales to create an offence of prison mutiny and to increase the maximum penalty for aiding prisoners to escape and to ensure that anyone guilty of taking a vehicle without consent is liable to a more severe sentence in aggravated circumstances. A Bill was introduced to enable applications for asylum in the United Kingdom to be dealt with quickly and effectively.

A Royal Commission has been established to examine the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in securing the convictions of those guilty of criminal offences and the acquittal of the innocent.

In addition to a major programme to impose existing prisons, since the beginning of 1987 10 new prisons have been opened, providing over 5,500 places. A further three prisons are due to open in the next three months, giving another 1,600 places, and five are under construction providing over 3,000 more places. Arrangements are being made so that from the end of December 1994 all prisoners in Prison Service establishments will have access to sanitation at all times.

The White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice", presented to Parliament last September, charts a course for the Prison Service in England and Wales into the next century and plans have been announced for the management of the Prison Service, including a move to agency status for the service. My Department launched two other "next steps" agencies in 1991—the Forensic Science Service and the United Kingdom Passport Agency—and the Fire Service college will become an agency next month.

Naturalisation Applications

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many outstanding applications for naturalisation as a British citizen are *(a)* less than one year old, *(b)* between one and two years old, *(c)* between two and three years old and *(d)* more than three years old.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As at 11 March 1992 the number of applications for naturalisation awaiting determination was 41,799. Of these *(a)* 14,992 were less than one year old, *(b)* 14,640 were between one and two years old, *(c)* 5,486 were between two and three years old, and *(d)* 6,681 applications were more than three years old. In addition, there were about 3,500 applications of all types for citizenship awaiting allocation to caseworkers.

Child Abuse, Rossendale

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Lancashire on the steps the police are now taking to re-open investigations arising from inquiries made by the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) in 1987 relating to alleged abuse by Mr. Michael Finn while he was a teacher at a primary school in Rossendale.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. The investigation of criminal offences is an operational matter for chief officers of police.

Shops Act 1950

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the progress of his consultations about the future of the Shops Act 1950.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have recently concluded my extensive programme of separate discussions with a wide range of major interest groups on possible ways of reforming the Shops Act 1950. Once the legal position of the Act in relation to Community law is clear, I hope to be in a position to recommend a way forward to the House.

Firearms Licensing

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will undertake a review of the firearms licensing system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: New controls on firearms and shotguns were imposed by the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988. I am sure that these controls are justified and should remain.

Responsibility for administering the controls currently rests with chief officers of police. The licensing function places an onerous administrative burden on police forces and diverts police officers from skilled police work, which only they can do.

I have today issued a public consultation paper which suggests that firearms licensing might be administered by a new civilian firearms control board, staffed by trained firearms and crime prevention experts. This is an imaginative proposal: it would put public safety first by providing a licensing system operated expertly, consistently and economically; and it would release police officers for other work. I urge all those involved to study the consultation paper. Their comments will be most carefully considered. I have placed a copy in the Library.

Inquests

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of inquests into deaths in police custody or in prison where the Government Departments were represented; and how long these inquests lasted during the last five years.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 5 March 1992]:* Between 1 January 1990 and 6 March 1992 there were 175 deaths in prison custody. The Prison Service was represented at 44 of the 131 inquests which have so far been held into these deaths. There is no Home Office representation at inquests into deaths in police custody.

Information on the number of inquests between 1988 and 1990 at which the Prison Service was represented could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Information on the duration of inquests is not available.

Police Manpower

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the results of the 1986 inter-censual survey *(a)* in south Glamorgan and *(b)* other areas were used to supplement the results of the 1981 census in determining the factors considered in calculating the number of officers needed by the South Wales constabulary as part of his Department's recent review of police manpower.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to his reply, 12 December 1991, c. 508]:* I now understand from OPCS that an inter-censual sample survey did take place in Wales in 1986; there was however no survey in England. The results of the Welsh survey could not have been used to calculate the relative establishment need of the South Wales constabulary because the formula used to assess relative need requires comparable information for all force areas in England and Wales.

HEALTH

North Staffordshire DHA (Radiation Treatment)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the terms of reference of each of the two inquiries into the radiation treatment at the North Staffordshire district health authority; and when he expects each of the reports to be published.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has assigned an inspector, appointed to enforce the Ionising Radiation (Protection of Persons Undergoing Medical Treatment) Regulations 1988, to investigate the circumstances of this incident. He will make recommendations, when he has completed his investigations, to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on what action, if any, is needed and what wider lessons can be learned. In addition, North Staffordshire health authority has appointed two independent experts, Dr. Ash of Cookridge hospital, Leeds and Dr. Bates of St. Thomas' hospital, London, to carry out a clinical review of all cases and West Midlands regional health authority has announced an independent inquiry, chaired by Sir Peter Baldwin, into how the incident occurred. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir James Ackers, the chairman of West Midlands regional health authority, for the terms of reference for both these inquiries.

Computer Expenditure

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* the capital expenditure and *(b)* the revenue expenditure incurred on computer hardware and software by each individual health authority in England in each year since 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: A table showing the information requested for 1987-88, which was derived from the annual accounts of health authorities in England for that financial year, has been placed in the Library. For comparable information for the years since 1987-88 and notes on this expenditure, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 28 January at columns *541-43.*

GPs Examination Certificates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the maximum charge which a general practitioner is entitled to make to provide a doctor's examination certificate for motor insurance for a patient in receipt of invalidity benefit and mobility allowance.

(2) if he will exempt claimants on disability benefits from insurance certificate charges.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Under their terms of service in the NHS, general practitioners must issue free of charge only certain specified certificates needed by patients to meet statutory requirements, such as those needed to support claims for social security benefits. Doctors may make a charge for providing private certificates including those requested by insurance companies; the amount charged in such cases is for agreement between the doctor and the patient.

General Practice Nurses

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nurses worked for general practitioners in 1978-79, 1983-84, 1990-91 and at the latest available date, respectively.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of GP practice nurses—whole-time equivalent—in England were: 888 in October 1978; 1,657 in October 1983, and 7,698 in October 1990—the latest figure available.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of hospitals closed in each year since 1979; and what information his Department has on the number of closures in the currrent financial year.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total level of proceeds from the sale of closed hospital sites in each year since 1979; and what information his Department has on proceeds from sales in the current financial year.

Mr. Dorrell: Total capital receipts from the sale of NHS land and buildings in England since 1979 are shown in the table. The latest estimate available for the current financial year is about £200 million.

	£ million
1979-80	9·9
1980-81	15·2
1981-82	19·4
1982-83	18·0
1983-84	31·5
1984-85	48·4
1985-86	82·3
1986-87	145·1
1987-88	197·8
1988-89	265·8
1989-90	221·0
1990-91	159·4

All proceeds have been reinvested in the NHS.

Television

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines or restrictions exist covering the charging by health authorities and health trusts for the use of television by patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Provision of communal television sets is a matter left to the discretion of individual trusts and health authorities. Charging is considered appropriate to meet the reasonable cost involved where patients wish to have a TV facility for their own personal use.

General Practitioners

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by region the ratio of patients to general practitioners in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is given in the table which relates to the average list sizes in England at 1 April 1991, the latest date for which figures are available. The information relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, for Scotland and for Northern Ireland.

Region	*Average list size*
Northern	1,916
Yorkshire	1,894
Trent	1,985
East Anglia	1,820
North West Thames	2,036
North East Thames	2,015
South East Thames	1,977
South West Thames	1,991
Wessex	1,824
Oxford	1,887
South Western	1,763
West Midlands	1,969
Mersey	1,992
North Western	1,778

Low Income Scheme

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to report on the outcome of the review of the health benefits low income scheme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are giving careful consideration to a number of proposals arising from the review. The results will be announced when this process is complete.

West Middlesex University Hospital

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions have taken place between the Houslow and Spelthorne district health authority and the North West Thames regional health authority concerning a new surgical block for the West Middlesex university hospital; on what date the district is expected to submit the formal application to the region; by what date the region expects to decide; what is the expected gross capital cost; what contribution to the cost will be made from the sale of the site of the former South Middlesex hospital following the grant of planning permission for a Tesco shop; and whether the consent of the Secretary of State for health is required.

Mr. Dorrell: I understand that there have been discussions between the Hounslow and Spelthorne district health authority and the North West Thames regional health authority over many months concerning the use of funds of some £29 million from the sale of the former South Middlesex hospital towards the further development of the West Middlesex university hospital. A formal application was submitted in January 1992. Until the final shape and cost of the scheme is decided it is not possible to say whether the scheme will require my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's consent.

Deaths

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths occurred in 1991 from HIV-related illnesses, measles, meningitis, whooping cough and cot death; and what resources are being deployed by his Department to combat these diseases, respectively.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1991, the public health laboratory service communicable disease surveillance centre reported the number of deaths in reported AIDS cases as 816. The actual number, not yet available because of delays in the reporting system, is estimated to be over 1,250. In addition, 46 deaths were reported in 1991 in HIV infected persons without AIDS. This number may also increase as a result of delayed reporting. In 1991 the Government allocated £11 million for the development of AIDS public education, £147·5 million to health and local authorities for the development of AIDS services including diagnosis, treatment, care and prevention, and nearly £2 million to the voluntary sector. The Medical Research Council has been allocated £31 million over five years for programmes on vaccines and drugs for treatment.

Provisional reports indicate that there were no deaths from acute measles or whooping cough in England and Wales in 1991. Immunisation against both diseases is included in the national childhood immunisation programme, and at November 1991, coverage was 90 per cent. of children aged two years for measles and 88 per cent. at 18 months for whooping cough. It is not possible to give the precise cost of these vaccines, but the immunisation publicity campaign in 1991-92 has cost £1·8 million with £2·2 million planned for 1992-93.

Deaths from all forms of meningitis totalled 236 in England and Wales for the first three quarters of 1991. Figures for the final quarter are not yet available. In October a vaccine—"Hib"—against invasive haemophilus disease, one of the main causes of bacterial meningitis, will be added to the programme. A major information and education campaign will precede the launch of Hib vaccine.

In 1990, the latest year for which figures are available, the number of infant deaths in England and Wales with any mention of sudden infant death on the death certificate was 1,280, a welcome reduction from the peak of 1,629 deaths in 1988. Whilst the causes of sudden infant death remain unknown, recent research showing that placing babies down to sleep on their back or side can reduce significantly the risk of cot death led to the launch of the £2 million "Back to Sleep" campaign in December 1991 and the issue of 3 million leaflets on "Reducing the Risk of Cot Death". We hope that this will lead to a continuation of the downward trend we have recently seen. Since 1979, the Government have spent £3·8 million on research into sudden infant death and respiratory distress syndromes through the Medical Research Council.

Pharmacist Contractors' Fees

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the amount paid to pharmacist contractors in England and Wales in respect of fees and on-cost, expressed in pence per prescription and as a percentage of the total amount paid per prescription for each of the last 10 years at actual and constant prices.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The requested information is given in the table:

Fees and oncost—Pence per prescription

Year	*Actual prices*	*Constant prices*[2]	*Percentage of total amount paid*
1981	76·3	136·7	22·4
1982	84·6	141·6	22·4
1983	88·7	141·8	21·5
1984	104·1	158·5	23·8
1985[1]	97·8	148·9	21·9

Year	Actual prices	Constant prices[2]	Percentage of total amount paid
1985-86	115·6	166·8	23·9
1986-87	121·9	170·3	23·8
1987-88	120·6	159·8	21·9
1988-89	132·0	163·2	21·9
1989-90	145·7	169·1	22·7
1990-91	138·7	148·4	20·8

[1] 1 January 1985 to 31 March 1985.

[2] Constant prices calculated using 1991-92 prices as base.

Note: Lump sum underpayments are included in the year in which they were paid.

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of expenditure on primary health care was paid to pharmacist contractors in respect of fees and on-cost for the last 10 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is shown in the table.

Total expenditure on pharmacists' fees and on-costs as a percentage of total expenditure on primary health care services
England

	Primary health care £ million	Pharmacists' fees, etc. £ million	Fees, etc. as percentage of primary health care per cent.
1981-82	2,443	232	9·5
1982-83	2,832	264	9·3
1983-84	3,041	282	9·3
1984-85	3,349	336	10·1
1985-86	3,527	359	10·2
1986-87	3,820	384	10·1
1987-88	4,220	409	9·7
1988-89	4,801	457	9·5
1989-90	5,099	477	9·4
1990-91	5,427	516	9·5

Source: Department of Health Tables (FI): Total cost of services and sources of finance for health and personal social services.

Note: Primary health care services are those provided by family doctors, dentists, community pharmacists, opticians and community nurses.

Insulin Injections

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what would be the net extra cost to his Department of supplying insulin injection pen needles for diabetics on prescription.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The addition of insulin injection pen needles to the list of items GPs may prescribe is the subject of continuing negotiations with manufacturers. The price which will be paid for needles when they become prescribable, and therefore the cost to the Department, are part of these negotiations.

English Wine

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will delay the implementations of all those recent environment and health regulations applying to the production of English wine in English vineries until a full assessment has been made by the deregulation unit of his Department of their impact on the industry and effect on unemployment and the industry of obligatory requirements imposed by local authority environmental health officers.

Mr. Dorrell: No new regulations have been introduced relating specifically to the safe production of wine. Wine producers are subject to the general requirements of the Food Safety Act 1990 for hygienic and safe production. As for other food businesses, their premises must be registered with local authorities under the Food Premises (Registration) Regulations 1991. Any enforcement measures should relate to the known risks of the product. In the case of wine production, the risks are generally relatively low.

Road Traffic Accidents

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total amount charged by each health authority for treatment given to patients following road traffic accidents for each of the last 10 years; and if he will give the comparable figures for NHS trusts.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 14 February 1992]:* The information requested, which is derived from annual accounts submitted to the Department, is shown in the tables for the financial years to 1990-91—the latest available. Such information is not collected in-year.

Table 1 shows the figures for the 10 years by region and table 2 for each health authority for the most recent three years. A complete analysis to each health authority for the entire 10-year period could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Table 1
Income from charges under the Road Traffic Acts—£000 (Cash)

Region	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Northern	216	296	398	391	424	349	398	397	384	390
Yorkshire	351	448	515	573	618	631	679	751	680	744
Trent	369	519	630	664	754	716	971	1,005	931	994
East Anglia	276	361	386	471	515	500	467	514	716	625
North West Thames	224	285	356	303	315	384	403	438	468	333
North East Thames	271	326	364	363	390	331	436	430	391	418
South East Thames	337	444	542	548	629	534	500	513	392	507
South West Thames	246	379	348	357	379	338	461	517	574	211
Wessex	316	458	584	583	775	753	742	836	861	1,077
Oxford	217	319	356	571	558	609	624	534	729	665
South Western	335	473	678	690	725	691	824	720	890	741
West Midlands	488	722	786	837	780	850	1,020	929	1,040	969
Mersey	228	392	399	385	466	458	491	407	517	624
North Western	318	468	603	584	590	722	669	753	681	779
SHAs	6	4	5	4	(2)	5	2	4	2	3
England	4,198	5,894	6,950	7,324	7,916	7,871	8,687	8,748	9,256	9,080

Table 2

Income from charges under the Road Traffic Acts

	1988-89 (£)	*1989-90 (£)*	*1990-91 (£)*
Northern Region			
Hartlepool	10,779	18,973	21,645
North Tees	17,948	21,272	22,311
South Tees	27,630	47,551	34,229
East Cumbria	39,031	45,766	51,260
South Cumbria	28,259	29,854	37,415
West Cumbria	12,349	13,135	11,410
Darlington	10,209	10,238	14,161
Durham	26,503	30,837	29,808
North West Durham	6,826	21,562	16,017
South West Durham	22,965	13,040	25,609
Northumberland	20,434	44,926	42,923
Gateshead	10,734	12,570	10,517
Newcastle	129,785	36,664	36,495
North Tyneside	11,842	8,794	12,052
South Tyneside	9,121	8,436	5,702
Sunderland	12,215	19,952	18,269
Total	396,630	383,570	389,823
Yorkshire Region			
Hull	153,110	125,621	152,581
East Yorkshire	5,148	4,302	4,350
Grimsby	20,682	31,113	37,678
Scunthorpe	13,499	17,120	28,640
Northallerton	24,201	15,932	12,925
York	26,556	38,971	31,291
Scarborough	33,488	34,655	55,701
Harrogate	27,745	30,428	28,731
Bradford	47,252	66,756	50,563
Airedale	29,637	37,418	57,086
Calderdale	37,741	25,640	35,644
Huddersfield	66,754	35,713	30,219
Dewsbury	28,108	38,417	41,807
Leeds Western	78,784	57,920	38,736
Leeds Eastern	117,071	80,582	90,796
Wakefield	26,002	19,155	33,125
Pontefract	15,694	19,835	13,731
Total	751,472	679,578	743,604
Trent Region			
North Derbyshire	63,128	39,661	56,000
South Derbyshire	137,672	138,300	108,772
Leicestershire	172,495	79,819	140,508
North Lincolnshire	87,372	74,019	134,055
South Lincolnshire	108,796	107,585	131,640
Bassetlaw	11,172	15,307	19,860
Central Notts	61,453	61,481	55,035
Nottingham	123,754	133,736	98,694
Barnsley	21,357	48,687	30,990
Doncaster	81,221	104,048	108,534
Rotherham	50,955	44,696	65,161
Sheffield	85,881	84,061	44,535
Total	1,005,256	931,400	993,784
East Anglian Region			
Cambridge	46,271	138,388	86,301
Peterborough	47,584	109,887	89,459
West Suffolk	37,573	49,872	42,756
East Suffolk	43,814	36,469	31,302
Norwich	190,102	204,360	213,959
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	28,721	75,331	41,905
West Norfolk and Wisbech	95,884	73,973	92,552
Huntingdon	23,649	28,080	26,962
Total	513,598	716,360	625,196
North West Thames Region			
North Bedfordshire	80,820	86,996	46,780
South Bedfordshire	53,266	74,524	68,648
North Hertfordshire	41,081	47,942	12,698
East Hertfordshire	4,405	20,174	17,618
North West Hertfordshire	58,989	59,945	37,027
South West Hertfordshire	20,935	25,478	16,912
Barnet	24,425	33,575	22,299
Harrow	10,547	5,328	10,747
Hillingdon	55,837	40,118	32,498
Hounslow and Spelthorne	71,732	71,828	51,160
Ealing	10,084	(6,191)	10,109
Riverside	1,815	3,529	2,837
Parkside	4,374	4,170	4,162
Total	438,310	467,416	333,495
North East Thames Region			
Basildon and Thurrock	20,987	15,315	15,306
Mid Essex	97,613	67,113	89,729
North East Essex	13,281	33,168	28,039
West Essex	54,092	36,825	23,204
Southend	32,672	13,939	24,717
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	55,163	79,143	56,546
Hampstead	23,128	24,431	23,913
City and Hackney	7,639	28,122	12,120
Newham	36,878	25,319	43,134
Tower Hamlets	27,326	2,601	26,073
Enfield	7,647	5,860	16,137
Haringey	1,683	1,848	2,537
Redbridge	8,909	4,901	16,064
Waltham Forest	16,470	35,507	29,963
Bloomsbury and Islington	26,787	17,104	10,067
Total	430,275	391,196	417,549
South East Thames Region			
Brighton	36,344	29,647	29,915
Eastbourne	59,396	36,938	55,990
Hastings	7,102	8,201	8,926
South East Kent	21,307	28,065	49,105
Canterbury and Thanet	95,067	95,510	76,468
Dartford and Gravesham	32,325	54,094	21,810
Maidstone	28,501	5,892	26,755
Medway	35,357	54,143	124,693
Tunbridge Wells	95,992	44,651	71,635
Bexley	24,187	(9,522)	7,358
Greenwich	15,015	15,585	10,575
Bromley	27,992	5,402	16,606
West Lambeth	30,925	10,674	570
Camberwell	734	5,916	(7,260)
Lewisham and North Southwark	2,609	6,241	14,304
Total	512,853	391,437	507,450
South West Thames Region			
North West Surrey	23,458	14,503	21,760
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	32,032	26,611	39,082
South West Surrey	54,672	20,440	44,572
Mid Surrey	16,443	740	8,715
East Surrey	12,679	14,674	12,754
Chichester	60,350	49,988	60,201
Mid Downs	60,609	71,512	90,627
Worthing	190,269	233,194	(17,151)
Croydon	15,465	69,794	32,204
Kingston and Esher	10,042	38,429	40,102
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	(623)	930	(804)
Wandsworth	7,898	2,895	4,963
Merton and Sutton	33,875	29,760	32,068
Total	517,169	573,470	211,093

	1988-89 (£)	*1989-90 (£)*	*1990-91 (£)*
Wessex Region			
East Dorset	121,668	107,252	150,008
West Dorset	27,559	33,077	28,386
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	114,425	112,389	121,614
Southampton and South West Hampshire	151,657	171,367	164,717
Winchester	85,145	80,716	92,925
Basingstoke	71,611	44,390	99,669
Salisbury	84,498	119,673	113,194
Swindon	59,130	70,023	58,485
Bath	109,021	104,188	212,102
Isle of Wight	11,624	17,524	36,046
Total	836,338	860,599	1,077,146
Oxford Region			
East Berkshire	43,424	87,948	54,094
West Berkshire	100,400	100,611	142,669
Aylesbury	49,064	57,278	54,586
Wycombe	46,800	64,532	21,031
Milton Keynes	24,752	20,647	18,260
Kettering	62,696	116,378	69,867
Northampton	61,946	69,051	55,119
Oxfordshire	144,844	212,922	248,941
Total	533,926	729,367	664,567
South Western Region			
Bristol and Weston	71,158	178,126	101,851
Frenchay	35,647	122,324	79,091
Southmead	40,030	33,196	29,645
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	121,422	140,566	120,609
Exeter	106,093	99,823	109,024
North Devon	21,775	18,317	19,311
Plymouth	83,094	79,930	81,415
Torbay	67,092	55,320	60,506
Cheltenham	37,104	16,218	22,466
Gloucester	42,902	38,907	36,811
Somerset	93,116	107,007	80,012
Total	719,433	889,734	740,741
West Midlands Region			
Bromsgrove and Redditch	14,559	11,200	19,453
Herefordshire	10,657	23,033	28,517
Kidderminster	26,017	24,717	19,991
Worcester	15,720	32,890	17,955
Shropshire	166,282	161,089	153,432
Mid Staffordshire	25,500	31,674	28,908
North Staffordshire	150,086	131,227	90,594
South East Staffordshire	35,257	92,865	41,077
Rugby	20,813	24,222	52,406
North Warwickshire	37,985	34,173	17,277
South Warwickshire	23,730	20,974	28,442
Central Birmingham	21,679	6,124	47,317
East Birmingham	37,770	43,996	67,506
North Birmingham	27,792	39,839	31,773
South Birmingham	84,783	98,091	75,284
West Birmingham	6,539	5,343	4,350
Coventry	36,022	32,774	35,276
Dudley	59,849	65,359	80,807
Sandwell	14,041	30,883	25,976
Solihull	16,657	10,161	8,533
Walsall	51,118	36,567	43,685
Wolverhampton	46,439	82,686	50,900
Total	929,295	1,039,887	969,459
Mersey Region			
Chester	60,056	69,636	86,583
Crewe	62,641	91,408	74,816
Halton	1,605	2,927	3,493
Macclesfield	14,475	16,224	31,067
Warrington	40,127	18,792	59,658
Liverpool	53,831	88,046	143,966
St. Helens and Knowsley	14,028	20,060	31,466
Southport and Formby	13,979	8,018	12,967
South Sefton	65,363	83,329	105,334
Wirral	80,564	121,217	74,492
Total	406,669	519,657	623,842
North Western Region			
Lancaster	24,361	28,694	19,253
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	33,991	28,575	26,962
Preston	64,692	67,831	50,448
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	29,764	24,677	42,611
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	49,985	48,386	45,247
West Lanchashire	37,224	37,274	43,768
Chorley and South Ribble	6,820	8,502	10,352
Bolton	31,775	30,248	35,816
Bury	12,212	12,488	13,334
North Manchester	40,150	20,856	28,968
Central Manchester	43,440	58,256	59,019
South Manchester	45,720	62,781	55,148
Oldham	35,224	19,351	19,910
Rochdale	51,859	19,592	29,064
Salford	81,598	35,670	38,929
Stockport	89,610	77,476	82,642
Tameside and Glossop	30,981	28,699	51,028
Trafford	11,722	12,186	12,477
Wigan	31,587	58,882	114,267
Total	752,715	680,424	779,243
Hospitals for Sick Children	15	14	22
Hammersmith and Queen Charlottes Hospital	4,369	2,246	2,855
S.H.As Total	4,384	2,260	2,877
England Total	8,748,323	9,256,355	9,079,869

Source: Annual accounts of district health authorities in England and those of the special health authorities for the London post-graduate teaching hospitals. (Predecessor authorities for 1981-82).

Notes:

1. The annual figures are for total income from charges for emergency and further treatment under the Road Traffic Acts (RTA) and represent sums due for the financial year but not necessarily received.

2. The figures also reflect accounting adjustments and RTA charges written-off as bad debts in the year of account. Such adjustments and write-offs include RTA sums due from earlier years and a negative income figure may occasionally result for a particular year (figures shown in brackets in the tables).

3. The annual accounts of the fourteen regional health authorities (RHAs) in England and six of the eight special health authorities (SHAs) for the London post-graduate teaching hospitals record no income from RTA in the period 1988-89 to 1990-91 and are omitted from table 2.

Health Service Finance

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish annex B of Cm 1913 adjusted for input unit costs.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 3 March 1992]:* The information requested for the hospital and community health services, family health services and the health service as a whole for the years 1986-87 to 1990-91 is given in the table. Information is not available in this form for other parts of the programme or for later years.

This information measures changes in total inputs at constant factor cost but ignores the continuing success of the national health service in increasing the efficiency with which it uses resources. Therefore, in order to give a complete picture, figures adjusted by the gross domestic product deflator have also been included.

It has not been possible to adjust these figures for certain national health service review related changes. Figures for 1991-92 onwards are therefore not directly comparable with those for earlier years. The main points are:

(i) Sums provided for trust debt remuneration are included in hospital and community health services current in 1991-92 and 1992-93;

(ii) Trusts' capital spending financed via health authorities' payments for services is included in hospital and community health services current for 1991-92 and 1992-93;

(iii) General practitioner fundholders' expenditure on drugs is included in hospital and community health services current in 1991-92 only.

Expenditure figures as they appear in Annex B of Cm 1913 adjusted for changes in input unit costs and by the GDP deflator
(All at 1990-91 prices)

£ million

NHS hospital, community health, family health (cash limited) and related services	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Current expenditure							
Adjusted for change in input unit cost							
gross	18,790	19,112	19,202	19,241	20,073	(a)	(a)
net	18,273	18,602	18,687	18,710	19,513	(a)	(a)
Adjusted by the GDP deflator							
gross	17,787	18,618	19,285	19,434	20,073	21,582	22,748
net	17,298	18,120	18,767	18,898	19,513	21,050	22,256
Capital expenditure							
Adjusted for change in input unit cost							
gross	1,703	1,697	1,731	1,930	1,864	(a)	(a)
net	1,491	1,420	1,365	1,638	1,661	(a)	(a)
Adjusted by the GDP deflator							
gross	1,642	1,631	1,643	1,878	1,864	1,911	1,731
net	1,437	1,364	1,295	1,594	1,661	1,698	1,538
NHS family health services (non cash limited)							
Current expenditure							
Adjusted for change in input unit cost							
gross	6,097	6,306	6,491	6,460	6,275	(a)	(a)
net	5,454	5,658	5,802	5,704	5,574	(a)	(a)
Adjusted by the GDP deflator							
gross	5,616	5,895	6,222	6,164	6,275	6,263	6,535
net	5,024	5,289	5,561	5,442	5,574	5,552	5,803
Total health services							
Current expenditure							
Adjusted for change in input cost							
gross	25,776	26,300	26,536	26,601	27,247	(a)	(a)
net	24,600	25,130	25,325	25,310	25,960	(a)	(a)
Adjusted by the GDP deflator							
gross	24,221	25,337	26,309	26,450	27,247	28,851	30,329
net	23,117	24,209	25,108	25,166	25,960	27,575	29,069
Capital expenditure							
Adjusted for change in input unit cost							
gross	1,774	1,744	1,786	1,981	1,933	(a)	(a)
net	1,561	1,463	1,394	1,688	1,729	(a)	(a)
Adjusted by the GDP deflator							
gross	1,710	1,676	1,695	1,928	1,933	2,080	1,910
net	1,505	1,407	1,323	1,642	1,729	1,801	1,717
Total expenditure							
Adjusted for change in input cost							
gross	27,572	28,069	28,350	28,592	29,180	(a)	(a)
net	26,179	26,616	26,758	27,011	27,689	(a)	(a)
Adjusted by the GDP deflator							
gross	25,931	27,015	28,003	28,377	29,180	30,932	32,239
net	24,622	25,616	26,431	26,809	27,689	29,376	30,786

(a) Estimates are not made for changes in input unit cost until the financial year has ended.

Agency Staff

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each district health authority, regional health authority, special health authority, and for England as a whole the amount spent on agency staff for each year since 1987 and for the latest available year.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 12 March 1992]:* The information, which is derived from annual accounts submitted to the Department for the financial years 1987-88 to 1990-91—the latest available—is shown in the table.

Total revenue expenditure on non-NHS (agency, etc.) staff

	1987-88 *£ (cash)*	*1988-89* *£ (cash)*	*1989-90* *£ (cash)*	*1990-91* *£ (cash)*
Northern regional health authority	122,371	151,306	183,836	96,133
Hartlepool	18,733	5,538	30,410	79,736
North Tees	16,486	27,571	0	15,008
South Tees	435,021	569,875	540,069	360,587
East Cumbria	90,628	97,941	109,007	117,503
South Cumbria	91,692	74,880	109,195	60,705
West Cumbria	54,979	64,030	39,999	54,571
Darlington	314,896	154,067	246,541	438,420
Durham	85,031	204,624	19,661	50,431
North West Durham	50,947	91,928	5,042	27,855
South West Durham	0	0	0	0
Northumberland	42,835	29,114	30,093	12,440
Gateshead	0	29,977	105,435	138,908
Newcastle	122,543	101,775	159,949	968,019
North Tyneside	89,331	65,189	130,367	166,277
South Tyneside	91,772	45,475	34,666	80,841
Sunderland	80,465	89,553	156,815	69,338
Northern region total	1,707,730	1,802,843	1,900,085	2,736,772
Yorkshire regional health authority	68,575	82,940	211,022	186,881
Hull	374,644	257,545	270,058	301,040
East Yorks	303,707	242,172	216,573	111,846
Grimsby	290,769	243,584	415,612	461,954
Scunthorpe	181,049	228,714	87,796	94,472
Northallerton	0	0	0	98,588
York	118,860	288,820	279,915	207,812
Scarborough	492,494	340,459	337,421	221,960
Harrogate	147,860	168,457	179,803	228,228
Bradford	670,368	726,030	880,794	1,025,534
Airedale	37,364	19,939	15,525	39,647
Calderdale	462,592	496,776	370,302	209,220
Huddersfield	23,119	26,953	66,526	57,919
Dewsbury	33,946	5,969	90,955	109,696
Leeds Western	1,869799	2,533,830	3,274,651	2,629,311
Leeds Eastern	506,698	749,710	1,152,806	1,334,620
Wakefield	449,460	348,417	431,231	442,089
Pontefract	237,028	147,342	154,856	251,802
Yorkshire region total	6,268,332	6,907,657	8,435,846	8,012,619
Trent regional health authority	294,698	300,236	325,810	202,386
North Derbyshire	31,738	98,581	234,532	176,156
South Derbyshire	595,635	477,658	512,592	333,341
Leicestershire	530,858	763,651	1,242,231	806,257
North Lincolnshire	105,119	120,848	160,367	133,818
South Lincolnshire	583,200	623,673	621,831	544,590
Bassetlaw	0	42,215	170,314	220,211
Central Nottinghamshire	65,002	40,657	63,406	232,172
Nottingham	501,317	454,044	455,369	757,044
Barnsley	65,465	63,308	112,928	117,057
Doncaster	224,243	206,050	195,525	259,518
Rotherham	146,223	259,528	429,098	590,632
Sheffield	1,277,009	1,849,679	3,484,517	3,155,054
Trent region total	4,420,507	5,300,128	8,008,520	7,528,236
East Anglian regional health authority	475,878	802,505	1,374,541	1,846,612
Cambridge	1,521,781	1,656,476	2,179,186	1,565,006
Peterborough	676,536	619,743	589,200	509,803
West Suffolk	410,296	491,299	602,125	837,760
East Suffolk	303,075	533,803	655,222	1,014,282
Norwich	1,875,080	1,555,447	1,482,742	1,342,194
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	436,536	359,775	377,276	400,635
West Norfolk and Wisbech	388,409	452,406	497,413	397,316

	1987-88 £ (cash)	*1988-89 £ (cash)*	*1989-90 £ (cash)*	*1990-91 £ (cash)*
Huntingdon	90,488	132,924	198,498	764,506
East Anglian region total	6,178,079	6,604,378	7,956,203	8,678,114
North West Thames regional health authority	2,299,214	727,892	729,071	884,125
North Bedfordshire	591,093	538,398	519,366	424,593
South Bedfordshire	820,269	1,022,665	1,243,620	1,621,391
North Hertfordshire	1,071,328	1,206,162	1,555,862	1,911,468
East Hertfordshire	951,014	882,852	675,886	752,335
North West Hertfordshire	1,567,927	1,719,755	1,919,530	1,991,275
South West Hertfordshire	1,261,893	1,721,574	1,729,753	2,114,156
Barnet	3,409,043	4,372,478	5,084,348	5,064,702
Harrow	2,289,898	2,429,707	2,906,290	3,269,381
Hillingdon	2,796,748	3,742,080	4,190,196	3,348,431
Hounslow and Spelthorne	3,179,646	3,830,287	4,547,753	3,907,046
Ealing	1,597,487	2,372,980	3,143,666	3,253,397
Riverside	9,905,227	13,590,643	15,020,274	11,040,240
Parkside	7,785,034	9,436,938	11,277,056	9,863,888
North West Thames region total	39,525,821	47,594,411	54,542,671	49,446,428
North East Thames regional health authority	738,317	859,563	937,619	721,659
Basildon and Thurrock	1,576,965	2,059,683	2,393,580	1,363,868
Mid Essex	1,206,645	1,204,844	1,148,747	1,007,351
North East Essex	393,908	752,040	971,582	861,628
West Essex	1,205,271	1,025,548	1,371,384	1,245,951
Southend	1,980,270	2,296,332	2,120,877	2,006,720
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	2,812,714	2,788,896	2,186,979	1,793,355
Hampstead	3,137,349	4,238,981	5,072,956	4,440,927
City and Hackney	4,854,313	6,802,822	7,436,144	7,102,272
Newham	3,112,504	3,232,217	3,619,816	4,278,542
Tower Hamlets	3,193,918	4,342,609	5,293,025	4,762,839
Enfield	2,218,174	2,022,592	1,981,352	2,064,315
Haringey	2,737,355	2,468,426	3,569,347	3,493,981
Redbridge	2,281,034	2,486,399	2,996,419	2,079,569
Waltham Forest	3,979,398	4,682,746	5,206,875	5,673,948
Bloomsbury and Islington	14,014,663	17,711,380	18,564,424	16,152,205
North East Thames region total	49,442,798	59,011,078	64,871,126	59,049,130
South East Thames regional health authority	1,019,536	1,462,288	796,115	590,079
Brighton	1,497,134	2,111,328	2,600,706	2,154,798
Eastbourne	989,148	1,052,220	937,118	894,674
Hastings	765,009	732,564	967,282	817,694
South East Kent	596,850	534,040	600,897	357,573
Canterbury and Thanet	1,105,938	1,229,828	1,225,943	1,000,535
Dartford and Gravesham	2,370,141	2,177,132	2,099,310	1,098,097
Maidstone	1,221,563	965,653	844,706	773,787
Medway	787,278	923,396	1,080,877	1,912,306
Tunbridge Wells	1,515,017	2,198,385	2,549,673	1,364,468
Bexley	1,037,467	1,057,577	1,311,721	1,157,721
Greenwich	2,220,621	2,674,043	2,670,592	2,444,405
Bromley	1,734,511	2,550,508	3,098,195	2,138,229
West Lambeth	4,044,238	5,240,423	6,131,448	3,710,181
Camberwell	4,381,014	4,787,608	6,135,868	7,039,915
Lewisham and North Southwark	4,165,801	5,631,563	5,187,217	4,945,197
South East Thames region total	29,451,266	35,328,556	38,237,668	32,399,659
South West Thames regional health authority	4,125,246	3,442,085	4,090,940	1,767,941
North West Surrey	1,416,863	1,418,310	2,547,056	2,255,178
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	1,311,438	1,584,613	1,665,467	1,176,231
South West Surrey	1,427,241	1,938,917	1,866,119	1,525,951
Mid Surrey	856,057	1,255,626	1,566,838	1,273,307
East Surrey	1,880,246	2,439,164	2,888,940	1,900,255
Chichester	450,957	591,739	805,124	645,371
Mid Downs	1,150,744	1,384,841	1,556,396	1,288,472
Worthing	1,311,811	1,392,828	1,702,995	1,540,308
Croydon	1,446,044	2,384,516	3,467,328	2,649,097
Kingston and Esher	1,666,994	2,437,871	3,049,237	1,748,899
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	2,687,663	3,097,592	3,299,278	3,397,120
Wandsworth	5,245,180	6,200,298	7,310,733	4,883,203
Merton and Sutton	2,114,184	2,913,701	2,852,301	2,419,863

	1987-88 £ (cash)	1988-89 £ (cash)	1989-90 £ (cash)	1990-91 £ (cash)
South West Thames region total	27,090,668	32,482,101	38,668,752	28,471,196
Wessex regional health authority	538,495	359,860	214,285	667,732
East Dorset	1,483,282	1,703,900	2,034,615	1,812,459
West Dorset	298,835	366,168	461,944	527,303
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	667,152	1,023,047	1,253,703	1,415,997
Southampton and South West Hampshire	678,522	610,280	1,127,391	1,053,254
Winchester	569,488	764,819	702,203	584,851
Basingstoke	832,146	1,234,165	1,395,171	1,071,689
Salisbury	433,641	336,344	418,191	437,442
Swindon	353,095	460,172	711,407	804,305
Bath	268,719	346,062	827,694	979,203
Isle of Wight	232,666	442,206	974,080	827,582
Wessex region total	6,356,041	7,647,023	10,120,684	10,181,817
Oxford regional health authority	129,673	327,235	735,085	527,375
East Berkshire	1,964,409	2,135,708	2,440,727	1,997,510
West Berkshire	1,259,707	1,474,065	1,754,567	1,790,170
Aylesbury	1,057,468	1,215,867	1,187,034	1,041,672
Wycombe	587,818	647,502	645,455	522,144
Milton Keynes	370,248	603,210	690,050	375,893
Kettering	194,847	223,515	287,835	285,144
Northampton	284,477	518,735	762,548	630,322
Oxfordshire	624,718	978,589	1,361,879	1,084,462
Oxford region total	6,473,365	8,124,426	9,865,180	8,254,692
South Western regional health authority	484,000	498,941	679,450	835,586
Bristol and Weston	870,341	1,427,086	1,964,462	2,086,772
Frenchay	191,581	378,586	758,969	1,229,122
Southmead	385,695	405,633	520,437	556,042
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	261,374	263,452	281,408	350,875
Exeter	493,777	647,282	1,028,593	666,534
North Devon	222,920	193,294	249,417	261,510
Plymouth	265,221	336,871	665,431	1,106,159
Torbay	150,855	179,697	221,672	283,306
Cheltenham	175,424	366,690	603,368	545,015
Gloucester	70,231	106,558	112,332	157,212
Somerset	1,219,532	1,144,346	1,275,176	1,459,015
South Western region total	4,790,951	5,948,436	8,360,715	9,537,148
West Midlands regional health authority	730,773	755,235	791,136	1,152,371
Bromsgrove and Redditch	336,575	187,481	215,171	327,382
Herefordshire	129,256	156,257	285,567	398,690
Kidderminster	100,275	107,993	120,621	165,699
Worcester	535,924	615,610	1,197,012	1,622,959
Shropshire	184,187	104,640	263,915	488,022
Mid Staffs	87,262	201,680	259,417	357,971
North Staffs	246,491	295,718	280,954	359,734
South East Staffs	169,574	197,927	254,502	255,658
Rugby	275,708	333,652	369,078	295,023
North Warwickshire	226,802	181,189	240,086	281,029
South Warwickshire	386,444	313,797	346,493	493,518
Central Birmingham	1,096,622	1,176,816	1,926,228	4,113,048
East Birmingham	623,485	728,890	1,393,344	1,504,775
North Birmingham	468,028	286,357	340,191	323,158
South Birmingham	939,572	744,906	982,011	854,728
West Birmingham	686,553	1,248,416	1,550,390	1,367,969
Coventry	421,659	612,652	861,914	635,468
Dudley	226,484	541,503	851,751	807,849
Sandwell	330,893	477,915	447,402	205,281
Solihull	315,479	201,299	186,268	342,793
Walsall	445,706	443,617	533,675	610,182
Wolverhampton	666,328	634,398	791,357	465,332
West Midlands region total	9,630,080	10,547,948	14,488,483	17,428,639
Mersey regional health authority	244,866	271,163	253,517	288,395
Chester	110,888	24,224	229,033	67,143
Crewe	496,125	350,167	519,320	639,719
Halton	217,425	353,701	369,752	267,952
Macclesfield	276,859	285,794	538,806	613,345
Warrington	227,261	219,578	264,482	30,584
Liverpool	770,672	375,875	2,094,580	2,510,559

	1987-88 *£ (cash)*	*1988-89* *£ (cash)*	*1989-90* *£ (cash)*	*1990-91* *£ (cash)*
St. Helens and Knowsley	96,422	44,602	81,166	133,408
Southport and Formby	284,061	258,126	247,071	315,320
South Sefton	163,903	439,085	668,066	491,794
Wirral	92,277	157,465	269,355	285,823
Mersey region total	2,980,759	2,779,780	5,535,148	5,644,042
North Western regional health authority	18,969	4,552	100,542	94,215
Lancaster	43,603	57,988	43,165	74,386
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	249,381	286,763	267,094	340,762
Preston	287,932	388,428	335,075	493,246
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	0	0	118,621	114,180
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	57,073	276,988	116,619	138,652
West Lancashire	118,769	177,447	570,483	741,067
Chorley and South Ribble	19,142	27,648	14,863	57,141
Bolton	526,670	700,095	586,073	413,544
Bury	115,890	71,054	178,085	300,077
North Manchester	150,309	320,374	446,372	993,235
Central Manchester	372,029	494,026	816,384	1,152,637
South Manchester	90,689	675,087	589,147	1,245,214
Oldham	344,533	353,911	273,386	171,600
Rochdale	100,777	50,608	60,548	65,388
Salford	363,522	355,484	255,378	525,580
Stockport	139,237	152,253	163,522	187,236
Tameside and Glossop	212,375	213,735	214,070	166,320
Trafford	202,788	242,912	112,842	192,333
Wigan	29,689	42,892	209,149	228,576
North Western region total	3,443,377	4,892,245	5,471,418	7,695,389
Hospitals for Sick Children	3,007,397	3,929,924	5,655,215	5,364,730
National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery	1,886,045	2,145,783	2,706,325	2,286,274
Moorfields Eye Hospital	1,192,738	1,697,004	1,580,001	1,204,326
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	1,146,088	1,351,302	2,316,199	1,530,689
National Heart and Lung Hospitals	1,409,469	2,272,109	2,804,712	3,682,776
Royal Marsden Hospital	1,394,752	1,783,790	2,295,757	1,926,012
Hammersmith and Queen Charlottes Hospital	3,367,977	3,675,845	3,280,373	3,472,062
Eastman Dental Hospital	271,154	339,793	380,587	394,333
SHA total	13,675,620	17,195,550	21,019,169	19,861,202
England	211,435,394	252,166,560	297,481,668	274,925,083

Source:

Annual accounts of regional and district health authorities in England and those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals.

Notes:

1. The table excludes the similar but comparatively small costs of staff wholly or mainly concerned with capital projects and which are charged to capital expenditure by the health authorities. Such costs totalled as follows:

	£000 (cash)
1987-88	2,449
1988-89	2,876
1989-90	4,612
1990-91	4,899

2. The table also excludes any expenditure incurred by special health authorities other than those for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Scientists

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to establish a United Kingdom body to retrain nuclear scientists and weapon designers from the Atomic Weapons Establishment in civil development projects.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No.

Hydrographic Office

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for defence what changes he proposes in the budget of the Hydrographic Office defence support agency from 1 April; what consequences for staffing he expects to result; and what consultations have taken place with representatives of the employees.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The 1992-93 business plan for the Hydrographic Office defence support agency is still being prepared, and consequently the budgetary allocation and any staffing implications have yet to be finalised by the chief executive. Discussions between the management and representatives of Hydrographic Office staff will continue by means of well-established local Whitley committee machinery.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has had over the prospect of the Hydrographic Office defence support agency achieving metrication of charts on a world basis by 1999; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A number of representations have been received concerning the metrication of charts by the Hydrographic Office defence support agency, including some from hon. Members. One of the key targets set for the chief executive of the Hydrographic Office is to reduce the number of imperial unit charts in the inventory by at least 90 per year. This will allow the metrication programme to be completed by 2005. By 1999 all imperial charts relating to EC waters will have been converted to metric units of measurement in accordance with an EC directive covering the territories of EC member states and their territorial waters.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on the adequacy of staff numbers employed on marketing by the Hydrographic Office defence support agency.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the automation programme of the Hydrographic Office defence support agency and the likely staff savings *(a)* before 1995 and *(b)* after 1995.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This is a matter for the chief executive of the Hydrographic Office. I have asked him to write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list *(a)* the running costs and *(b)* the incomes from sales in request of the Hydrographic Office defence support agency in each year since 1971 (i) at current prices and (ii) at 1990-91 prices.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This is a matter for the chief executive of the Hydrographic Office. I have asked him to reply to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy that the savings required under current proposals from the Hydrographic Office defence support agency should be based on net rather than total running costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Hydrographic Office defence support agency has been required to achieve a number of economy measures as a contribution to savings needed throughout the fleet support area. The chief executive has been given certain freedoms and flexibilities to deal with these savings measures and will be considering how best to implement them while ensuring that the Hydrographic Office continues to respond effectively to the needs of its customers.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what figures he has been given by the military authorities of the Commonwealth of Independent States forces for *(a)* the total number of nuclear warheads in the CIS stockpile and *(b)* the total amount of nuclear explosive material in warheads or in store in the CIS.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Russian authorities have indicated that the former Soviet nuclear arsenal contains in excess of 27,000 warheads but have given no details of the amount of fissile material they possess.

Plymouth Development Corporation

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence from which defence vote and subhead he proposes to make funds available to the proposed new urban development corporation in Plymouth; how much he proposes to make available; and what value has been placed on the amounts of development land surplus to his Department's requirements which he proposes to hand over to the proposed corporation.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Ministry of Defence has undertaken to provide £20 million and some surplus land to support the proposed Plymouth urban development corporation announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on the 6 March; this forms part of a package for the disposal of the Royal William yard.

Low Flying

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he hopes to pay Mr. W. Martin of Blackdown Goat farm, Loddiswell, near Kingsbridge, south Devon, compensation as a result of a low-flying service helicopter on 5 February; if he will make a full investigation into the circumstances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Mr. Martin has only recently submitted a claim to my Department for compensation. The matter will be fully investigated and dealt with as quickly as possible.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children in Scotland were growing up in households dependent on income support or supplementary benefit; and what share of the Scottish population aged 16 years and under this represented, in each year since 1974.

Miss Widdecombe: The answer is given in the table. The information requested is not available for the years prior to 1977 and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The figures in the table largely reflect the increased numbers of lone parent families that is a characteristic of Great Britain as a whole and the fact that 60 per cent. of lone parents are either separated or divorced. Members of this group tend to become dependent on income support because of the problems that they face in obtaining appropriate levels of maintenance for their children and also in entering the labour market. This situation will be helped by the two changes in family credit that are to take effect from April; the definition of remunerative work is to be reduced to 16 hours and a £15 disregard is to be introduced for child maintenance from absent parents. In the longer term the Child Support Agency will help lone parents obtain the child maintenance that is due to them.

(A) *Year*	*(B)* *Number of children in Scotland aged 16 or under dependent on income support* *(000's)*	*(C)* *(B) expressed as a percentage of the total number of children in Scotland aged 16 or under*
1977	122	8·6
1978	121	8·8
1979	111	8·2
1980	121	9·2
1981	158	12·3
1982	186	14·9
1983	180	14·7
1984	200	17·1
[1]1986	216	18·9
1987	221	19·6
1988	232	21·0
1989	229	21·0
1990	222	20·4

Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Sources: Supplementary benefit/income support annual statistical inquiries for 1977 to 1990. Population statistics branch. General Register Office, Scotland.

[1] There was no annual statistical inquiry in 1985: the one due in December that year was deferred until February 1986.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of income support recipients are responsible for a mortgage or home loan and are *(a)* not in arrears with their payments, *(b)* more than three months in arrears and *(c)* more than six months in arrears.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available in the form requested. The Benefits Agency is currently undertaking an exercise to identify claimants in difficulties with their mortgage interest payments and to make those payments direct to lenders. From April all claimants receiving help with mortgage interest will have payments made automatically to qualifying lenders.

Benefit Expenditure

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the reduction in overall expenditure in all welfare benefits, with the exception of child benefit, if all the adult working population including those currently classified as unemployed were deemed to have earned £100 per week.

Mr. Jack: The outcome of the proposal outlined in the question would not result in a benefit saving.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the average expenditure per claimant for each social security benefit at 1991-92 prices for each year since 1979; and what was the percentage increase or decrease each year.

Miss Widdecombe: The available information is in the tables. In considering this data, it must be borne in mind that wholly beneficial benefit enhancements can, by increasing beneficiary numbers, produce an apparent fall in real average payments whereas in reality household real income from social security can be higher—for example, the growing number of married women receiving pensions in their own right. For income-related benefits, amounts paid reflect other income and other benefits, and changes from year to year are the consequence of increases in various benefits made to reflect the Government's concern to help elderly and sick people and families.

Table 1

Average payment (at 1991-92 prices) (£ per annum)[1]

	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Retirement Pension[2]	2,400	2,360	2,330	2,410	2,490	2,540	2,490	2,550	2,590	2,550	2,450	2,450	2,450	2,570
Widows' Benefit[2]	2,770	2,670	2,640	2,690	2,730	2,800	2,810	2,820	2,880	2,890	2,840	2,640	2,720	2,810
Unemployment Benefit	3,010	2,760	2,620	2,500	2,300	2,350	2,360	2,400	2,410	2,390	2,280	2,270	2,190	2,320
Sickness Benefit	3,370	3,110	2,950	2,140	2,350	2,490	2,360	2,490	2,500	2,440	2,260	2,260	2,200	2,230
Statutory Sick Pay[3]	—	—	—	—	—	3,330	3,220	3,210	3,300	3,230	3,040	3,060	2,840	2,620
Invalidity Benefit[2]	3,800	3,730	3,640	3,720	3,810	3,940	3,950	3,920	3,990	3,890	3,770	3,740	3,750	3,970
Industrial Disablement Benefit	2,170	2,100	2,080	2,170	2,160	2,230	2,230	2,220	2,160	2,070	1,890	1,850	1,820	1,820
Industrial Death Benefit	2,890	2,790	2,750	2,810	2,840	2,880	2,790	2,790	2,840	2,970	2,430	2,280	2,570	2,600
Maternity Allowance	2,850	2,530	2,440	2,260	2,030	2,050	2,040	2,060	2,130	2,250	2,220	1,740	1,820	1,950
Statutory Maternity Pay	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3,200	3,860	3,690	4,200	4,050
Non-contributory RP	1,540	1,520	1,490	1,400	1,490	1,640	1,700	1,690	1,290	1,400	1,270	1,160	1,100	1,060
War Pension	2,400	2,360	2,310	2,490	2,550	2,660	2,720	2,840	2,940	2,940	2,850	2,810	2,970	3,100
Attendance Allowance	1,720	1,640	1,620	1,690	1,730	1,780	1,790	1,780	1,800	1,770	1,700	1,690	1,690	1,760
Invalid Care Allowance[4]	2,170	1,860	1,960	2,150	1,340	1,600	1,670	1,880	5,810	3,050	2,140	1,860	1,650	1,690
Severe Disablement Allowance	1,250	1,200	1,210	1,290	1,320	1,390	1,470	1,570	1,500	1,470	1,450	1,430	1,580	1,940
Mobility Allowance	1,340	1,310	1,330	1,480	1,490	1,540	1,390	1,450	1,560	1,530	1,490	1,530	1,520	1,610
Income Support/ Supplementary Benefit[5]	2,030	1,940	2,000	2,330	2,510	2,020	2,100	2,230	2,180	2,100	2,170	2,140	2,270	2,470
Child Benefit (per child)[6]	360	490	440	460	470	500	520	520	520	510	460	440	400	430
One Parent Benefit	210	270	280	290	300	320	320	330	340	330	310	310	320	300
Family Credit/FIS[7]	770	780	870	950	950	980	940	910	1,050	1,080	1,740	1,620	1,650	1,760
Rate Rebate[5]	150	150	160	180	170	280	270	300	310	320	320	310	—	—
Rent Allowance[5]	460	420	390	470	480	840	910	890	1,130	1,120	1,330	1,420	1,590	1,770
Rent Rebate[5] [8]	460	460	470	560	510	850	840	870	880	890	1,010	1,080	1,070	1,080
Community Charge Benefits[9]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	250	330	190

Notes:

[1] Cash values revalued by use of the GDP deflator.

[2] Includes additional pensions.

[3] 80 per cent. reimbursement in 1991-92 grossed up to 100 per cent.

[4] Data for 1986-87 and 1987-88 distorted by major increase in numbers of beneficiaries and extensive arrears payments following the extension of entitlement to married women, first announced in 1985-86.

[5] Changes in 1983-84 reflect the transfer of support for housing costs from supplementary benefit to housing benefit.

[6] Increase in 1979-80 reflects the full introduction of child benefit and abolition of most child tax allowances.

[7] Increase in 1988-89 reflects the introduction of family credit.
[8] Includes expenditure on Department of the Environment and Welsh Office programmes in 1990-91 and 1991-92.
[9] Reduction in 1991-92 reflects effects of the community charge rebate and reduction schemes.

Table 2

	Percentage change over preceding year												
	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Retirement Pension[2]	−2	−1	3	3	2	−2	2	2	−2	−4	0	0	5
Widows Benefit[2]	−3	−1	2	1	3	0	0	2	0	−2	−7	3	3
Unemployment Benefit	−8	−5	−5	−8	2	0	2	0	−1	−4	−1	−3	6
Sickness Benefit	−8	−5	−7	−14	6	−5	5	0	−3	−7	0	−2	1
Statutory Sick Pay[3]	—	—	—	—	—	−3	0	3	−2	−6	1	−7	−8
Invalidity Benefit[2]	−2	−2	2	2	3	0	−1	2	−3	−3	−1	0	6
Industrial Disablement Benefit	−3	0	4	0	3	0	−1	−3	−4	−9	−2	−1	0
Industrial Death Benefit	−4	−1	2	1	1	−3	0	2	4	−18	−6	12	1
Maternity Allowance	−11	−3	−7	−10	1	0	1	4	6	−1	−22	4	7
Statutory Maternity Pay	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	21	−5	14	−4
Non-contributory RP	−1	−2	−6	6	10	4	0	−24	8	−9	−9	−5	−4
War Pension	−2	−2	8	3	4	2	5	4	0	−3	−1	6	4
Attendance Allowance	−5	−1	4	2	3	1	0	1	−1	−4	0	0	4
Invalid Care Allowance[4]	−14	8	9	−38	19	5	12	210	−48	−30	−13	−11	3
Severe Disablement Allowance	−4	1	7	2	5	6	7	−4	−2	−2	−1	10	23
Mobility Allowance	−2	1	11	1	4	−10	4	8	−2	−3	2	0	5
Income Support/ Supplementary Benefit[5]	−4	3	16	8	−20	4	6	−2	−4	4	−1	6	9
Child Benefit (per child)[6]	36	−10	5	3	6	4	−1	−1	−2	−8	−6	−8	6
One Parent Benefit	31	3	4	3	6	2	1	3	−3	−4	0	3	−8
Family Credit/FIS[7]	2	11	9	1	3	−5	−2	14	4	60	−7	2	7
Rate Rebate[5]	4	4	16	−6	61	−2	9	4	4	−1	−4	—	—
Rent Allowance[5]	−8	−7	19	2	77	8	9	13	0	18	7	12	11
Rent Rebate[5,8]	−1	2	20	−9	86	−1	3	2	1	14	6	0	1
Community Charge Benefit[9]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	30	−44

Note: For footnotes see Table 1.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which areas of Lancashire have received cold weather payments in the 1991-92 winter; and for what relevant dates.

Mr. Scott: Such information is available in the Library.

Kidderminster Local Office

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the full cost of temporary accommodation with regard to the closure of the Kidderminster integrated local benefit office will be funded centrally; and if a new integrated local office will be established in Kidderminster.

Miss Widdecombe: The provision of benefit offices is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Libary and the Public Information Office.

Social Fund

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated full cost of implementing all of the Social Security Advisory Committee's recommendations on the social fund in Great Britain in 1992-93.

Mr. Scott: The recommendations of the Social Security Advisory Committee propose wide-ranging changes to the social fund. The full information needed to produce a reliable estimate of the cost is not readily available. We are considering this report carefully, including the basis on which sound estimates might be constructed.

Contributions Agency

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many *(a)* posting query cases, *(b)* receivership cases and *(c)* refund requests are currently outstanding at Contributions Agency central operations in Newcastle; and when they will be cleared;

(2) what are the *(a)* benefit entitlement implications and *(b)* revenue implications of the current posting query and receivership cases backlog at Contributions Agency central operations in Newcastle.

Mr. Jack: The current state of processing work at Newcastle and the implications this has on benefits and revenue is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive of the Contributions Agency. She will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Benefits Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out *(a)* the number of claimants, *(b)* the number of claimants' partners and *(c)* the number of dependants on supplementary benefit and income support in each year from 1979 to the latest available.

Miss Widdecombe: This information is published annually in the supplementary benefits or income support statistics, copies of which are available in the Library.

It is regretted that there was a transcription error in one figure of a previous answer to a similar question, on 5 November 1991, columns *85-86*. The number of claimants in May 1987 should have read 4,895,525 not 4,095,525.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1983-84, *(c)* 1987-88 and *(d)* 1991-92 the average number of claimants in receipt of (i) benefits paid to disabled people and (ii) benefits paid to retired people.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), on 9 March 1992 at columns *422-23*.

Income Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of raising the income support personal allowance to the level of the personal allowance for those aged 25 years and over for people aged *(a)* 18, *(b)* 19, *(c)* 20, *(d)* 21, *(e)* 22, *(f)* 23 and *(g)* 24 years.

Miss Widdecombe: The estimated disaggregated costs are shown in the table.

Benefit (£ million)

Age	*IS*	*CCB*	*HB*	*Total*
18	55	5	—	60
19	60	5	5	65
20	50	—	—	50
21	40	—	5	50
22	35	—	5	40
23	35	—	5	40
24	30	—	5	35
Total	305	15	25	340

Source: Data shown from the 1987-89 family expenditure surveys and the 1990 annual statistical inquiry, modelled at 1992-93 prices and benefit levels.

Notes:

1. Figures have been rounded to the nearest £5 million. Because of this individual columns or lines do not necessarily sum.

2. — Indicates a cost of less than £2·5 million.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of income support who have a child included in their assessment of entitlement are aged *(a)* 18 to 19, *(b)* 20, *(c)* 21, *(d)* 22, *(e)* 23 and *(f)* 24 years.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is shown in the table.

Income support recipients who have children

Age group	*Number of claimants (000's)*
18 to 19	42
20	33
21	39
22	40
23	51
24	53

Note: All figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.
Source: Annual statistical inquiry May 1990.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many recipients of housing benefit who are also receiving income support are aged *(a)* 16-17, *(b)* 18-19, *(c)* 20, *(d)* 21, *(e)* 22, *(f)* 23 and *(g)* 24 years;

(2) how many recipients of housing benefit are aged *(a)* 16-17, *(b)* 18-19, *(c)* 20, *(d)* 21, *(e)* 22, *(f)* 23 and *(g)* 24 years.

Miss Widdecombe: The available estimates are in the table:

Number of housing benefit recipients in Great Britain—May 1990

Age of recipient	*With income support*	*Without income support*	*All cases*
16-17	5,100	2,900	8,000
18-19	37,600	25,400	63,000
20	32,200	32,000	64,200
21	38,800	36,900	75,700
22	43,000	30,000	73,000
23	52,500	19,100	71,600
24	50,800	14,800	65,600
Total	260,100	161,100	421,200

Source: The Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit Management Information System annual 1 per cent. sample.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the extent to which local authorities have complied with the requirements of regulation 66 of Housing Benefits (General) Regulations 1987; what is the effect of non-compliance on voted expenditure for subsidies in respect of authorities' benefit expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I am aware that in the years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 some local authorities in Great Britain have not complied with the requirements of the regulations and have continued to make awards of benefit without undertaking reviews at the prescribed time. In such cases, the effect of the regulations is that authorities are only entitled to direct subsidy at the rate proper for overpayments resulting from the authorities' error; 15 per cent. of benefit expenditure in respect of allowances and rebates not paid through the housing revenue accounts and nil in respect of rebates paid through the housing revenues accounts. Subsidy which has been paid in excess of these rates has not therefore been paid in accordance with the full requirements of the regulations.

In the vast majority of cases, however, it is likely that the overrun awards represented the claimants' correct benefit entitlements and would have attracted full subsidy had the awarding authorities complied with the review requirements in the regulations. I therefore propose that authorities should examine all overdue review cases and bring them to account by 5 October 1992. In cases where authorities have awarded more benefit than they would if they had carried out reviews at the prescribed time, they will receive reduced subsidy in the normal way. Where, however there would have been no change in benefit following a review at the prescribed time, I propose to allow full subsidy. From 5 October, I propose to introduce a new subsidy penalty for failure to comply with regulation 66, in addition to those already in place for overpayments. The new penalty will be proportionate to the number of cases outstanding and the length of time they remain unreviewed.

Subject to consultation with the local authority associations and the local authorities about these proposals, the necessary provisions will be brought forward in the relevant subsidy order and determinations.

Land Purchase (Blackpool)

Sir Peter Blaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to be able to announce the result of the negotiations between the Information Technology Services Agency and Blackpool borough council regarding the purchase of land at Peel Corner.

Mr. Jack: We are pleased to say that Blackpool borough council has agreed in principle to the sale of land at junction 4 (Peel Hill), Blackpool to the Information Technology Services Agency. Negotiations are continuing and if finalised they should ensure the retention in the area of some 2,500 jobs and the further prospect of some 250 new jobs, over the next few years. We understand that it is hoped that contracts will be exchanged in the next few weeks.

Pension Funds

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what investigations his Department is undertaking into the pension funds managed by members of the family of Jacob and Jeremiah Harouni; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 5 March 1992]:* The Department does not undertake investigations into the management of pension funds. The Occupational Pensions Board monitors the ability of contracted-out schemes to meet their guaranteed minimum pension liabilities. From the limited information available the board is unable to trace a contracted-out scheme in which either Jacob or Jeremiah Harouni is involved.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Institute of Chartered Accountants

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the inspectors' reports which have been passed to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, with the date on which each report was passed to the institute.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is as follows, updating the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 3 July 1991, *Official Report*, column *160:*

Name of company	*Report sent*	*Decision notified*
1 Milbury plc Westminster Property Group Ltd.	26 October 1988	17 February 1992
2 Minet Holdings plc WMD Underwriting Agencies Ltd.	13 August 1990	
3 Alexander Howden Holdings plc	13 August 1990	
4 The Greenbank Trust plc	19 June 1990	11 June 1991
5 Aldermanbury Trust plc	31 January 1991	
6 Sound Diffusion plc	15 March 1991	
7 The Animal Defence Society Ltd.	14 March 1991	22 July 1991
8 Rotaprint plc	5 July 1991	
9 The Milford Docks Company	16 January 1992	
10 BOM Holdings plc	26 February 1992	

British and Commonwealth

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the cost so far of his Department's investigation into the collapse of British and Commonwealth.

Mr. Redwood: Inspectors were appointed on 15 June 1990 under section 432 of the Companies Act 1985 to investigate and report on the affairs of Atlantic Computers plc and Atlantic Computer Systems plc, companies in the British and Commonwealth group. The cost, so far, of the Atlantic investigation is £3·89 million.

Inspectors Reports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report,* column *397*, what was the cost of each of the reports listed; what auditing firms were criticised in the reports; and to what interested parties he has supplied the unpublished reports.

Mr. Redwood: The cost of the inspections listed in the reply I gave on 25 November is set out below, where available.

The inspections into Dunlop Holdings Ltd., Euroflame Holdings plc and Hartley Baird plc were carried out by departmental staff and cost information is not available. The inspections into British Anzani and Graylaw Holdings Ltd. were linked and cost information is only available for the combined investigation.

Company name	*Cost (£)*
Bryanston Finance Ltd. (now Ramor Investments Ltd.)	760,301
British Anzani plc Graylaw Holdings Ltd.	474,045
Blue Arrow plc	3,569,800
The Bestwood plc	2,709,446
BOM Holdings plc	1,185,343

Each of these reports is unpublished and it would be inappropriate for me to discuss details of them. Such reports are disclosed, where appropriate, under the Companies Act 1948, as amended, under part XIV of the Companies Act 1985, as amended, and under the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Austiin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many of his Department's inspectors' reports published since 1979 contain evidence of audit failures.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to replies I gave on 19 December 1989 *Official Report*, column *138* and *139*, 21 February 1990 *Official Report*, column *789* and 26 October 1990 *Official Report*, column *328*. Four inspectors' reports have since been published which contain criticism of auditing firms:

Name of company	*Date of publication*	*Name of accountants*
Aldermanbury Trust plc	20 March 1991	Levy Gee
South Diffusion plc	1 May 1991	Spicer and Peglar, Gibraltar
Rotaprint plc	24 July 1991	Arthur Young Ernst and Whinney
The Milford Docks Company	16 January 1992	Coopers and Lybrand

Corporate Reports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has opposing the environmental disclosures in annual corporate reports.

Mr. Redwood: The Confederation of British Industry and the Association of British Insurers made representations expressing reservations on the practicability of a recent private Member's Bill, the Corporate Safety and Environmental Information Bill, which, among other things, would have required publication of certain environmental impact information in the directors' report.

Reporting Accountants

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the firms which have acted as reporting accountants on any of the companies privatised by his Department.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not held centrally.

Cadbury Committee on Corporate Governance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations his Department has made to the Cadbury Committee on Corporate Governance.

Mr. Redwood: I have made no written representations on matters of substance, but a representative of the Department participates in the committee as an observer.

Staff Training

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will require companies to publish the amount spent on staff training.

Mr. Redwood: The Government, through the Secretary of State for Employment's support for the investors in people initiative and by other means, encourage companies to publish their expenditure on training where this is appropriate to the objectives of companies' business.

Inspectors' Fees

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how the fees of his Department's inspectors are agreed.

Mr. Redwood: Fee rates are agreed by negotiation between my officials and prospective inspectors.

Auditing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has plans to propose legislation under which auditing firms would be prevented from designing tax avoidance schemes for their clients and then auditing the same.

Mr. Redwood: No. The provision by auditors of other services to their clients is a matter that is best dealt with by professional rules of conduct.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will propose regulations to impose an obligation on the supervisory bodies listed by him in his answer of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *346*, to allow the public to have access to the minutes of those bodies.

(2) if he will propose regulations to impose an obligation on the supervisory bodies listed by him in his answer of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *346*, to give the public a right of admission to their council meetings.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will introduce legislation to define the expression "true and fair" in audit reports.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Ernst and Young

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a list showing the inspectors appointed by him who were partners of Ernst and Young.

Mr. Redwood: Mr. J. M. Barney and Mr. D. J. Macleod were appointed as inspectors under section 177 of the Financial Services Act 1986. Mr. Macleod was also appointed an inspector on 10 February 1987 under section 442 of the Companies Act 1985 to investigate the membership of Bremner plc. No other partners in the firms which combined to form Ernst and Young, or in that firm itself, have been appointed inspectors since 1979.

Polly Peck

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the Polly Peck administrators.

Mr. Redwood: None, apart from those received from the hon. Member.

Maxwell Companies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will initiate an inquiry into the conduct of the Maxwell auditors.

Mr. Redwood: The Serious Fraud Office—SFO—is investigating events leading up to the collapse of the Maxwell group. Whether the role of the auditors may be relevant to those enquiries is a matter for the SFO. If any matters arise which could more appropriately be investigated using my right hon. Friend's powers, we will not hesitate to use them provided this would not impede the SFO's work. The Government's response to the report of the Social Security Committee on pension funds, which refers to the conduct of auditors, will be made in due course.

Intellectual Property Rights

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what intellectual property rights protection is available for companies applying for his Department's funding for research programmes.

Mr. Leigh: Applicants for assistance under Department of Trade and Industry programmes are expected to take appropriate steps to protect intellectual property rights arising from the assisted work. The costs of such protection are not normally supported because they form part of the commercial exploitation phase which follows the Government-assisted research phase. However, the particular difficulties facing small independent firms are recognised by allowing necessary patent costs to be assisted.

Research Funding

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the total of his Department's funded research each year since 1979 in cash terms, real terms on 1979, and as a percentage decrease or increase on the previous year.

Mr. Leigh: Figures are available from 1981-82 to 1989-90 only, as shown below. They are subject to qualification. Their composition has been altered by changes in the structure of government and transfer to the private sector of public corporations for which my Department was formerly responsible, and from 1987 expenditure of up to £50 million per annum was re-classified to other budgets. Real terms figures are readily available only to a 1989-90 base.

DTI expenditure on R&D

£ million

Year	*cash terms*	*real terms*[1]
1981-82	284·9	440·6
1982-83	284·0	410·1
1983-84	313·1	432·1
1984-85	346·7	455·3
1985-86	374·4	466·4
1986-87	362·9	436·9
1987-88	324·4	370·8
1988-89	314·4	334·4
1989-90	310·0	310·0

[1] base year 1989-90

Source: Cabinet Office Annual Review of Government Funded R&D 1991, published by HMSO.

British Telecom

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will hold talks with the director general of OFTEL about the replacement of rural telephone exchanges.

Mr. Redwood: British Telecom has invested more than £17 billion since its privatisation in 1984, with the result that more than 75 per cent. of customers' lines are now served by digital or modern analogue exchanges. Ninety-five per cent. of BT's exchanges will have been digitalised by the end of 1995. I meet the director general of OFTEL from time to time to discuss a wide range of telecommunications issues. He fully shares the Government's view that all customers, including those in rural areas, should benefit from the modernisation and expansion of telecommunications networks and services in the United Kingdom.

Maxwell Communications

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what communications he has received concerning actions that could be taken on behalf of constituents involved in pension funds managed by the Maxwell Communications pension fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have received a number of letters from hon. Members on behalf of their constituents.

Forced Labour Products

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what controls exist on the import of products produced by forced labour; if these are being applied to imports from the People's Republic of China; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are severe practical difficulties in identifying goods allegedly produced using forced labour given the varied and complex channels of production and distribution which exist in international trade. More generally, it is highly doubtful whether the social conditions that give rise to forced labour can be improved by restricting trade: indeed, opening up trade is more likely to contribute to economic growth in the developing world, which is a prime objective of the current GATT Uruguay round negotiations.

The Government do, however, urge all states which have ratified international instruments covering slavery, servitude, forced labour and similar practices to meet their obligations under those instruments, and also urges those states which have not done so to ratify at the earliest opportunity.

Trade in goods produced specifically with prison labour is governed by the Foreign Prison Made Goods Act 1897, as amended in 1988. For enforcement of the Act, the Government have to rely in the main on the private sector or others to supply sufficient evidence to HM Customs and Excise.

English Wine

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will make it his policy to serve exclusively English wine at all official receptions and events sponsored by Her Majesty's Government taking place in the British pavilion at Expo 92 in Seville, and in particular on British national day whether in the pavilion or elsewhere in Seville;

(2) if he will make it his policy to display wines from England in the British pavilion at Expo 92 in Seville without requiring a sponsorship fee from the English wine industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: English wines will be included in the British pavilion restaurant wine lists throughout the duration of Expo 92. They will also be offered at official Government receptions in the pavilion, including on British national day.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the effect of regional selective assistance in the Bury/Bolton travel-to-work area.

Mr. Leigh: Since 1982-83, 82 projects with total project costs of £48·4 million have been supported by regional selective assistance in the Bury-Bolton travel-to-work area. The amount of grant accepted was £6·1 million and at the time the offer was accepted the projects were expected to create a total of 1,520 new jobs and safeguard a further 1,364.

Fireworks

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish the figures of injuries caused by fireworks in 1991.

Mr. Leigh: According to reports from accident and emergency units in hospitals in England, Wales and Scotland, 723 people required treatment for injuries caused by fireworks during the three weeks leading up to November 5 1991 and the few days after, a decrease of just over 10 per cent. Serious injuries fell by 23 per cent. There was a decrease in injuries to all age groups, but particularly to 16 to 20-year-olds, where the fall was 31 per cent. There were also significant reductions in injuries to those under 16 years of age. There was a decrease of 36 per cent. in injuries from rockets and of 8 per cent. for bangers, but an increase of 9 per cent. from sparklers. Injuries from incidents in the street were down 21 per cent., from large public displays 18 per cent., from small public dislays 3 per cent. and from family firework parties 2 per cent. There were over 110 million fireworks let off in 1990, but we estimate that there were 2 to 5 per cent. less in 1991. The detailed breakdown for 1991 and the preceding four years is as follows:

Firework injuries in Great Britain
(4 week period in October-November)

	Year				
	1991	*1990*	*1989*	*1988*	*1987*
Total	723	805	800	877	960
Place of accident					
1. Family or private party	263	269	280	300	260
2. Semi-public display (eg scouts, cricket club)	57	59	71	69	88
3. Large public display	111	135	135	123	155
4. Casual incident in street etc.	209	264	247	298	364
5. Other place	68	64	46	65	73
6. Indoors	15	14	21	22	20
Type of firework					
1. Banger	146	158	136	162	163
2. Rocket	92	144	131	164	174
3. Roman candle, coloured fire etc.	68	66	89	83	96
4. Home-made or extracted powder	16	7	18	17	24
5. Other proprietary fireworks	68	73	125	86	109
6. Sparklers	101	93	83	102	95
7. Unspecified type	232	264	218	263	299
Severity of injury					
1. Fatal injury	—	—	—	—	—
2. Detained for more than one night	26	38	46	69	60
3. Sufficient to cause absence from work or equivalent	109	138	142	167	158
4. Minor injury	583	590	551	587	661
5. Unspecified injury	5	39	61	54	81
Eye injuries (included in 2-5)	247	269	275	269	312
Age group of injured persons					
1. Over 20	263	269	251	280	252
2. 16 to 20	98	142	135	151	168
3. 13 to 15	122	134	152	266	220
4. Under 13	240	260	262	280	320

Inner Cities Task Forces

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, what was the budget of the urban task forces covering London councils in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 12 March 1992]:* The budget of the Government's inner cities task forces covering London boroughs in 1991-92 was £5,396,000. This was divided among Deptford £1·2 million, north Peckham £1·5 million, west London £1·25 million, Spitalfields £1·3 million and Hackney—which opened in November 1991—£146,000.

The budgets for 1992-93 have not yet been set.

Containerised Cargo Handling

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, what is his policy on maintaining competition in containerised cargo handling facilities on the River Thames, east of Tower bridge.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 10 March 1992]:* In this as in other commercial activities, the Government's policy is to maintain and promote competition vigorously.

SCOTLAND

Gaelic Language Examination

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table to show the number of students who passed in Gaelic language at *(a)* GCSE and O-level and *(b)* A-level in 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The tables show for the years in question the numbers of awards in bands 1 to 3 for the Scottish certificate of education examinations at ordinary grade and standard grade, and in bands A to C at higher grade.

	Ordinary grade	*Standard grade (introduced 1990)*	*Higher*
Gaidhlig (Native Speakers)			
1989	68	—	18
1990	56	13	30

	Ordinary grade	*Standard grade (introduced 1990)*	*Higher*
1991	13	65	31
Gaelic Learners			
1989	232	—	106
1990	184	38	106
1991	94	164	99

Schools Expenditure

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of capital expenditure on schools in *(a)* each regional authority in Scotland and *(b)* Scotland in total in each year since 1978-79 in constant prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information given in the table has been compiled from local authority financial returns. The fall in expenditure in real terms during the period reflects a substantial and progressive decline in school pupil numbers which has reduced the requirement for new school building.

Capital expenditure by local authorities on schools at 1990-91 prices

£ million

	1978 to 1979	*1979 to 1980*	*1980 to 1981*	*1981 to 1982*	*1982 to 1983*	*1983 to 1984*	*1984 to 1985*	*1985 to 1986*	*1986 to 1987*	*1987 to 1988*	*1988 to 1989*	*1989 to 1990*	*1990 to 1991*
Borders	0·701	1·202	1·925	1·545	1·007	1·052	1·301	1·437	1·145	1·179	1·224	1·726	3·162
Central	8·904	7·106	4·997	4·058	2·174	1·599	1·543	1·902	3·106	3·469	5·046	5·416	4·687
Dumfries and Galloway	2·651	3·285	2·892	2·798	3·198	3·593	3·385	3·328	2·746	0·814	1·917	1·962	1·383
Fife	7·853	4·989	4·604	4·145	3·649	2·553	4·105	5·789	5·994	2·575	5·485	6·308	8·639
Grampian	18·198	14·898	15·928	19·801	13·444	9·730	8·271	11·145	10·358	2·804	3·934	4·246	5·808
Highland	7·523	5·063	4·828	5·373	4·407	2·469	1·164	1·783	1·469	3·125	4·218	4·233	3·113
Lothian	22·841	16·860	16·045	11·866	12·535	8·830	8·465	8·286	4·874	10·053	9·034	12·549	9·442
Strathclyde	59·035	37·643	34·977	39·370	29·781	29·530	28·451	27·123	22·582	24·444	28·731	28·722	23·533
Tayside	5·847	4·850	3·170	3·018	3·137	2·170	3·012	3·718	2·627	4·051	4·160	3·819	3·140
Orkney	1·057	0·337	0·175	1·010	1·898	1·343	1·786	1·636	1·192	1·214	1·185	1·074	1·288
Shetland	4·493	6·326	5·690	5·963	4·245	3·754	2·606	1·425	0·655	0·666	1·072	0·784	0·835
Western Isles	1·032	1·056	1·152	2·386	2·566	1·372	1·373	1·606	4·237	4·800	2·534	1·718	2·275
Scotland	140·137	103·615	96·381	101·333	82·043	67·994	65·461	69·178	60·986	59·196	68·538	72·559	67·305

Note: The figures include expenditure on nursery, primary, secondary and special schools.
Outturn figures have been converted to 1990-91 prices using the GDP deflator.

Fur Factory Farms

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many mink factory farms are currently operating under licence in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are two licensed mink farms currently operating in Scotland.

Whitson-Fairhurst Houses

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will agree to meet members and officials of Roxburgh district council to discuss ways of financing the re-purchase of the Whitson-Fairhurst houses in Hawick which were sold to sitting tenants under the right-to-buy provisions without notification of the structural design defects;

(2) what action the Government propose to take to safeguard the interests of the purchases of the Whitson-Fairhurst homes in Burnfoot; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The existing law relating to the sale of defective houses safeguards the interests of the purchasers and I have no power to intervene; any matters concerned with the performance or discharge of the seller's obligations are a matter for the sheriff court. I shall however write to the hon. Member about the sale of Whitson-Fairhurst houses by Roxburgh district council.

Supplementary housing capital allocations are made available to local authorities specifically to cover their obligations to owners of defective houses, such as Whitson-Fairhursts, where the circumstances meet the statutory requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. Decisions on repurchasing houses in other cases are a matter for the district council and such repurchases must be funded from the council's general housing capital allocations. In the circumstances, I see no purpose in a meeting with the council during the general election period.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table, analysing the data in appendix 1 of Cm 1915, showing separately for each line for the years 1986-87 to 1994-95 *(a)* expenditure within the Scottish block and *(b)* other expenditure;

(2) if he will publish tables, covering the years 1986-87 to 1994-95 and consistent with Cm 1915, analysing *(a)* the Scottish block by economic category within spending sector, *(b)* the Scotland programme by economic category within spending sector and *(c)* the Scotland programme minus Forestry Commission by economic category within spending sector;

(3) if he will publish a table, analysing the data in the "summary cash plans" of Cm 1915 (page vii), showing separately for each line within the sub-total, total Scottish Office and Departments, for the years 1986-87 to 1994-95 *(a)* expenditure within the Scottish block and *(b)* other expenditure;

(4) if he will publish tables, analysing for the years 1986-87 to 1994-95, the data in the "summary cash plans" of Cm 1915 (page vii), analysing the component parts of *(a)* the Scottish block and *(b)* other expenditure, by

(i) public expenditure (sub) programme and (ii) the functional classification used in the identifiable expenditure figures, appendix E of Cm 1920.

Mr. Lang: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the latest figures available, stating whether they are final outturns, provisional outturns or budget figures, for 1988-89 to 1992-93 on the statistical basis of table 2 (summary analysis of general fund services revenue account), table 3 (summary analysis of housing, trading and special revenue accounts), table 4 (summary analysis of capital accounts) and table 5 (general fund services revenue account: total expenditure) of Scottish local government financial statistics.

Mr. Lang: The information requested will take a little time to assemble and I shall therefore write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Fish Processors

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when he expects to be able to provide application forms to enable small scale fish processors to make applications for the derogation under article 14 of directive 91/493;

(2) if he will make a statement outlining the Government's position on the provisions of article 14 of EC directive 91/493 dealing with temporary relief from officially set health requirements as they affect small-scale fish processors until January 1996;

(3) whether member states are required to amend the existing provision of the Food Safety Acts to enable the derogation scheme under article 14 of directive 91/493 to proceed;

(4) what form of guidance his Department intends to provide to local environmental health officers to enable them to advise prospective applicants for derogations under article 14 of directive 91/493; and how soon he hopes to be able to provide it.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Under article 14 of directive 91/493/EEC, the Commission is to submit a report to the Council on the minimum structural and equipment requirements to be met by small establishments which distribute on the local market and are situated in regions subject to particular supply constraints. It will be necessary to consider the Government's position on such matters once the Commission's proposals are seen. Meanwhile we have sought the views of the industry. It should not be necessary to amend existing United Kingdom legilsation to enable derogations under article 14 to be put in place should such derogations be agreed.

Careers Service

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish guidelines to encourage careers service partnerships between education authorities and local enterprise companies.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Guidelines on the formation of careers service partnerships are being issued today. Quality careers guidance is vital if young people are to achieve their potential and take full advantage of the numerous opportunities in education and training. It is also vital that employers play an active and increasing role in the careers service to ensure that the best possible information and advice are available.

Careers service partnerships are a significant move in that direction. The active involvement of local employers will enable the careers service to offer a valuable and flexible service to its clients and one which is fully attuned to local needs and opportunities to help promote partnerships.

Education authorities are being invited to submit applications for finance to assist them in meeting initial development costs of partnerships during 1992-93. Support is likely to range from £5,000 in the smallest authorities to £30,000 in the largest.

The Government are determined to give young people the best possible deal in education and training and in getting themselves a job. The issue of these guidelines is another step towards achieving that goal.

Assisted Places

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any information about the examination performance of assisted places pupils.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The aim of the assisted places scheme, which was set up by the Government in 1981, is to allow children to attend Scottish independent schools which would otherwise be beyond the financial means of their parents.

Some 2,900 children now benefit from the scheme in Scotland and I expect that number to rise to 3,000 in the 1992-93 session.

The examination performance of children on the scheme has also demonstrated once and for all that children from families with low incomes and from a wide social background can, and do, perform just as well as children from better-off families when they are given the same opportunity.

A survey, which has been commissioned by the Scottish Council of Independent Schools, will I am sure, shortly provide further evidence to confound those who have questioned the merit of the scheme. Final results from the survey are expected in July. The scheme is working well. I look forward with interest to the results of the survey.

Set-aside Schemes

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the amount of payments under the set-aside scheme in Scotland which have been recovered or withheld in each region since 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 10 March 1992]:* The information is set out in the table. It takes account of developments since my earlier answers on 20 December 1991 and 13 February 1992 which contained some provisional figures.

Set-aside Scheme: Scotland
Payments recovered/withheld

Region	*1988-89* £	*1989-90* £	*1990-91* £
Borders	—	—	2,608·80
Central	692·00	4,894·20	—
Fife	—	1,662·00	51·00

Region	1988-89 £	1989-90 £	1990-91 £
Grampian	23,814·74	13,123·33	7,926·80
Highland	—	1,031·33	2,238·00
Lothian	2,687·40	408·00	—
Tayside	4,884·60	9,754·70	7,064·50
Others	—	—	—
Total	32,078·74	30,873·56	19,889·10

Infertility Service

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the National Medical Advisory Committee's report on an infertility service for Scotland will be published; and when he expects its recommendations to be implemented.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 March 1992]:* There are a number of matters about the provision of an assisted reproduction service which call for further investigation and I have sought supplementary advice from the NMAC. When these matters have been resolved, the NMAC report will be published and the issues surrounding implementation addressed.

Planning (Guidelines)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give details of guidelines pertaining to notification times given to third parties in planning matters when a reporter is due to inspect a site; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has had regarding the adequacy of guidelines pertaining to notification times given to third parties in planning matters when a reporter is due to inspect a site; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 March 1992]:* There is no statutory obligation for a reporter to notify third parties when he is due to inspect a site and there are therefore no guidelines. But the Scottish Office inquiry reporters unit normally informs third parties as a matter of courtesy. Site inspections can be arranged at short notice, but the unit normally gives parties two weeks' notice.

The Scottish Office inquiry reporters unit has had representations on a site inspection which was arranged at short notice at Memsie in Banff and Buchan. The two days' notice given to third parties in this case was shorter than normal and arose from the cancellation of another case.

Council Tax

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his best estimate of the numbers of single people with incomes of over £40,000 per annum who will qualify for a 25 per cent. discount under his council tax proposals.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 12 March 1992]:* This information is not available.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish his estimate of the total number of discounts for *(a)* single person households and *(b)* other eligible groups he expects to be available under his council tax proposals, shown in aggregate and by region.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 12 March 1992]:* For the illustrative calculations published in 1991, it was estimated that 30·4 per cent. of households were one adult households. My right hon. Friend is not yet in a position to estimate the incidence of other discounts under the council tax.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each ambulance authority, and for each year since 1987, the number of complaints lodged.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 12 March 1992]:* The information is not held centrally in the form requested.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, for 1987 and 1991, and for each ambulance service in Scotland, the percentage of emergency calls responded to within *(a)* 7 to 8 minutes and *(b)* 14 to 20 minutes.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 12 March 1992]:* The information is not held centrally in the form requested.

Health Service Staff

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the numbers of national health service front-line staff for the national health service in Scotland in 1979, 1983, 1987 and the latest available year; and if he will list the percentage change in these figures between each of those years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 12 March 1992]:* The information requested is shown in the table.

Direct care staff in the NHS in Scotland: Whole-time equivalent (WTE) as at 30 September

Total[1] Year	WTE	Percentage change Period	Percentage change
1979	72,320·3	—	—
1983	79,928·4	1979-83	[2]5·1
1987	81,588·7	1983-87	2·1
[3]1991	82,550·8	1987-91	1·2

Notes:

[1] Direct care staff include doctors and dentists, nursing and midwifery staff, scientific and PAMs staff, technical staff, hospital pharmacists and opticians, ambulance staff. The figures include some staff who are not involved in direct patient care—for example, those in teaching, administration or public health medicine. Staff in the state hospital are excluded.

[2] Numbers have been adjusted to reflect the change for nursing staff from a 40-hour week in 1979 to a 37·5-hour week in subsequent years.

[3] Provisional

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 16 March 1992

PRIME MINISTER

Gambling

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on encouraging the demand for gambling.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Home Affairs to my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) on 13 January 1992, at column *460*.

Government Objectives

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Prime Minister what are the present objectives of the Government; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government's objectives were set out in the Queen's Speech on 31 October 1991 at columns *5-7*.

Progress made on these objectives is detailed in today's Prorogation Speech.

European Union

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister with reference to the changes proposed by the new article 8—citizens of the union—of the revised treaty of Rome, as specified in the draft treaty on European union, what variation will occur between the future status of any citizens of the United Kingdom and that of its monarch.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* There will be no change in the status of citizens of the United Kingdom or that of the monarch. Every person who is a United Kingdom national for European Community purposes will hold citizenship of the union as an additional right.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime Statistics, Newham

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish figures for *(a)* total recorded offences, *(b)* all violent crimes, *(c)* burglaries and *(d)* murders in Newham for each year from 1980-81 to 1991-92.

Mr. John Patten: The available information has been given in the table. Annual figures for murder cannot be provided in time; I shall therefore write to the hon. Member with them shortly.

Notifiable offences recorded in the borough of Newham

Year	*Total notifiable offences*	*Total violent crime*	*Burglary*[1]
1980	18,230	952	4,309
1981	21,465	977	5,267
1982	21,233	1,097	5,695
1983	20,050	1,081	5,411
1984	23,561	1,460	6,180
1985	24,064	1,476	5,845
1986	23,109	1,439	5,150
1987	23,595	1,685	4,945
1988	25,090	1,759	4,971
1989	26,607	2,007	5,808
1990	28,332	2,348	6,609
1991	30,731	2,854	7,166

[1] Includes going equipped for stealing.

Gambling

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to raise money for the arts from the proceeds of gambling.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government have decided to establish a national lottery to raise money for good causes, including the arts. On 6 March, we published a White Paper setting out the broad framework for the national lottery and inviting views of interested parties on a number of the practical issues.

Relocation

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those parts of his Department which are currently under review for relocation; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to the east midlands; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to Mansfield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Home Office has completed a number of relocation reviews, and a current wider review of the Police National Computer Organisation includes the question of relocation. Some 2,000 posts in Prison Service headquarters and DTELS will move to the east midlands. There are no plans to relocate any posts to Mansfield.

Eavesdropping Devices

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report,* column *344,* to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn); if he has any plans to restrict the circumstances in which eavesdropping devices may be used; what consideration he has given to the effect of their use on personal privacy; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: No, but the effect of the use of devices which amplify and transmit sound is kept under review.

Parole

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of prisoners in England and Wales eligible for parole, who are awaiting consideration of their applications for parole; and what was the comparable figure at the same time in 1991 and 1990.

Mrs. Rumbold: Central records show that there are now some 4,600 cases under consideration for parole and on which no decision has yet been reached. An additional unknown number of inmates will have had their reviews started locally, but the cases have not yet been received at the centre. At this time last year there were about 5,000 cases being processed at the centre. Figures for previous years are not readily available.

Auto Crime

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the Association of Chief Police Officers concerning the methods to be used in the apprehension of those suspected of acts of aggravated vehicle-taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: This is an operational matter for the police.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has for the latest available year of all motor vehicles stolen or broken into, on the number of cases in which the method of entry was via *(a)* a forced window, *(b)* a smashed window and *(c)* a forced door.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 13 March 1992]*: The only information held centrally is from the British crime survey. The most recent sweep, conducted in early 1988, showed that of a sample of 1,500 motor vehicles which were stolen or broken into over the past year, entry was as shown below. The survey does not ask for methods of entry in quite the same way as the question specifies. Nor do all victims, particularly those of theft of cars, know the method of entry. The other methods referred to in the third row include entry by unlocked doors and open windows.

	Percentage	*Estimated number of crimes*
Broken windows	33	811,000
Forced lock	18	445,000
Other methods/not known	49	1,217,000
Total	100	2,473,000

Prisons

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to implement changes in the prison disciplinary system.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have laid before the House amendments to the prison rules and young offender institution rules which will implement, from 1 April, important changes to the prison disciplinary system. These implement commitments in the White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice". On 1 April boards of visitors will cease to have a role in hearing disciplinary cases or in remitting or mitigating any punishment. Governors will in future hear all charges, using their existing powers, and will refer allegations of serious criminal offences committed in prisons to the police for investigation. Guidelines have been agreed with the police and the Crown prosecution service on the referral of such cases. Governors will also be responsible for remitting or mitigating punishments. These changes will free boards of visitors to concentrate on their "watchdog" role.

The amendments to the prison rules also increase the statutory entitlement of convicted adult prisoners to receive visits from one a month to two. This change was implemented administratively in June 1991. In addition, the rule amendments make provision for their application to contracted-out prisons.

Magistrates Courts

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has reached conclusions on the review of magistrates courts procedures initiated in 1989.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have now received the report of the committee invited to review magistrates courts procedure by my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) and have placed a copy in the Library. I am grateful to all those from the magistrates courts service and other bodies who participated in the review. With the exceptions noted below, and subject to deferral of questions relating to liquor licensing for further consideration, I am glad to endorse its recommendations. Some will require primary legislation, and I therefore cannot at this stage indicate when it will be possible to bring the necessary legislative proposals before Parliament. Others can be taken forward through changes to subordinate legislation or guidance to the courts.

The recommendations on which I am not persuaded that action is justified are those that it should be an offence to fail to carry a driving licence when driving, that failure to produce a licence at court should attract a fixed penalty fine and that a review of the witnesses' oath should be undertaken.

With these exceptions, I believe that the recommendations in the report will help to simplify and modernise court procedures in a way which maintains the requirements of justice. They should yield useful improvements in the efficiency of the criminal justice process as well as making court procedures clearer and more convenient for court users, in line with the citizens charter.

Crime, Basildon

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the change in the crime rate in Basildon in each of the last three years.

Mr. John Patten: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Identity Cards

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made on the implementation of EC identity cards for senior citizens.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Animal Welfare Groups

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what financial assistance is available for animal welfare groups in Basildon.

Mrs. Rumbold: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Tethering

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been made since the implementation of the Protection Against Cruel Tethering Act 1988.

Mrs. Rumbold: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Taxi Licences

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about the issuing of licences to taxi drivers and private car hire drivers in Basildon.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

I will write to my hon. Friend.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Training Schemes

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the latest information he has on the destination of people leaving the youth training programme.

Mr. Needham: The most recent information available on the destination of participants leaving the youth training programme is for the period 1 April 1991 to 29 February 1992.

YTP leavers whose destination is known	*Number of young people*	*Percentage of total*
To employment	5,583	54
To full-time education	723	7
Unemployed	4,022	39

Languages

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will publish a table to show the number of students in each education and library board area who passed in Irish language at *(a)* O-level or GCSE and *(b)* A-level in 1989, 1990 and 1991;

(2) if he will publish a table to show how many students in each education and library board area passed at *(a)* GCSE or O-level and *(b)* A-level in each language taught, other than English and Irish, in 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not readily available by board area. However the overall number of students who passed GCSE—that is, obtained grades A to C—and A-level—that is, obtained grades A to E—in languages other than English was as follows:

GCSE passes (grades A to C)

Subject	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
French	8,704	8,549	8,901
Irish	1,133	955	959
German	1,051	1,054	1,094
Spanish	997	1,022	1,155
Italian	123	110	170
Latin	362	349	263
Greek	13	7	13

GCE A-level passes (grades A to E)

Subject	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
French	1,266	1,239	1,354
Irish	183	229	214
German	175	210	259
Spanish	227	342	294
Italian	33	38	36
Latin	72	84	63
Greek	8	7	—

Department of Economic Development

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the achievements since 1979 of the Department of Economic Development for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: The Department of Economic Development has developed policies to stimulate the development of enterprise, to promote a more enterprising culture and to encourage the competitiveness and growth of small firms.

Since the inception of the Industrial Development Board in September 1982 new investment projects worth a total of £2,740 million have been secured, an overall total of 41,446 new jobs have been promoted and 69,467 jobs safeguarded. Since 1979 LEDU, the small firms agency, has promoted 42,476 jobs.

Harland and Wolff plc was privatised in September 1989 and Shorts Brothers in October 1989.

On 2 April 1990 the Department launched the Training and Employment Agency which has 1,700 staff and a budget of £172 million. It assists employers to improve the competitive position of Northern Ireland companies and delivers programmes designed to provide skills and abilities to unemployed-people and those seeking to enter the labour market.

Against the background of plans for completion of the single European market, the Department adopted a new strategy which was set out in "Competing in the 1990s—the Key to Growth". The new strategy changes the emphasis of Government assistance for business away from grants for capital expenditure towards measures designed to improve business preformance in areas such as marketing, research, exporting, design and innovation.

In March 1992 the Department of Economic Development published a comprehensive research and development strategy for Northern Ireland—"Innovation 2000"—and established a new industrial research and technology unit to improve the competitiveness of industry and strengthen the economy.

The Electricity (NI) Order 1992 made on 11 February 1992, provides for the reorganisation and privatisation of the electricity supply industry in Northern Ireland. Proceeds from the sale of the four generating stations, subject to audit, will amount to about £353 million. The sale of Ballylumford power station will lead to the construction of a gas pipeline between Northern Ireland and Scotland and agreement has also been reached to construct a 240 MW electricity link between these two parts of the United Kingdom.

An estimated 15 per cent. reduction in energy consumption by the public sector has been achieved since 1984.

The Government have considerably strengthened the law against unlawful discrimination in employment in Northern Ireland through the introduction of the Fair

Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989. It represents the most radical anti-discrimination law ever enacted in the United Kingdom. Through the monitoring information which has been gathered and published by the Commission, a clearer picture has emerged of the extent of the problem of inequality in the work force. Already, a small but helpful improvement in the situation is evident.

Department of Education

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the achievements since 1979 of the Department of Education for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: Since 1979 spending on education and related services has increased, in real terms, by over 30 per cent; in 1992-93 the total spend will be £1·2 billion.

Pupil-teacher ratios have improved between 1979-80 and 1990-91 from 23·8 to 22·8 in the primary sector and from 15·5 to 14·9 in the secondary sector. The proportion of 16-year-olds, over school leaving age, and 17-year-olds staying on at schools has increased over that period from 36·7 and 25·5 per cent. to 49·9 and 35·1 per cent. respectively. The proportion of school leavers with at least one A-level increased from 21·1 to 30 per cent., while the proportion leaving with no GCSE/O-level pass has fallen from 27 to 15·3 per cent.

Some £650 million has been invested in capital projects by the Department. This has enabled work to be carried out on more than 210 major building projects at schools and further education colleges and on nine new libraries.

Local management of schools—LMS—arrangements for financing schools, which gave all secondary schools responsibility for their own budgets, were introduced in April 1991.

In further education, the number of students enrolled has increased by almost 30 per cent. Special resource allocations have been made available to improve staffing levels, replace equipment, provide for staff development and to implement a major computerisation programme which will improve management and financial information systems. Boards of governors of colleges have been reconstituted to strengthen the representation from the business world and local management of colleges—LMC—has given colleges responsibility for the management of their resources.

In higher education, the outcome of a review in the early 1980s, led to the removal of the binary divide in Northern Ireland and the establishment of the University of Ulster. The number of full-time NI domiciled undergraduates in higher education rose by 54 per cent. and the proportion of female full-time undergraduate and postgraduate university students in Northern Ireland has increased from 42 and 37 per cent. in 1980-81 to 51 and 46 per cent. in 1990-91.

Expenditure by DENI on recurrent and capital grants for arts, museums and libraries has increased from £17·429 million in 1979-80 to £33·299 million in 1990-91.

The Department has promoted the improvement of community relations in the schools and youth sectors. The cross-community contact scheme was established in 1987, and to date some 420 schools and 300 youth and community groups have been involved. A common curriculum has been introduced in all grant-aided schools.

Department of Health and Social Security

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the achievements since 1979 of the Department of Health and Social Security for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: Since 1978-79, expenditure on health and personal social services in Northern Ireland has increased by 31 per cent. after allowing for general inflation. Cost improvement programmes have also generated savings of nearly £70 million for investment in services to patients and clients.

Over the same period, levels of activity have increased by 33 per cent. Since 1981 the number of hospital in-patients has risen by 10 per cent. from 249,198 to 272,986; the number of day cases has increased fivefold, from 9,853 to 49,724; the number of operations has risen by 20 per cent.; and the number of out-patient attendances has risen by 17 per cent. from 1·7 million to 2 million.

There have also been substantial increases in the numbers of professional staff: there are now 10 per cent. more dentists; 17 per cent. more hospital doctors; 26 per cent. more general practitioners; 9 per cent. more nurses and midwives; and 99 per cent. more qualified social workers. Particular emphasis has been placed on the training and development of professional staff. The training budget currently stands at over £14 million a year.

Since 1979, perinatal and infant mortality rates in Northern Ireland have been reduced from 16·6 and 14·8 to 7·6 and 7·5 respectively. The latest available rates, for 1990, are, for the first time, the lowest in the United Kingdom.

Through the emphasis on developing community services, there have been reductions of 34 and 28 per cent. respectively in the number of patients in psychiatric and mental handicap hospitals.

The charter for patients and clients published on 10 March 1992 places a particular emphasis on quality and sets new, improved standards for the delivery of care and treatment.

The social security benefits system has been maintained and reformed on the same basis as in the rest of the United Kingdom. The cash value of pensions and other long-term benefits have been secured in real terms.

In July 1991 a Social Security Agency was established as part of the next steps initiative. The agency has attracted around 850 jobs to Northern Ireland providing services to the benefit network in Great Britain. Investment in computer technology has enhanced the efficiency of the services provided.

Adoption law and practice were brought broadly into line with the rest of the United Kingdom.

A major reform of gambling and club registration laws has been undertaken.

Since 1979 aid to the voluntary sector has been increased by 69 per cent. in real terms.

Department of Agriculture

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the achievements since 1979 of the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: Since 1979 grants totalling £470 million have been paid to support capital investments on farms.

To facilitate animal disease control the Department has introduced computerised animal health records to enable the movement of animals to be monitored for disease control purposes. The Department has assisted in improving the hygiene standards of milk production resulting in the attainment of STEP II standards under the heat treated milk directive. It has also obtained an extra 65,000 tonnes of milk quota for the Province in 1984 in recognition of the special importance of milk production to the Northern Ireland economy.

Since 1979 significant scientific advances have been made and an extensive research and development programme continues.

Considerable advances have been made in assessing the pollution potential of farm effluents and an enhanced programme of marine and freshwater fisheries research, including the acquisition of a sea-going research vessel, has made a significant impact on national and international fisheries resource management. The advent of an experimental food irradiation facility has led to significant results on the extension of shelf life of food products and to a prospective methodology for the detection of irradiation treatment of foods.

The Department's staff have carried out more than one third of a million personal consultations within the agri-food industry aimed at improving the efficiency of production and marketing and co-operation between individual businesses within the industry as a whole. A quality assurance scheme has been initiated within the agri-food industry designed to promote and sell a quality assured product. The Department has also encouraged farmers and growers to adopt good health and safety practices by a fivefold increase in farm inspections resulting in a 33 per cent. decline in the number of fatal farm accidents.

Since 1979 the Department has catered for a threefold increase in the number of students on full-time and part-time courses at agricultural colleges and in excess of a sevenfold increase in the number of participants on short courses.

Landings of fish into Northern Ireland ports have increased from the 12,800 tonnes in 1979 to 24,400 tonnes in 1991 and the number of persons employed full-time in the catching sector of the industry increased from 700 to 1,050. Numbers employed in the fish processing sector have also increased. Major development works costing some £8·8 million have been carried out at the three main fishery harbours in the Province.

Timber sales by the Department's Forest Service have increased from 54,000 m^3—value £580,000—in 1979 to 184,000 m^3—value £3·6 million—in 1991. In the same period some 9,500 hectares of new afforestation has taken place and 10 new nature reserves have been established on forest land.

A total of £80 million has been spent by the Department on capital projects to improve drainage infrastructure and to assist development. Currently some £17 million per annum is spent on new schemes and maintenance works to alleviate flooding and minimise risk to life and damage to property.

Since 1987 the environmentally sensitive areas scheme has attracted a total of almost 1,000 farmers to enter 18,000 hectares of land in five-year agreements with the Department to use environmentally friendly farming practices.

Some 160 water recreation projects have been completed.

Department of the Environment

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the achievements since 1979 of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: Since 1979, the Department of the Environment has made substantial progress in conserving and improving the quality of the built and natural environment in Northern Ireland.

Housing condition surveys show that the level of unfitness declined from 14·1 per cent. in 1979 to 8·4 per cent. in 1987 and that the proportion of dwellings lacking at least one basic amenity declined from 17·9 to 5·5 per cent. The level of home ownership, which was 52 per cent. in 1979, is now 65 per cent. The housing situation of people unable to purchase their own dwellings has also improved with a fall in the Housing Executive's urgent waiting list from nearly 19,000 in 1981 to under 10,000 at present.

A total of £347 million has been invested in the further development of the road system, there has been considerable upgrading and expansion of the facilities at Aldergrove airport and extensive improvements at Belfast, Londonderry, Larne and Warrenpoint ports.

In 1989 the Department gained approval from the European Commission for a comprehensive programme for a new transport infrastructure in Northern Ireland, involving total expenditure of over £150 million of which £100 million will come from the European regional development fund.

Belfast city centre has seen a huge expansion of retail opportunities; areas of inner-city deprivation have been helped through the work of nine action teams; the Laganside corporation has been established to regenerate vacant and underused riverside land, and a new weir on the River Lagan is under construction. Londonderry has also seen significant economic improvement, with public and private investment in the last three years either spent or planned totalling over £200 million creating 2,500 full-time and part-time jobs.

An extensive programme of economic and environmental improvement schemes is also being carried out in the provincial towns.

New legislation during the period has helped improve the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of district councils. The local government auditor has completed seven value-for-money studies. Compulsory competitive tendering and improvements in the conduct of council business will soon be statutory requirements.

As part of the next steps agency policy, a Rate Collection Agency was established in 1991, and an Ordnance Survey Agency and Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency are to come into being from 1 April 1992.

Since 1979, grants of £3·2 million to district councils have enabled 31,000 houses to convert to burn smokeless fuel. Two hundred and fifteen river water quality stations have been installed to monitor and control water pollution. Three major pieces of legislation have been introduced to protect and keep open rights of way; to designate areas of outstanding natural beauty and of special scientific interest; and to protect certain plants and animal species.

In addition, 4,300 buildings of architectural or historic importance have been listed, 700 monuments have been scheduled as being of archaeological or historic importance and 32 monuments have been taken into state care. Four areas of outstanding beauty, covering 147,000 hectares, have been developed and 36 areas of special scientific interest covering 7,550 hectares.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many jobs have been *(a)* lost and *(b)* created in manufacturing industry in East Antrim in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Needham: The information in the table relates to redundancies notified to the Department of Economic Development, and its predecessors, involving 10 or more employees in manufacturing at any specific worksite and jobs promoted in manufacturing by Government agencies.

East Antrim parliamentary constituency

	Notified redundancies in manufacturing	*Job promoted in manufacturing department of commerce-IDB*	*LEDU*
1982	182	n/a	29
1983	690	n/a	46
1984	38	n/a	95
1985	661	n/a	222
1986	955	n/a	114
1987	177	37	160
1988	85	230	188
1989	110	596	193
1990	401	651	110
1991	782	129	101

Notes:

Figures for notified redundancies refer to the calendar year in question; figures for jobs promoted refer to the financial year ending in March of that year.

Figures from LEDU are not available for the parliamentary constituency of East Antrim. The figures given above relate to the district council areas of Larne and Carrickfergus.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* job losses have occurred and *(b)* new jobs have been created in each of the last 10 years in manufacturing industry in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The information in the table relates to redundancies notified to the Department of Economic Development, and its predecessors, involving 10 or more employees in manufacturing at any specific worksite and jobs promoted in manufacturing by Government agencies.

	Notified redundancies in manufacturing	*Jobs promoted in manufacturing*
1982	17,581	2,974
1983	7,596	5,571
1984	5,212	6,024
1985	3,449	8,051
1986	3,609	5,435
1987	3,269	6,394
1988	2,569	7,741
1989	3,129	8,110
1990	1,986	7,100
1991	4,240	4,937

Note:

Figures for notified redundancies refer to the calendar year in question; figures for jobs promoted refer to the financial year ending in March of that year.

Stevens Report

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the main conclusions of the Stevens report into alleged collusion between loyalist paramilitaries and the British military.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary published a summary of Mr. Stevens's report on 17 May 1990 and a copy is in the Library.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will publish a table, consistent with table 1.1 of Cm 1917, showing separately for each sub-programme for the years 1986-87 to 1994-95, *(a)* expenditure within the Northern Ireland block as defined for the purposes of the application of the 2.75:100 formula, *(b)* expenditure within the Northern Ireland block as defined for the purposes of the Secretary of State's expenditure-switching discretion and *(c)* expenditure outside these blocks;

(2) if he will publish tables, analysing for the years 1986-87 to 1994-95, the data in table 1.1 of Cm 1917, analysing the components of *(a)* expenditure within the Northern Ireland block as defined for the purpose of the application of the 2.75:100 formula and *(b)* expenditure within the Northern Ireland block as defined for the purposes of the Secretary of State's expenditure-switching discretion, by (i) public expenditure sub-programme and (ii) the functional classification used in the identifiable expenditure figures appendix E of Cm 1920.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* The information requested is as follows.

For Northern Ireland, expenditure covered by the 2.75:100 formula is the same as that defined as being within the Secretary of State's switching discretion.

Northern Ireland—(Based on CM 1917—Table 1.1)
Expenditure covered by 2·75/100 formula
Expenditure within S of S switching discretion

£ million

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE									
Law, Order and Protective Services	481	546	581	638	699 :	776 :	832	880	924
NORTHERN IRELAND DEPARTMENTS									
National Agriculture (non Block)									
Local Agriculture, Fish and Forestry	83	85	84	97	101 :	117 :	119	124	129

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
Industry, Energy, Trade and Employment	353	388	723	689	397 :	389 :	450	446	444
Transport	123	119	131	148	146 :	163 :	173	181	187
Housing	335	337	334	268	245 :	258 :	249	257	267
Environmental and Miscellaneous Services	154	174	192	209	230 :	170 :	199	234	240
Law Order and Protective Services	21	26	28	29	32 :	35 :	27	39	40
Education and Science, Arts and Libraries	695	750	811	897	1,005 :	1,122 :	1,211	1,274	1,327
Health and Personal Social Services	733	798	880	949	1,052 :	1,162 :	1,242	1,294	1,344
Social Security	76	96	97	110	117 :	129 :	150	150	148
Other Public Services	39	38	46	54	56 :	66 :	90	93	102
Total Northern Ireland	3,092	3,355	3,907	4,088	4,079 :	4,386 :	4,754	4,973	5,153

Northern Ireland
(Based on CM 1917—Table 1.1)
Expenditure not covered by 2·75/100 formula
Expenditure not within S of S switching discretion

£ million

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
NORTHERN IRELAND DEPARTMENTS									
National Agriculture (Non-Block)	72	69	63	80	86	85	94	90	89
Social Security	1,335	1,335	1,466	1,557	1,705 :	1,978 :	2,177	2,350	2,494
Total Northern Ireland	1,407	1,473	1,528	1,637	1,791 :	2,063 :	2,271	2,440	2,583

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table, analysing the data in table 12.1 of Cm 1917, showing separately for each row for the years 1986-87 to 1994-95, *(a)* expenditure within the Northern Ireland block as defined for the purposes of the application of the 2·75:100 formula, *(b)* expenditure within the Northern Ireland block as defined for the purposes of the Secretary of State's expenditure-switching discretion and *(c)* expenditure outside these blocks.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* The information requested is as follows:

For Northern Ireland, the expenditure covered by the 2·75:100 formula is the same as that defined as being within the Secretary of State's switching discretion.

Northern Ireland
(Based on CM 1917—Table 12.1)
Expenditure covered by 2·75/100 formula
Expenditure within S of S switching discretion

£ million

	1986-87 Outturn	*1987-88 Outturn*	*1988-89 Outturn*	*1989-90 Outturn*	*1990-91 Outturn*	*1991-92 Estimated Outturn*	*1992-93 Plans*	*1993-94 Plans*	*1994-95 Plans*
NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE									
Central Government's own expenditure									
Voted in Estimates									
Law, order and protective services	481	544	581	637	699	776	832	880	924
Total Northern Ireland Office	481	544	581	637	699	776	832	880	924
NORTHERN IRELAND DEPARTMENTS									
Central Government expenditure									
Voted in Northern Ireland Estimates									
National agriculture and fisheries support									
Northern Ireland agriculture, fisheries and forestry services and support	83	85	84	97	101	117	119	124	129
Industry, energy trade, and employment	377	356	761	726	468	457	442	438	435
Of which:									
Northern Ireland Electricty	8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Transport	123	126	126	147	146	167	172	179	185
Of which:									
Northern Ireland Public Trust Port Authorities	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company	22	21	19	22	22	23	22	23	23
Housing	238	237	248	187	186	195	193	198	206
Of which:									
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	203	202	213	157	159	162	160	162	170
Environmental and miscellaneous services	124	142	160	175	196	131	158	191	194

	1986-87 Outturn	*1987-88 Outturn*	*1988-89 Outturn*	*1989-90 Outturn*	*1990-91 Outturn*	*1991-92 Estimated Outturn*	*1992-93 Plans*	*1993-94 Plans*	*1994-95 Plans*
Of which:									
Laganside Development Corporation	—	—	—	3	6	8	6	5	5
Law, order and protective services (Fire Service)	21	26	28	29	32	35	37	39	40
Education, arts and libraries	690	746	807	894	1,002	1,118	1,208	1,270	1,324
Health and personal social services	733	798	880	949	1,052	1,162	1,242	1,294	1,344
Social security	49	60	59	68	71	83	101	98	93
Other public services	38	37	46	53	55	65	89	92	10
Total voted in Northern Ireland Estimates	2,476	2,614	3,198	3,325	3,310	3,529	3,761	3,924	4,054
Of which:									
Central Government's own expenditure	2,243	2,390	2,966	3,142	3,123	3,396	3,573	3,735	3,856
Public corporations (excluding nationalised industries)	233	223	232	182	187	193	188	190	198
Other (non-Voted)									
Industry, energy, trade and employment	−26	25	−41	−43	−73	−74	2	2	2
Of which:									
Northern Ireland Electricity	−37	21	−42	−45	−73	−76	—	—	—
Social security	28	28	30	35	38	38	41	44	46
Housing—Northern Ireland Housing Executive	96	99	86	80	60	64	56	59	61
Transport—Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company	—	−7	5	2	−1	−4	2	2	2
Total other (non-Voted)	98	146	81	75	24	24	102	107	111
Of which:									
Central Government's own expenditure	38	33	32	38	38	40	44	46	48
Public corporations (excluding nationalised industries)	60	113	49	37	−14	−16	58	61	63
Total central Government expenditure for Northern Ireland Departments	2,574	2,760	3,279	3,400	3,333	3,552	3,864	4,302	4,165
Of which:									
Central Government's own expenditure	2,281	2,424	2,998	3,180	3,161	3,376	3,618	3,781	3,904
Public corporations (excluding nationalised industries)	293	336	282	220	173	176	246	250	261
Central Government grants to local authorities Voted in Northern Ireland Estimates									
Current grants—									
Environmental and miscellaneous services	29	31	31	33	33	37	39	42	44
Education, arts and libraries	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Capital grants—									
Industry, energy, trade and employment	2	6	3	5	2	6	6	7	7
Environmental and miscellaneous services	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	2
Education, arts and libraries	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	—
Total voted in Northern Ireland Estimates	37	42	39	42	39	50	51	53	55
Other (non-Voted)—Current grants									
Social security	—	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	9
Total central Government grants to local authorities	37	50	46	50	47	58	59	62	63
Of which:									
Current	31	41	41	42	44	48	50	52	55
Capital	6	9	5	7	3	10	9	9	9
Total Northern Ireland Departments	2,611	2,810	3,326	3,449	3,380	3,610	3,923	4,093	4,229
Total expenditure within the Secretary of State's responsibility[1]	3,092	3,355	3,907	4,088	4,079	4,386	4,754	4,973	5,153
Comprising:									
National agriculture and fisheries support	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
The Northern Ireland Block[2]	3,092	3,355	3,907	4,088	4,079	4,386	4,754	4,973	5,153

[1] The Departmental programme deals only with expenditure in Northern Ireland which is within the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. There is expenditure in Northern Ireland in other programmes.

[2] The Northern Ireland Block comprises expenditure by the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments excluding National Agriculture and Fisheries Support. The allocation of expenditure for future years among the services included in the Northern Ireland Block (except social security benefit expenditure) may be altered at the discretion of the Secretary of State. Expenditure on national agriculture and fisheries support is not part of the Block because it is influenced to a greater extent than others by national and EC policies.

[3] Includes expenditure financed by receipts from the European Communities. The amounts involved are as follows:

Financed by ERDF receipts	23	46	47	40	49	64	75	84	52
Financed by ESF receipts	53	56	36	46	51	54	52	49	50
Financed by EAGGF (Guidance section) receipts	1	9	13	9	10	38	28	25	17

Northern Ireland
(Based on CM 1917—Table 12.1)
Expenditure not covered by 2·75/100 formula
Expenditure not within the S of S switching discretion

£ million

	1986-87 Outturn	*1987-88 Outturn*	*1988-89 Outturn*	*1989-90 Outturn*	*1990-91 Outturn*	*1991-92 Estimated Outturn*	*1992-93 Plans*	*1993-94 Plans*	*1994-95 Plans*
NORTHERN IRELAND DEPARTMENTS									
Central Government's expenditure Voted in Northern Ireland									
National agriculture and fisheries support	72	69	63	80	86	85	94	90	89
Social security	700	736	772	813	899	1,059	1,201	1,308	1,405
Total Voted in Northern Ireland Estimates	772	805	835	893	985	1,144	1,295	1,398	1,494
Of which:									
Central Government's own expenditure	772	805	835	893	985	1,144	1,295	1,398	1,494
Other (non-Voted)—Social security	635	667	694	744	806	919	976	1,042	1,089
Total other (non-Voted)	635	667	694	744	806	919	976	1,042	1,089
Of which:									
Central Government's own expenditure	635	667	694	744	806	919	976	1,042	1,089
Total central Government expenditure for Northern Ireland Departments	1,407	1,473	1,528	1,637	1,791	2,063	2,271	2,440	2,583
Of which:									
Central Government's own expenditure	1,407	1,473	1,528	1,637	1,791	2,063	2,271	2,440	2,583
Total expenditure within the Secretary of State's responsibility	1,407	1,473	1,528	1,637	1,791	2,063	2,271	2,440	2,583
Comprising:									
National agriculture and fisheries support	72	69	63	80	86	85	94	90	89
The Northern Ireland Block	1,335	1,404	1,465	1,550	1,705	1,978	2,177	2,350	2,494

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish tables, covering the years 1986-87 to 1994-95 and consistent with Cm 1917, analysing by economic category within spending sector for *(a)* expenditure within the Northern Ireland block as defined for the purpose of the application of the 2·75 : 100 formula, *(b)* expenditure within the Northern Ireland block as defined for the purposes of the Secretary of State's expenditure-switching discretion and *(c)* expenditure outside these blocks.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* The information requested is as follows:

For Northern Ireland, expenditure covered by the 2·75 : 100 formula is the same as that defined as being within the Secretary of State's switching discretion.

Northern Ireland
(based on Cm 1917—Table 12.4)
Expenditure covered by 2·75/100 Formula
Expenditure within Secretary of States Switching Discretion

Spending Sector:	*1986-87 outturn*	*1987-88 outturn*	*1988-89 outturn*	*1989-90 outturn*	*1990-91 outturn*	*1991-92 Estimated outturn*	*1992-93 plans*	*1993-94 plans*	*1994-95 plans*
Central governments own expenditure									
Departmental running costs	344	380	399	429	484	535	580	551	564
Other public service pay and current expenditure	1,624	1,767	1,924	2,103	2,339	2,447	2,676	2,866	2,996
Subsidies	52	48	50	50	38	39	41	41	43
Current grants	312	329	365	405	440	522	566	590	614
Net capital expenditure on assets	157	178	190	238	250	307	316	353	363
Capital grants	217	205	195	190	197	206	191	199	197
Lending and other financial transactions	55	62	457	403	112	97	79	61	50
Total	2,762	2,968	3,579	3,818	3,860	4,152	4,449	4,661	4,828
Local Authority element of planning total									
Current grants	31	41	41	42	44	48	50	52	55
Capital grants	6	9	5	7	3	10	9	9	9
Total	37	50	46	50	47	58	59	62	63
Central Governments other public corporations									

Spending Sector:	*1986-87 outturn*	*1987-88 outturn*	*1988-89 outturn*	*1989-90 outturn*	*1990-91 outturn*	*1991-92 Estimated outturn*	*1992-93 plans*	*1993-94 plans*	*1994-95 plans*
Subsidies	168	171	185	139	149	153	144	144	152
Capital Grants	65	53	48	43	38	40	44	45	46
Lending and other financial transactions	60	113	49	37	−14	−16	58	61	63
Total	293	336	282	220	173	176	246	250	261
Total Northern Ireland	3,092	3,355	3,907	4,088	4,079	4,386	4,754	4,973	5,153

Spending Sector:	*1986-87 outturn*	*1987-88 outturn*	*1988-89 outturn*	*1989-90 outturn*	*1990-91 outturn*	*1991-92 Estimated outturn*	*1992-93 plans*	*1993-94 plans*	*1994-95 plans*
Central Government's own expenditure									
Subsidies	34	36	39	57	66	65	74	73	73
Current Grants	1,336	1,404	1,466	1,557	1,705	1,978	2,177	2,350	2,494
Capital grants	38	33	23	23	20	20	20	17	16
Total	1,407	1,473	1,528	1,637	1,791	2,063	2,271	2,440	2,583

CIVIL SERVICE

Agencies

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what effect the next steps initiative has had on the quality of service to the public.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what effect the next steps initiative has had on customers.

Mr. Renton: Next steps is improving the quality of service provided to the public. There are many examples of this in the "Next Steps Annual Review"—Cm 1760—published last year. Agencies are set demanding quality of service targets and are increasingly consulting their customers about priorities.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many civil servants are currently serving in civil service agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: There are currently 221,000 civil servants in next steps agencies and other organisations operating on next steps lines. I expect this to increase to half the civil service in the next few weeks.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what recent meetings he has had with trade union representatives regarding equal opportunities.

Mr. Renton: None, but my officials have regular meetings with the trades unions on equal opportunity issues. The Council of Civil Service Unions fully supports the programmes on race and disability and the excellent new programme for action on women, published earlier this month following discussions with the trade union side.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Burns: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on opportunities for disabled people in the civil service.

Mr. Renton: The civil service is committed to providing equal opportunities for people with disabilities. Our magazine, *Independent,* published on 28 February, shows continuing progress. Copies have been placed in the Library.

THE ARTS

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Minister for the Arts what special allocation has been made to help with museums and galleries buildings.

Mr. Renton: I have allocated £196 million in 1992-93 to 1994-95 to the building programme of the National museums and galleries, which I sponsor, and last November within that sum I made a number of special additional allocations amounting to £9·3 million to priority projects.

Arts Support

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the level of support for the Arts by private and corporate donations since 1979.

Mr. Renton: Comprehensive figures on donations to arts organisations are not available. I know, however, that they make a much valued contribution to the well-being of the arts. The gift aid scheme introduced in October 1990 has already attracted £200 million in donations to United Kingdom charities. The decision of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to reduce the minimum threshold on qualifying gifts will provide a further important stimulus to charitable giving from which the arts and other good causes will derive substantial benefit.

Libraries

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister for the Arts what public funds have been made available to libraries during the current year; what the amount was in May 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Expenditure on the public library service in England in 1979-80 was £214 million. The estimated outturn figure for 1991-92 is £590 million, which is a cash increase of £283·6 million and an increase in real terms of 18·6 per cent.

Living Arts

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is his estimate of the contribution to the economy made by the living arts.

Mr. Renton: There is no definitive assessment of the economic importance of the arts. A report by the Policy Studies Institute in 1988 suggested that the arts generated a turnover of around £10 billion and employed almost half a million people. Official figures suggest that in 1990, the arts contributed almost £6 billion to the United Kingdom's balance of payments.

Although it is difficult to be precise, it is clear that the arts are a major sector of economic activity.

Arts Opportunities

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to visit Battersea to discuss arts opportunities for young people.

Mr. Renton: I visited the Battersea arts centre last year and was impressed by the number of projects concerned with the arts for young people. I am delighted that the London arts board has increased the centre's grant by 40 per cent. I am also well aware of the excellent work with young people being done by other arts organisations in Wandsworth.

Exhibitions

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Minister for the Arts what exhibitions he has in mind to fund in the coming year.

Mr. Renton: The Office of Arts and Libraries does not itself directly fund individual exhibitions. The OAL provides grant-in-aid to the national museums and galleries which mount a number of major exhibitions each year. In addition, the Arts Council provides funds to organisations which arrange exhibitions as part of their programmes.

To celebrate the United Kingdom's presidency of the European Community in the second half of 1992, £6 million has been allocated by the OAL towards a European arts festival. Some of this will be used to mount a variety of exhibitions in both national and regional museums and galleries.

East Midlands Arts

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Minister for the Arts what recent meetings he has had with East Midlands Arts representatives to discuss local ventures.

Mr. Renton: I met the chairman and director of the East Midlands arts board on a number of occasions last year, when a range of subjects were discussed.

I was delighted to be able to congratulate them personally on 1 October last year when the Arts Council announced that the east midlands region had won the competition to be the venue for the Arts 2000 year of dance in 1993.

New Theatre, Keswick

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received on the funding of a new theatre by the side of Lake Derwentwater at Keswick.

Mr. Renton: I have received no such representations. But I am pleased that planning permission has been given for the construction of a theatre by Lake Derwentwater.

Tourism

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the contribution made by the arts to tourism in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: The United Kingdom as a tourist venue is a centre of cultural and artistic excellence; and, as year round activities, both the performing arts and heritage venues are major attractions to tourists, whether from within the United Kingdom or from abroad. Attendances at London's west end theatres reached a record high in 1990 at 11·3 million, and remained at around 11 million in 1991. The latest visitor figures for museums and art galleries show that there were 74 million such visits in 1990 throughout the United Kingdom.

Cash Limits

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give details of any proposed changes to the cash limits for his Department's votes for 1991-92.

Mr. Renton: Subject to parliamentary approval of the late spring supplementary estimates, the cash limit for class XII, vote 2, is to be increased by £10,800,000, to £240,092,000, to increase the grant in aid for the Arts Council.

The additional provision will be charged to the reserve and will therefore not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will *(a)* arrange for the issue of an erratum slip with the "Report for 1992 of the Office of Arts and Libraries", Cm. 1912, in respect of the last sentence of paragraph 3.3 of that report and *(b)* issue a press notice, to draw attention to his answer to the hon. Member for Warley, East of 2 March, *Official Report,* column *20,* on current Government policy in respect of access to the contingency reserve for the purpose of covering acceptances in lieu of tax.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 9 March 1992]:* An erratum slip will be issued shortly by my office, amending the two final sentences of paragraph 3.3 of the above Report to read:

> "Lord Gowrie announced in July 1985 that the provision for Acceptance in Lieu may be supplemented by access to the Contingency Reserve for large and important offers. He said that "Looking simply at recent and current levels of acceptance in lieu offers, we would expect to call on the Reserve for around £10 million or so a year, taking one year with another. I must emphasise strongly that this is an estimate; it is neither a target nor a limit, as in any given year the demand could be either less or more."

I see no need to issue a press notice on this matter.

Scottish Arts Council

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Minister for the Arts what was the annual grant by the Scottish Arts Council to arts organisations and events in the regions of Scotland and the cities of Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee in the financial year 1991-92, and projected for the year 1992-93.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* Information for the Scottish regions is not available in the form requested. Projected figures for the cities of Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee for the financial year 1992-93 have yet to be decided. Information for 1991-92 is as follows:

	1991-92 *£*
Glasgow	10,540,721
Edinburgh	3,959,670
Aberdeen	218,361
Dundee	449,979

The figures for Glasgow and Edinburgh reflect the fact that they are the permanent bases for national organisations such as Scottish Opera, Royal Scottish Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Scottish Ballet, all of which tour throughout Scotland.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Payments to EC Farmers

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals the European Commission has made this year for additional payments to farmers in European Community countries; and if he will list the amounts involved for each country.

Mr. Curry: No proposals have so far been made by the European Commission in 1992 for additional payments to farmers.

Relocation

Mr. Meale: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those parts of his Department which are currently under review for relocation; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to the east midlands; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to Mansfield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: No parts of the Department are currently under review for relocation. Major reviews completed recently have resulted in decisions to move a total of about 1,000 posts to North Yorkshire over the next four years.

Arctic Foxes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) for how long Grange farm, Ovenden wood, Halifax has continuously factory farmed arctic foxes;

(2) how many arctic fox factory farms are currently operating in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Maclean: Information is not collected on the keeping of arctic foxes in England and Wales. There are no arctic fox farms operating in Northern Ireland.

Mink

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many mink factory farms are currently operating under licence in each county of England and Wales.

Mr. Maclean: No mink farms are currently operating in Wales. Details for England are as follows:

England	*As at 12 March 1992*
Northumberland	1
North Yorkshire	1
West Yorkshire	3
South Yorkshire	1
Humberside	1
Lancashire	8
Cheshire	1
Staffordshire	1
Norfolk	1
Suffolk	3
Hampshire	1
Isle of Wight	1
Cornwall	2
Total	25

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether neck breaking or an intra-abdominal injection of chloral hydrate are permitted means of killing mink in fur farms.

Mr. Maclean: The Protection of Animals Act 1911 requires any operation performed on an animal, including killing, to be performed with due care and humanity. The Department is not aware of either of the methods described being used on mink farms and intra-abdominal injection of chloral hydrate is not recommended. These methods would not be permitted for the routine slaughter of mink under the proposed Community regulation on protection of animals at slaughter.

Factory Farmers (Prosecutions)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many prosecutions of factory farmers there have been under the Welfare of Livestock (Intensive Units) Regulations 1978.

Mr. Maclean: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mink and Fox Carcases

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what regulations exist *(a)* governing the disposal of mink and fox carcases and *(b)* regarding the use of mink and fox carcases in pet food.

Mr. Maclean: The disposal of mink and fox carcases is controlled under part IV of the Agriculture Act of 1970, the Meat (Sterilisation and Staining) Regulations 1982, and the Processed Animal Protein Order 1989. If they were to be used in pet food these same safeguards would apply.

Meat and Poultry

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received regarding the sale as fresh turkeys of originally frozen birds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Ministry has received no such representations.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many prosecutions have been brought in the last 12 months for selling as fresh meat and poultry previously frozen meat and poultry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Such information is not held centrally.

Farm Produce (Marketing)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assistance he will give to help establish a farm producers marketing co-operative to sell west country produce to major supermarkets.

Mr. Curry: I refer to the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) on 3 March 1992, *Official Report*, column *120*.

Any eligible producer groups who wish to seek assistance under the group marketing grant will be entitled to apply.

Leptospirosis

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about his Ministry's involvement in the control of leptospirosis, including the testing of cattle for the disease; what information he has about the incidence of the disease for each year since 1980; and whether local veterinarians are expected to pass test results on to his Ministry.

Mr. Gummer: There are no statutory controls relating to Leptospira hardjo in cattle. Precise figures on disease incidence are not available, but it is considered not to be widespread. My officials need not be informed of test results unless the farmer is a member of the voluntary cattle health scheme.

Land Settlement Association

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to provide money to the Land Settlement Association's tenants who did not benefit from the litigation settlement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have no such plans. Legal advice clearly indicates that those tenants who were not party to the litigation are not entitled to receive any money as a result of the settlement.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the sale of the Land Settlement Association headquarters, including the date of sale, the amount the building was sold for; what proportion of this money has been given to the Land Settlement Association's central reserve fund; and what proportion has been used in the litigation settlement with Land Settlement Association tenants.

Mr. Gummer: The headquarters building of the Land Settlement Association Ltd. was the company's private property and the Ministry was not entitled to receive any money arising from the disposal of the building. I believe that the building was sold in August 1985, but I have no information about the sale price. None of the proceeds of the sale were transferred to the Land Settlement Association's general reserve fund or used in the litigation settlement.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the Land Settlement Association central reserve fund, including the amount that was in the fund at the end of each of the past five financial years; whether money in this fund has been used in the litigation settlement to Land Settlement Association tenants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Land Settlement Association general reserve was created in October 1951 as a reserve against losses on the revenue account. Three appropriations were made over the years for that purpose. At the end of March 1982 the funds in the general reserve amounted to £236,277. This money was then absorbed into the revenue appropriation account and the deficit suspense account to cover some of the accumulated losses. The general reserve was nil on 1 April 1983 and no funds have been transferred into it since then. No money from the general reserve has been used to fund the settlement of litigation with Land Settlement Association tenants. Full details are contained in the reports and accounts for the year ended 31 March 1983 and for the nine months ended 31 December 1983 submitted to my Department by the Land Settlement Association Ltd. I am placing a copy of these in the Library of the House.

ADAS

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the Agricultural Development Advisory Service laboratories which have been closed since 1979 giving their location, date of closure and type of laboratory, distinguishing between research and development, veterinary, farm and countryside service or general.

Mr. Gummer: Work has been concentrated on fewer sites in the farm and countryside service, research and development service and veterinary service in order to improve efficiency and hence service to customers. The laboratories that have closed or merged as a result of this since 1979 are as follows:

	Date
Farm and countryside service	
Accrington	1 September 1989
Bangor	31 March 1986
Caernarfon	1 April 1990
Carmarthen	31 March 1990
Cheshunt	31 March 1987
Crewe	1983
Evesham	30 November 1989
Kendal	31 March 1987
Liverpool	1987
Ormskirk	1990
Rhydmyn	31 March 1990
Shardlow	31 March 1986
Shrewsbury	1979
Wrexham	1982
Research and development	
Liverpool	1 August 1982
Tolworth	29 February 1992
Norwich	29 February 1992
Veterinary investigation centres	
Weybridge	December 1980
Cardiff	March 1986
Gloucester	June 1986
Leeds	June 1986
Northampton	July 1986
Chester	April 1986
Wye	July 1991

	Date
Bangor	September 1991
Lincoln	September 1991

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of *(a)* scientists and *(b)* advisory staff employed by the Agricultural Development Advisory Service for each year since 1979.

Mr. Gummer: The number of staff employed by the Agricultural Development Advisory Service as advisory officers since 1979 is:

	Number
1979	1,252
1980	1,243
1981	1,240
1982	1,156
1983	1,183
1984	1,193
1985	1,202
1986	1,159
1987	1,069
1988	1,061
1989	1,003
1990	925
1991	876

Details for scientific staff would be available only at a disproportionate cost.

Farming, Basildon

Mr. Amess: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what special assistance has been made available to help farming in Basildon over the past five years.

Mr. Gummer: Farmers in Basildon, as elsewhere in the United Kingdom, have benefited from the Government's determination to ensure fair treatment for British farmers under the common agricultural policy. This has already led to the virtual eradication of green pound discrimination, it has ensured a growing consensus for a fair alternative to Mr. MacSharry's proposals and it will continue to mean that Britain will not accept measures that distort agriculture to the detriment of our farming community.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement on the measures which he has taken to ensure there is equality of enforcement and implementation of the common agricultural policy in all EC member states.

Mr. Gummer: At the United Kingdom's instigation a declaration was agreed by member states at Maastricht stressing the need to ensure that Community law is properly implemented and enforced, and changes to the treaty were agreed giving the European Court the power to impose financial penalties on member states that persistently fail to comply with their Community obligations.

We, of course, are still ready to draw to the Commission's attention any failures by other member states to implement and enforce the CAP. For example I recently pressed the Commissioner responsible for agricultural policy and the French Minister of Agriculture on the apparent failure by the French Government to impose charges for poultrymeat inspection at the level required by Community legislation. I will continue to seek an urgent solution.

Water Abstraction

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent appeals his Department has received against the refusal of the National Rivers Authority to approve an abstraction licence application, and with what result.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 12 March 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

My Department has outstanding three appeals against refusal of a licence. These appeals are being held in abeyance while the appellants and the authority attempt to agree terms under which the licences might be granted.

SCOTLAND

Manufacturing Exports

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the value of Scottish manufacturing exports in real terms in each year since 1974.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Scottish Council (Development and Industry) carries out an annual survey of Scottish exporters. This is the most comprehensive source of information on Scottish manufacturing exports. Up until 1984, the survey was only carried out on a triennial basis and coverage was less complete than in later years. These points should be borne in mind when interpreting the series, which is expressed in 1990 constant prices using the council's own suggested deflator; the United Kingdom producer price index for home sales of manufactured goods.

Scottish manufacturing exports 1974-1990

Year	£ billion (1990 prices)	Year	£ billion (1990 prices)
1974	6·8	1982	5·7
1975	5·9	1983	6·0
1976	6·5	1984	6·6
1977	6·7	1985	7·0
1978	7·1	1986	6·4
1979	6·8	1987	7·4
1980	6·5	1988	8·0
1981	6·3	1989	8·1
		1990	8·6

GDP

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of *(a)* Scottish and *(b)* United Kingdom gross domestic product was derived from (i) manufacturing and (ii) electronics in (1) 1979 and (2) the most recent figures available.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what share of Scotland's gross domestic product has been invested in education in each year since 1970.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 6 March 1992]:* I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what Scotland's share of United Kingdom gross domestic product has been in each year since 1971 until the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* Information on Scotland's share of United Kingdom GDP since 1971 is set out in the table.

Scotland's share of United Kingdom GDP[1] 1971-1990

Year	*Per cent. share*	*Year*	*Per cent. share*
1971	8·8	1981	8·9
1972	8·7	1982	8·9
1973	8·9	1983	8·9
1974	8·9	1984	8·8
1975	9·0	1985	8·7
1976	9·2	1986	8·5
1977	9·0	1987	8·4
1978	8·8	1988	8·3
1979	8·8	1989	8·2
1980	8·7	1990	8·2

Source: Central Statistical Office, regional accounts.

[1] United Kingdom less the continental shelf.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the percentage of Scottish gross domestic product invested in *(a)* health and *(b)* education in Scotland in each year since 1979 until the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Company Statistics

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give *(a)* the number of new companies established *(b)* the total number of registered companies and *(c)* the total number of bankruptcies in Scotland in each year since 1978.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Charing Cross Clinic, Glasgow

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the future of Greater Glasgow health board's Charing Cross clinic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Greater Glasgow health board has no plans affecting the future of the Charing Cross clinic or its location.

NHS Estate

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate for every health authority and trust in Scotland the amount required to bring the national health service estate to a condition B, exhibiting only minor deterioration.

Mr. Lang: The most recent information from health boards relates to 1990-91 and is set out in the table. There were no trusts in Scotland at that time.

Total estimated costs required to bring the National Health Service estate in Scotland up to Condition B, exhibiting only minor deterioration

Health Boards	*£ million*
Argyll and Clyde	4·9
Ayr and Arran	1·5
Borders	1·6
Dumfries and Galloway	5·3
Fife	19·7
Forth Valley	7·6
Grampian	12·9
Greater Glasgow	131·3
Highland	11·9
Lanarkshire	18·1
Lothian	48·2
Orkney	0·1
Shetland	0·4
Tayside	23·7
Western Isles	0·2
Total	287·4

Boundary Commission

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the composition of the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Scotland and the date when he expects it to report.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Nebulisers

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of *(a)* adults and *(b)* children in Scotland who are on health service waiting lists for nebulisers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on the number of nebulisers supplied or awaiting supply is not collected centrally.

Powered nebulisers may be provided by the NHS in cases where a hospital respiratory consultant has judged it to be clinically necessary. Health boards are responsible for meeting the costs of the nebulisers supplied to patients.

Waste Disposal

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 29 January, *Official Report*, column 626, if he will list the sites in the Baillieston, Carmyle, Broomhouse and Mount Vernon areas of Shettleston constituency where industrial, commercial and household wastes have been deposited, and the sites where chromium waste has been deposited.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Local Government Commissioner

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in each of the last five years, and for each district council area in Scotland, how many complaints have been referred to the Local Government Commissioner; how many of these have been followed up by the commissioner; and how many have been found in favour of the complainant.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the change in *(a)* the number of employees in employment and *(b)* the number of employees in employment in manufacturing in Scotland between June 1979 and June 1991; and what the changes are in percentage terms.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Development Expenditure

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the gross provision for the Scottish Development Agency in every year since 1979 and the non-training element of Scottish Enterprise for 1991-92 and 1992-93 in cash prices.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Exports

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the composition of Scottish-manufactured exports, by standard industrial classification, for each year from 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Council Tax Rebates

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to provide a rebate for carers, under the proposals for the council tax.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Crime

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the crime figures for Grampian region broken down by standard category, including the total figure of crimes and offences, for every year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information for 1979-90 is set out in the table.

Number of crimes and offences recorded by the police 1979-90
Grampian Region

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Total crimes	22,821	25,203	26,569	30,037	29,144	31,340	33,384	37,466	39,556	33,567	34,034	37,070
Non-sexual crimes of violence	484	854	940	823	882	868	890	910	937	814	892	860
Crimes of indecency	393	370	312	407	520	589	703	602	507	548	800	737
Crimes of dishonesty	16,653	17,790	20,556	21,682	20,161	21,592	22,789	26,278	28,003	22,923	22,242	24,887
Fire-raising, vandalism etc.	4,624	5,421	5,774	6,039	6,288	6,697	7,570	8,203	8,358	7,374	7,850	8,302
Other crimes	667	768	987	1,086	1,293	1,394	1,432	1,473	1,751	1,908	2,250	2,284
Total offences	27,783	31,404	31,110	30,179	34,128	35,110	38,275	40,628	39,198	38,307	42,504	45,001
Miscellaneous offences	11,580	12,032	10,753	10,296	10,885	11,080	12,485	13,560	13,935	13,946	14,899	15,204
Motor vehicle offences	16,203	19,372	20,357	19,883	23,243	24,030	25,790	27,068	25,263	24,361	27,605	29,797
Total crimes and offences	50,604	56,607	59,679	60,216	63,272	66,450	71,659	78,094	78,754	71,874	76,538	82,071

Notes:

Data for 1979 have been regrouped on the basis of the current Scottish Office Home and Health Department classification of crimes and offences which was revised in 1980.

Prior to 1980, the return included crimes and offences reported to the procurator fiscal by agencies other than the police in which a prosecution was taken. Since 1980, these cases have been excluded. In 1982, there were about 6,400 such cases in the whole of Scotland, of a total of 762,483 crimes and offences.

Details of the SOHHD classification are given in the SOHHD statistical bulletin "Recorded crime in Scotland, 1990" a copy of which is in the Library.

Aberdeen Royal Hospitals Trust

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now publish the business plan and details of the application for trust status for the Aberdeen royal hospitals trust.

Mr. Lang: I refer to the reply given to the hon. Member on 18 December 1991, at column *201*.

Job Losses, Inverbervie

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he intends to take in relation to job losses in Inverbervie as a result of the closure of Sidlaw's textile mill and the Inlak's seafood processing factory.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Grampian Police

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the number of police officers requested by the chief constable of Grampian police for every year since 1986 and *(b)* the number of additional officers permitted in response.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Grampian regional council sought the consent of the Secretary of State for increases in the authorised establishment of Grampian police as follows:

Year	*Request for increase in police establishment*
1986	40
1987	11
1988	61

Year	*Request for increase in police establishment*
1989	47
1990	42
1991	20

Consent was given in full for each request.

Bankruptcy

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will institute an inquiry into the causes of bankruptcy in individuals in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government are presently reviewing all aspects of the operation of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985. It is clear that the major factor influencing the number of sequestrations in Scotland is the easier access by individuals to the sequestration process following the introduction of the 1985 Act.

The Government are actively considering the need for changes to the present legislation.

Education (Funding)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received in favour of making an additional grant to Scottish local authorities for the purposes of ensuring a pay settlement for teachers in Scotland for 1992-93 in line with that in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement on his policy on this subject.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what element of the increase in the revenue support grant to Scottish local authorities in 1992-93 was allocated to *(a)* education spending and *(b)* pay for teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Sequestration Awards

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report,* columns *348-50,* if he will give gross payments to trustees including outlays, statutory fees, remunerations and VAT but excluding recoveries for each year from 1985 to 1991 in respect of the awards of sequestration granted in that year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost to the public purse.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report,* columns *348-49,* if he will list for each year since 1985 *(a)* the number of sequestration awards for which the final outcome is known and *(b)* the number as a percentage of the total number of awards.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
(a) No. of sequestration awards where final outcome is known	—	3	8	24	90	373
(b) No. of sequestration awards	295	437	834	1,457	2,344	4,364
(c) No. of sequestration awards where final outcome is known expressed as a percentage of total number of sequestration awards	—	0·69	0·96	1·65	3·84	8·54

Health Boards

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the reviews conducted by his Department into the accountability of health boards; and when he expects to publish the findings.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The chief executive of the NHS in Scotland carries out accountability reviews of each health board each year. The reviews are primarily intended to agree the board's objectives for the following year. These will be reflected in a variety of published documents, such as the board's local health strategy, local charter for health etcetera.

Sheriff Courts

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year since 1986 the population of each sheriff court jurisdiction in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not available in the form requested. The table gives population estimates for the sheriffdom and sheriff court districts in 1981. These figures were prepared for a review which confirmed the district areas in 1983.

Table

Sheriffdom and Court district	*Estimated population*
Grampian, Highland and Islands	
Aberdeen	269,000
Stonehaven	40,000
Elgin	83,000
Banff	80,000
Peterhead	
Dingwall	45,000
Tain	
Dornoch	13,000
Wick	27,000
Kirkwall	18,000
Lerwick	22,000
Inverness	76,000
Fort William	20,000
Portree	10,000
Lochmaddy	30,000
Stornoway	
Totals	733,000
Tayside, Central and Fife	
Dundee	189,000
Perth	119,000
Cupar	65,000
Kirkcaldy	149,000
Stirling	79,000

Sheriffdom and Court district	*Estimated population*
Falkirk	144,000
Dunfermline	126,000
Alloa	48,000
Forfar	92,000
Arbroath	
Totals	1,011,000
Lothian and Borders	
Edinburgh	538,000
Haddington	79,000
Peebles	14,000
Linlithgow	132,000
Jedburgh	35,000
Selkirk	33,000
Duns	18,000
Totals	849,000
North Strathclyde	
Paisley	267,000
Kilmarnock	218,000
Dumbarton	171,000
Greenock	101,000
Campbeltown	64,000
Dunoon	
Oban	
Rothesay	
Totals	821,000
South Strathclyde, Dumfries and Galloway	
Airdrie	174,000
Hamilton	341,000
Lanark	57,000
Ayr	158,000
Dumfries	91,000
Kirkcudbright	22,000
Stranraer	29,000
Totals	872,000
Glasgow and Strathkelvin	
Glasgow	869,000
Totals	869,000
Total (all sheriffdoms)	5,155,000

Private Forestry

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the rate of discount for calculation of compensation has been agreed between the Nature Conservancy Council and the representative body for private forestry as provided for under annex A of the financial guidelines to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The former Nature Conservancy Council did not reach agreement with the representative body for private forestry on the appropriate rate of discount to apply as provided for under the guidelines. There are a number of outstanding cases in Scotland involving afforestation proposals in respect of which application for afforestation grant was submitted prior to May 1989 when it was announced that compensation would no longer be offered for the refusal of grant where it was refused solely on nature conservation grounds. In deciding how such compensation in these cases can most appropriately be determined, the fact that such forestry planting would have been eligible for grant from the Forestry Commission and, prior to the 1988 Budget, to tax allowances, means that in general it should be expected to earn a commercial rate of return comparable to other forms of investment. On the advice of the Forestry Commission, I have concluded that it would have been reasonable for those undertaking such investments to have expected a real return of 6 per cent. on the assumption of no real increase in timber prices and I believe that this figure reflects a realistic view of the rate of return that investors in forestry might have been seeking. I am accordingly advising NCCS—and, as from 1 April 1992, Scottish Natural Heritage—that this figure should be used in negotiating management agreements in any of the outstanding cases where application for forestry grant was submitted before 10 May 1989.

In general, I would find it hard to justify compensation under paragraph 3 of annex A of the guidelines based on a calculation of net revenue forgone which exceeded an estimate of the unrestricted value of the land and its crop, unless some exceptional circumstances so warranted.

The review of the guidelines which will be undertaken later this year will take account of this change.

Inheritance Tax

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if any works of art accepted in lieu of inheritance tax have been allocated since he last made an announcement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts announced on 26 April 1991 that the following items had been accepted in lieu of inheritance tax.

Items	*Amount of tax satisfied*
Portrait of Thomas Lamb by Allan Ramsay; two paintings and two volumes of drawings by Alexander Runciman	£196,000

I am pleased to announce that I have decided to allocate these items to the national galleries of Scotland.

Apprenticeships

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many apprenticeships there were in Scotland and in what trades, in each year since 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 11 February 1992]:* I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Traffic Offences

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the annual figures for (i) road deaths and (ii) injuries for each year since 1981, including the number of *(a)* children and *(b)* adults who have been hit by cars on or near pedestrian crossings.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 February 1992]:* I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Adult Students

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many adult students have been, or are at present, on access courses leading to higher education during the years 1989-90, 1990-91, and 1991-92 in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 25 February 1992]:* I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Agricultural Investment

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the figures for the investment in agriculture in Scotland for each of the last eight years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 9 March 1992]:* I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a reconciliation between the local authority expenditure and *(a)* its financing figures contained in tables 9.1, 9.2 and 9.4 and chart 9.3 of Cm 1920, and *(b)* the figures announced in the latest revenue support grant and other settlements.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* The information, based on total relevant local authority non-housing expenditure for the years 1986-87 to 1991-92 is as follows:

	1986-87			*1987-88*			*1988-89*		
	Current £ million	*Capital £ million*	*Total £ million*	*Current £ million*	*Capital £ million*	*Total £ million*	*Current £ million*	*Capital £ million*	*Total £ million*
Government support	3,007	369	3,376	3,146	372	3,518	3,519	426	3,945
Expenditure	3,730	408	4,138	4,024	416	4,440	4,364	455	4,819
Self-financed expenditure	723	39	762	878	44	922	845	29	874

	1989-90			*1990-91*			*1991-92*		
	Current £ million	*Capital £ million*	*Total £ million*	*Current £ million*	*Capital £ million*	*Total £ million*	*Current £ million*	*Capital £ million*	*Total £ million*
Government support	3,810	453	4,263	3,956	456	4,412	4,791	493	5,284
Expenditure	4,654	500	5,154	5,119	487	5,606	5,592	552	6,144
Self-financed expenditure	844	47	891	1,163	31	1,194	801	59	860

Notes:

1. Government support for current expenditure consists of rate support grant (for 1986-87 to 1989-90), revenue support grant (from 1989-90 to 1991-92), community charge grant (from 1991-92), non-domestic rate income (for the years 1986-87 to 1989-90 local authorities were responsible for setting the level of non-domestic rates but since 1990-91 the Government have determined the level to be set), specific grants within aggregate external finance (AEF) and AEF grants outside the Secretary of State's responsibility. The figures in Cm 1915 represent the amounts paid in the respective year, not necessarily in respect of that year.
2. Government support for capital expenditure represents the net capital non-housing allocation.
3. The current expenditure figures are total relevant expenditure figures including loan and leasing charges and are final outturn figures for the years 1986-87 to 1989-90, near final outturn for 1990-91 and is a budget estimate for 1991-92.
4. The capital expenditure figures are net of receipts and are final outturn for the years 1986-87 to 1990-91 and estimated outturn for 1991-92.
5. The self-financed expenditure in relation to current expenditure is financed by way of domestic rate income for the years 1986-87 to 1988-89 and community charge income for the years 1989-90 to 1991-92.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table, covering the years 1986-87 and consistent with Cm. 1915, showing by sub-programme *(a)* total local authority expenditure in Scotland, *(b)* local authority expenditure in Scotland on services for which he has policy responsibility and *(c)* an analysis of the diferences between *(a)* and *(b)*.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* The information requested is contained in tables 9.4 and 9.5 of Cm. 1915. It should be noted that due to a printing error, the last column in table 9.4 is erroneously headed "1991-92 Outturn"; it should read "1991-92 Budget Estimate".

Crime Survey

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the British crime survey for Scotland before Monday 16 March; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* Work on the survey is not yet complete. The results will be published as soon as possible.

Fish Processers

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement outlining the Government's position on the provisions of article 7 of EC directive 91/493 dealing with derogations for small-scale fish processors.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* Detailed guidance and application forms for derogations under article 7 of directive 91/493/EEC are being prepared. It is hoped to send these to local authorities early in April.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be able to provide guidance to environmental health officers to enable them to advise small-scale fish processors of the opportunities open to them to be exempt from the officially set health requirements as detailed by EC directive 91/493.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* Small-scale fish processors are not exempt from the provisions of EC directive 91/493. However under article 7 of that directive fish processors may seek temporary derogations from certain structural and equipment requirements. It is hoped to issue guidance and application forms to local authorities early in April.

In addition, under article 14 of the directive, there is a prospect that minimum structural and equipment requirements may be set for small establishments which distribute on the local market and are situated in regions subject to particular supply constraints. This possibility is largely dependent on the content of a report to be submitted to the Council by the Commission by 1 July 1992 and the outcome of subsequent discussions.

Arts Grants

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the annual grant to arts organisations and events in the regions of Scotland and the cities of Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee for the financial year 1991-92 and projected for the year 1992-93.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* For those areas of expenditure on the arts for which the Scottish Office Education Department is responsible I set out the grants made to the national institutions and arts organisations in 1991-92 and those expected to be made in 1992-93.

	199-92 *£ million*	*1992-93* *£ million*
National Museums of Scotland	13·355	15·804
National Galleries of Scotland	7·379	8·569
National Library of Scotland	11·801	15·994
Scottish Museums Council	0·665	0·731
Scottish Film Council	0·619	0·686
Scottish Film Production Fund	0·087	0·090
Scottish Community Drama Association	0·025	0·025
Scottish Youth Theatre	0·053	0·055
National Youth Orchestra of Scotland	0·034	0·035

The majority of the grants to the national institutions will be spent in Edinburgh. Grants to other organisations are to support their work throughout Scotland.

In addition to the above grants, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland announced on 28 February that he would make an exceptional payment of £500,000 to Scottish Opera in the financial year 1992-93 to reduce their current deficit.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Passes

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council pursuant to his answer of 17 December, *Official Report,* column *99,* if he will request those hon. Members who have places on the research assistants' list which are currently not filled to release them in order to reallocate spare places to the hon. Members who require a researcher's pass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: There are 172 actual pass holders, out of the 230 places allowed, which means that 58 Members are currently not filling their places. I suspect that this has come about because of the imminence of the general election and some Members who have places are not filling them until they know whether they will need their places after the general election.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make it his policy not to allow any hon. Member to have two full researchers passes until all hon. Members requiring only one such pass have been allocated one; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Only the leaders of the official Opposition and of the Liberal Democrats have two full researchers' places, and, due to the imminence of the general election, I did not think that we could consider changing their entitlements.

I am sure that the situation over Members' research assistants' places will sort itself out in the aftermath of the general election. However, if it does not, I think that it would be an appropriate subject for the Administration Committee to investigate.

Evacuation (Westminster)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what account is taken, during the evacuation of Westminster station due to bomb threats, of the need to alert or evacuate staff in St. Stephen's house overlooking the station.

Mr. MacGregor: Full account is taken of the need to alert—or to evacuate if necessary—all staff in the vicinity of any bomb threat.

European Delegates

Mr. Harris: To ask the Lord President of the Council what are his plans for the appointment of the delegation for the 1992-93 session of the Council of Europe/Western European Union.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be making the appointments to the delegation at the end of April and will announce them to the House as soon as practicable thereafter.

Office Costs Allowance

Mr. Harris: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he received the Top Salaries Review Body report on the office costs allowance; and what implications it has for the uprating of the office costs allowance on 1 April.

Mr. MacGregor: I have recently received the TSRB's report on the office costs allowance. It makes a number of important recommendations which it should be for the new Parliament to consider. Accordingly copies will be placed in the Vote Office and Library early in the new Parliament.

The House will wish to know that the report recommends no immediate change in the uprating mechanism. It will be for the new House to decide what recommendations in the report it wishes to implement and in what time scale. Meanwhile, under the resolution of this House of 21 July 1987 the OCA will, as in recent years, be uprated from 1 April 1992 in line with the increase in the maximum point on the scale for civil service senior personal secretaries in receipt of inner London weighting. The uprating will be implemented as soon as a settlement is reached covering senior personal secretaries in the civil service.

EMPLOYMENT

Training Guarantee

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps have been taken to ensure that the training guarantee to young and unemployed people in Greenwich can be met during the next 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Our officials and their counterparts in the South Thames training and enterprise council have been seeking agreement on the level of youth training—YT—provision needed in 1992-93 in Greenwich and other areas for which the TEC is responsible. The aim is to agree a business plan sufficient to support the guarantee of the offer of a suitable YT place to young people under 18 who are unemployed and are seeking training.

Employment Statistics

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the occupational distribution of the number of persons employed in second jobs, including both employees and the self-employed, in the labour force survey for the latest year for which figures are available, giving the information by males, married females, other females and all persons.

Mr. Forth: Estimates for Great Britain from the spring 1991 labour force survey are as follows:

Employees and self employed persons (aged 16 or over) with a second job by sex, female marital status and occupation of second job: Spring 1991

Great Britain *Thousands*

Occupation of second job[2]	*All persons*	*Males*	*Married* [3]*females*	*Non-married females*
All occupations[4]	1,074	501	395	177
1 Managers and administrators	113	73	33	[1]—
2 Professional occupations	147	93	42	12
3 Associate professional and technical occupations	149	84	44	21
4 Clerical and secretarial	141	40	83	18
5 Craft and related	44	34	[1]—	[1]—
6 Personal and protective services	233	87	76	71
7 Selling	78	27	31	21
8 Plant and machine operatives	36	26	[1]—	[1]—
9 Other occupations	127	33	73	22

Source: Labour Force Survey.

[1] Less than 10,000 in cell: estimate not shown.

[2] Based on the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) major groups, (first published February 1990).

[3] Married includes those reported as cohabiting.

[4] Includes persons with a second job for which the occupation was inadequately described or not stated.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total average hours worked per week by those with second jobs, broken down by occupational group, for employees and the self-employed, in the labour force survey for the latest year for which figures are available, giving the information by males, married females, other females and all persons.

Mr. Forth: Estimates for Great Britain from the spring 1991 labour force survey are as follows.

Average total actual hours worked in the survey week (excluding mealbreaks), by employees and self employed persons (aged 16 or over) with a second job, by sex, female marital status and occupation of second job: spring 1991—Great Britain

Hours[2]

Occupation of second jobs[3]	*All persons*	*Males*	[4]*Married females*	*Non-married females*
All occupations[5]	39·1	48·3	29·1	35·7
1 Managers and administrators	51·0	57·1	38·5	[1]—
2 Professional occupations	35·6	41·1	31·5	33·7
3 Associate professional and technical occupations	40·3	45·5	30·5	39·0
4 Clerical and secretarial	34·3	45·4	29·3	32·8
5 Craft and related	48·0	38·0	[1]—	[1]—
6 Personal and protective services	37·7	49·4	26·2	35·7
7 Selling	35·1	41·7	29·2	35·3
8 Plant and machine operatives	46·4	50·9	[1]—	[1]—
9 Other occupations	30·1	42·5	24·1	21·9

Source: Labour Force Survey.

[1] Less than 10,000 in cell: estimate not shown.

[2] Averages are based only on persons reporting valid hours of work.

[3] Based on the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) major groups (first published February 1990).

[4] Married includes those reported as cohabiting.

[5] Includes persons with a second job for which the occupation was inadequately described or not stated.

Second Jobs

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average number of hours worked in second jobs, broken down by occupation, for employees and the self-employed in the labour force survey for the latest year for which information is available, giving the information by males, married females, other females and all persons.

Mr. Forth: Estimates for Great Britain from the spring 1991 labour force survey are as follows.

Average actual hours worked in second jobs in the survey week (excluding mealbreaks), by employees and self employed persons (aged 16 or over) with a second job, by sex, female marital status and occupation of second job: spring 1991—Great Britain.

[2]Hours

Occupation of second job[3]	*All persons*	*Males*	*Married females*[4]	*Non-married females*
All occupations[5]	9·5	10·5	8·8	8·4
1 Managers and administrators	13·7	15·1	11·2	[1]—
2 Professional occupations	6·0	6·0	6·5	4·3
3 Associate professional and technical occupations	8·5	8·9	7·6	8·4
4 Clerical and secretarial	8·8	9·5	8·5	8·4
5 Craft and related	11·3	11·0	[1]—	[1]—
6 Personal and protective service	9·7	11·4	9·0	8·4
7 Selling	8·5	9·8	8·0	7·4
8 Plant and machine operatives	14·4	14·9	[1]—	[1]—
9 Other occupations	10·4	13·7	9·1	10·0

Source: Labour Force Survey.

[1] Less than 10,000 in cell: estimate not shown.

[2] Averages are based only on persons reporting valid hours of work.

[3] Based on the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) major groups (first published, February 1990).

[4] Married includes those reported as cohabiting.

[5] Includes persons with a second job for which the occupation was inadequately described or not stated.

Collier Industrial Waste Ltd.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action the Health and Safety Executive factory inspectorate has taken following the incident on 2 August 1991 when a worker in the paint shop at Collier Industrial Waste Ltd. collapsed, was hospitalised and diagnosed as suffering from isocyanate-induced asthma; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Health and Safety Executive's factory inspectorate has received no notification of an incident on 2 August 1991 at Collier Industrial Waste Ltd., Trafford Park, in which a worker collapsed in the paint shop and was diagnosed as suffering from isocyanate-induced asthma.

However, on 8 August 1991 an employment medical adviser from HSE interviewed an employee who had a medical history consistent with isocyanate-induced asthma. An inspector subsequently visited the company and wrote to it to confirm the precautions to be observed during the spraying of isocyanate paint.

A follow-up visit was also paid.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information has been laid against Collier Industrial Waste Ltd., Trafford Park and P. J. Collier Ltd., Rixton by the Health and Safety Executive since January 1989.

Mr. Forth: None.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what prosecutions have been taken and what convictions gained against Collier Industrial Waste Ltd., Trafford Park and P. J. Collier Ltd., Rixton by the Health and Safety factory inspectorate since January 1989.

Mr. Forth: None.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences were reported to the Health and Safety Executive by Collier Industrial Waste Ltd., Trafford Park and P. J. Collier Ltd., Rixton since January 1989.

Mr. Forth: Since January 1989, Collier Industrial Waste Ltd., Trafford Park has reported no diseases or dangerous occurrences but has reported to the Health and Safety Executive the following three injuries:

in 1989 a tyre fitter sustained an injury to his forehead;
in 1990 an employee tripped and broke his arm;
in 1991 a fitter/welder received bruises to his arm and leg.

No injuries, diseases or dangerous occurrences have been reported to HSE by P. J. Collier Ltd., Rixton, since January 1989.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what notices have been issued against Collier Industrial Waste Ltd., Trafford Park and P. J. Collier Ltd., Rixton, by the Health and Safety Executive Factory Inspectorate since January 1989.

Mr. Forth: The Health and Safety Executive's factory inspectorate has issued one improvement notice against Collier Industrial Waste Ltd., Trafford Park, since January 1989, in respect of machinery safety.

The factory inspectorate has issued no notices against P. J. Collier Ltd., Rixton, since January 1989.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action was taken since February 1991 by the Health and Safety Executive factory inspectorate to ensure that paint shop workers at Collier Industrial Waste Ltd. were not exposed to dangerous isocyanate fumes, by taking action including carrying out dust sampling and consideration of the use of alternative paints in the paint shop and consideration of the adequacy of respiratory protection.

Mr. Forth: Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations, it is the legal responsibility of Collier Industrial Waste Ltd. to ensure that its paint shop workers are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. This includes the risk of exposure to dangerous isocyanate fumes. Since February 1991, the Health and Safety Executive's factory inspectorate has visited the premises at Trafford Park on two occasions and has drawn the company's attention to its legal obligations, including the duty to comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988. In particular the company's attention has been drawn to the need to assess exposure to dust in the paint shop, to consider using alternative paints and to check the adequacy of the respiratory protective equipment provided.

Hazardous Waste (Disposal)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures are being taken by the Health and Safety Executive factory inspectorate and the employment medical advisory service to investigate reports of ill-health by employees of hazardous waste disposal companies.

Mr. Forth: Regulation 5 of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 requires certain occupational diseases to be reported to the appropriate enforcing authority. The information on all reports of diseases made to the Health and Safety Executive, including those in respect of employees of hazardous waste disposal companies, is verified by HSE's Employment Medical Advisory Service to ensure that it is accurate and complete. EMAS investigates all reported exposures to toxic substances. Other incidents are selected for investigation if in the judgment of the employment medical adviser, intervention may secure prevention or recurrence, prevent exposure of other workers, or derive new information about the cause or prevention of occupational ill health.

EMAS liaises closely with HSE's factory inspectorate, which also determines, using similar criteria, whether a report of an occupational disease should be investigated. The subsequent investigation of those reports selected may be carried out either independently by factory inspectors, jointly by factory inspectors and EMAS, or by EMAS at the request of the factory inspectorate.

A current priority of HSE's field operations division is to raise awareness of occupational health in industry.

Unfair Dismissal

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number and proportion of reinstatements for cases of unfair dismissal over the last five years.

Mr. Forth: The number and proportion of reinstatement and re-engagement orders made by industrial tribunals over the last five financial years are as follows:

Year	*Number of reinstatement/ re-engagement orders*	*Percentage of unfair dismissal cases proceeding to a hearing*
1990-91	63	1·0
1989-90	59	1·0
1988-89	58	1·0
1987-88	83	1·1
1986-87	103	1·1

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers of claims for unfair dismissal by *(a)* trade union safety representatives and *(b)* trade union representatives for the last five years; and what was the average settlement for each group.

Mr. Forth: We do not have this information for the period before 1989-90. For the period 1989-90 and after, this information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hazardous Substances

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures are being taken by the Health and Safety Executive factory inspectorate to ensure that companies which handle hazardous waste are fully implementing the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations.

Mr. Forth: Inspectors seek compliance with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1985—COSHH—at all premises and work activities for which they have enforcement responsibility for health and safety legislation and to which the regulations apply, including those of companies which handle hazardous waste. Enforcement of the regulations has been integrated into normal inspection arrangements and inspectors take whatever action is appropriate to ensure that those responsible comply with their duties under the legislation.

Inspectors give a high priority to exaimining employers' action to comply with COSHH when there is exposure to hazardous substances, and liaise with the Health and Safety Executive's employment medical advisory service on matters relating to health risk and medical surveillance. The action taken by inspectors to secure compliance can range from giving advice to the use of enforcement notices and legal proceedings in those circumstances where there is a disregard for health and safety. Inspectors enforce the regulations vigorously and pursue their inquiries to the highest levels in companies which do not meet the required standards.

Relocation

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those parts of his Department which are currently under review for relocation; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to the east midlands; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to Mansfield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 6 November 1989, *Official Report,* columns *471-72,* to the hon. Member for Roxborough and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood).

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many, and which, training and enterprise councils have notified his Department in writing about a failure to deliver *(a)* the youth training guarantee or *(b)* the employment training requirement as required under the TEC contract for 1991-92; how many individual youth training and employment training cases this involved; how the problems were resolved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The delivery of the YT and ET guarantee is a contractual commitment upon the TECs. Additional funds have been provided in the year 1991-92 to the following TECs:

Essex
Milton Keynes and North Buckinghamshire
Somerset
Avon
Dudley
Hereford and Worcester
Sandwell
Shropshire
Walsall
Sheffield
Rochdale
Bolton and Bury

This is consistent with maintaining the delivery of the guarantees. Meanwhile, the existence of a procedure under which individuals may register problems covering their treatment under the training guarantees is an important aspect of the policy in guarantees, and will continue under the new TEC operating agreement for 1992-93.

Training Initiatives

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what training initiatives have been introduced in Basildon in each of the last two years.

Mr. Jackson: Over the last two years Essex TEC has carried out the training initiatives specified in its contract, including youth training, employment training, enterprise allowance scheme, high technology national training, business enterprise training and various education programmes, such as education business partnerships. TECs have also been given the flexibility to introduce other initiatives to meet specific local needs and information on these can be obtained by contacting Essex TEC direct.

European Grants

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what European grants have been made to Basildon in the last year.

Mr. Jackson: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Self-employment

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his current estimate of the number of self-employed people in the northern region.

Mr. Forth: In September 1991 there were 115,000 self-employed in the northern region.

Tourism

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what help is available for tourism in Basildon.

Mr. Forth: Basildon is within the area of the East Anglian tourist board which, with the help of financial support from the English tourist board, encourages the development and promotion of tourism within its region.

Small Businesses

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what help is available to help small businesses start up in Basildon.

Mr. Forth: The Essex training and enterprise council provides a wide range of help and advice to small business. This includes a business start-up programme which in 1991-92 will assist some 800 people throughout the county. In addition, my Department operates a loan guarantee scheme to help viable small businesses obtain loans where conventional funding would not otherwise be available.

ENERGY

Combined Heat and Power

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what have been his Department's achievements in the development of combined heat and power since 1979; and what plans he has to further advance the development of combined heat and power in the next five years.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The main achievements of my Department in the development of CHP since 1979, mainly through the programmes of the Energy Efficiency Office and in conjunction with industry and other Government Departments, have been:

The 'Lead City' programme to evaluate the potential for large scale CHP/Community Heating (CHP/CH). This stimulated widespread interest in the potential for CHP/CH which is culminating in schemes such as that recently announced by Citigen.

To develop and demonstrate the use of small-scale packaged CHP for buildings, leading to an unprecedented rise in the installation of such units.

The development and encouragement of the use of cost effective CHP applications in industry based on the use of modern gas turbines.

The environmental benefits of CHP have been assessed and the potential of the technology to reduce environmentally harmful emissions is now widely acknowledged.

The privatisation of both the electricity and gas industries has led to the creation of new competitive markets. CHP operators can obtain gas on a non-discriminatory basis and they have a market into which they can sell surplus electricity. The majority of genuine on-site CHP operators generating for own use are free to continue to do so without the need for a licence and, therefore, do not have to pay the fossil fuel levy. This has provided a commercial environment which is stimulating interest in CHP not only from the privatised companies but from energy users in all sectors of the economy. The Pooling and Settlement Agreement now enables companies generating their own electricity to sell only surplus power to the pool, instead of having to sell all they generate and buy back their own requirements.

Measures have also been provided, where appropriate, to assist the development of CHP. Under the 1989 Electricity Act CHP operators as licensed generators may have powers to break streets to lay heat and power mains. There are special provisions for the treatment of CHP in the Department of Environment's Integrated Pollution Control regulations. Equitable treatment for CHP/CH schemes in the Department of Environment's rating formulae has been secured.

The Department has produced a wide range of publications and two videos highlighting successful applications of CHP technology. The Department has also successfully collaborated with industry on the promotion and marketing of CHP, particularly with the CHPA on their Power Plus campaign. These activities have helped to raise the profile and awareness of CHP in industry, commerce and the public sector to a record level.

Throughout the remainder of the 1990s the EEO will continue to vigorously promote the technology through its best practice programme and will aim to achieve the environment White Paper commitment to double CHP capacity to 4,000MWe by 2000.

British Coal

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what figures he has for the change in the level of productivity in British Coal since 1983-84.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Since 1983-84 productivity at British Coal's deep mines has increased by 110 per cent.

Relocation

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those parts of his Department which are currently under review for relocation; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to the east midlands; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to Mansfield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department carries out an annual relocation review as part of the public expenditure survey. An independent assessment of the case for and against the relocation of my Department's petroleum engineering directorate to Aberdeen is currently being undertaken. No posts are currently being considered for relocation to the east midlands.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Thames Polytechnic

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what public resources are made available to Thames polytechnic.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council—PCFC—has made the following public funds available to Thames polytechnic for the financial year 1991-92:

	£
Main allocation	19,307,579
Equipment	1,933,332
Hunter capital	541,700
Minor works	424,000
Research	250,000
Total	22,456,611

In addition the polytechnic's publicly funded tuition fee from funded places is expected to be £11,944,000. Total public funds available to the polytechnic are therefore £34,400,611. Institutions are free to recruit additional students who do not attract PCFC grant but who bring with them the publicly funded tuition fee, averaging £2,200 in the PCFC sector in 1991-92.

Handicapped Pupils

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the latest developments in Government policy to ensure the integration of handicapped children into the maintained school system.

Mr. Fallon: The Government's policy on the intergration of children with special needs in mainstream schools is reflected in the provisions of the Education Act 1981. The Act requires local education authorities to educate children with statements of special educational needs in ordinary schools wherever possible.

Relocation

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those parts of his Department which are currently under review for relocation; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to the east midlands; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to Mansfield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Department is considering the scope for relocating some 50 posts from London to Darlington in 1992.

Seven-year-olds

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, columns *374-76*, if he will list by local education authority *(a)* the proportion of usable return from maintained schools for seven-year-olds and *(b)* the number of children seven plus years old included in the seven-plus league tables of usable returns as a percentage of the total number of seven-plus pupils in maintained schools.

Mr. Eggar: Tables showing this information were provided in written answers to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 15 January, *Official Report*, columns *580-82*, and the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) on 17 February, *Official Report*, columns *35-36*.

The following tables have been updated to incorporate details for Lambeth and Tower Hamlets, which were not included in the original tables.

LEA RANKING

Proportion of returns from maintained schools with 7 year olds used to compile the National analyses of the 1991 test results

	percentage Returns used
Avon	100
Barking	100
Berkshire	100
Bexley	100
Bury	100
Cleveland	100
Coventry	100
Croydon	100
Enfield	100
Essex	100
Hackney	100
Hammersmith	100
Haringey	100
Havering	100
Kensington and Chelsea	100
Kingston Upon Thames	100
Merton	100
Northamptonshire	100
Stockport	100
Sutton	100
Calderdale	99
Devon	99
Hereford and Worcester	99
Humberside	99
Lincolnshire	99
Sunderland	99
Tameside	99

	percentage Returns used
Wakefield	99
Walsall	99
West Sussex	99
Bradford	98
Bromley	98
Cambridgeshire	98
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	98
Dudley	98
North Yorkshire	98
Northumberland	98
Rotherham	98
Solihull	98
South Tyneside	98
Suffolk	98
Warwickshire	98
Gateshead	97
Newcastle Upon Tyne	97
Surrey	97
Trafford	97
Westminster	97
Wirral	97
Wolverhampton	97
Manchester	96
Shropshire	96
Somerset	96
Redbridge	95
Sefton	95
Waltham Forest	95
Kent	94
St. Helens	94
Staffordshire	94
Barnet	93
Gloucestershire	93
Leeds	93
Rochdale	93
Wiltshire	93
Barnsley	92
Brent	92
Camden	92
Cheshire	92
Cumbria	92
Doncaster	92
Knowsley	92
Sandwell	92
Durham	91
Harrow	91
Hertfordshire	91
Lancashire	91
Bedfordshire	90
Derbyshire	89
Isle of Wight	89
Lewisham	89
Oldham	89
Nottinghamshire	88
Richmond Upon Thames	88
Wandsworth	88
Sheffield	87
Dorset	85
Lambeth	83
Hampshire	82
Leicestershire	81
Hillingdon	78
Ealing	77
Greenwich	75
Wigan	75
Tower Hamlets	74
North Tyneside	73
Birmingham	72
Bolton	70
Liverpool	70
Oxfordshire	70
East Sussex	66
Islington	65
Kirklees	65
Salford	65
Southwark	60
Buckinghamshire	59
Norfolk	59
Hounslow	58
Newham	55

Proportion of 7 year old pupils from maintained schools included in the national analyses of the 1991 test results

[illegible]	Percentage of pupils in KS1 results
Camden	94
Greenwich	74
Hackney	100
Hammersmith and Fulham	100
Islington	62
Kensington and Chelsea	100
Lambeth	82
Lewisham	90
Tower Hamlets	67
Southwark	55
Wandsworth	85
Westminster	96
Barking and Dagenham	100
Barnet	91
Bexley	100
Brent	91
Bromley	97
Croydon	100
Ealing	72
Enfield	100
Haringey	100
Harrow	92
Havering	100
Hillingdon	7[illegible]
Hounslow	4[illegible]
Kingston upon Thames	100
Merton	100
Newham	46
Redbridge	95
Richmond upon Thames	86
Sutton	100
Waltham Forest	94
Birmingham	72
Coventry	100
Dudley	98
Sandwell	93
Solihull	99
Walsall	100

	Percentage of pupils in KS1 results
Wolverhampton	96
Knowsley	91
Liverpool	67
St. Helens	94
Sefton	98
Wirral	97
Bolton	68
Bury	100
Manchester	97
Oldham	86
Rochdale	94
Salford	63
Stockport	100
Tameside	99
Trafford	94
Wigan	73
Barnsley	93
Doncaster	87
Rotherham	97
Sheffield	87
Bradford	99
Calderdale	100
Kirklees	59
Leeds	96
Wakefield	100
Gateshead	97
Newcastle upon Tyne	96
North Tyneside	74
South Tyneside	96
Sunderland	98
Avon	100
Bedfordshire	89
Berkshire	99
Buckinghamshire	56
Cambridgeshire	98
Cheshire	88
Cleveland	100
Cornwall & Isles of Scilly	99
Cumbria	93
Derbyshire	88
Devon	99
Dorset	89
Durham	91
East Sussex	62
Essex	100
Gloucestershire	93
Hampshire	78
Hereford and Worcester	99
Hertfordshire	93
Humberside	98
Isle of Wight	84
Kent	94
Lancashire	90
Leicestershire	85
Lincolnshire	100
Norfolk	60
North Yorkshire	100
Northamptonshire	100
Northumberland	100
Nottinghamshire	89
Oxfordshire	72
Shropshire	96
Somerset	95
Staffordshire	93
Suffolk	96
Surrey	97
Warwickshire	97
West Sussex	99
Wiltshire	92
Total England	89

Expenditure, Eastern England

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out the GM-relevant costs less the expenditure on school meals in each of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex local education authorities.

Mr. Eggar: Using the definition of GM-relevant costs set out in the reply to my hon. Friend on 17 December 1991, *Official Report*, columns *114-16*, the information, taken from the LEAs' section 42 budget statements for 1991-92, is as follows:

	£
Norfolk	172,117,000
Suffolk	149,632,000
Essex	364,119,000

Note:

The GM-relevant costs constitute the total budget in respect of the LEA's maintained schools which corresponds to the total annual maintenance grant—AMG—of grant-maintained—GM—schools, ie the general schools budget less expenditure on items for which provision is made outside the AMG of GM schools, those items being: central Government specific grants; capital expenditure; and expenditure on home to school transport, education welfare officers and psychologists, pupil support, statemented pupils and special units.

Ethnic Minority Teaching

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 3 March, *Official Report*, column *116*, if he will send the letter referred to, to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, before the dissolution of Parliament; and what is the reason for the delay.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend wrote to the right hon. Member on 13 March confirming his decision.

Higher Education

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children went into higher education in each of the last two years in Basildon.

Mr. Eggar: Information for the Basildon area is not available centrally.

The estimated numbers of school leavers from maintained schools in the Essex local education authority area whose intended destination was further or higher education for the academic years 1988-89 and 1989-90, the latest years available, were 5,000 and 6,150 respectively. Information for higher education is not available separately at local authority level.

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will give the numbers attending full-time and sandwich courses at universities and polytechnics in the northern region in 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Eggar: The number of home and overseas domiciled students attending full-time and sandwich higher education courses at the three polytechnics in the northern region in 1990 was 18,900, and the number attending similar courses at the two universities in the region was 14,700.

Operating Initiatives

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what operating initiatives have been launched in Basildon in each of the last five years.

Mr. Eggar: The main on-going initiative launched by Essex education authority in Basildon was the establishment of Basildon tertiary college and the consequent abolition of school sixth forms in the area. More recently, in response to local demand, my right hon. and learned Friend accorded grant-maintained status to Chalvedon school, and re-established its sixth form.

ENVIRONMENT

Consultants

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list each private sector consultancy firm which has been retained by each agency within his Department, and for his Department as a whole, for the purposes of advising on the market testing programme; and whether the appointment in each case was the result of competitive tendering.

Mr. Heseltine: To date no private sector consultancy firms have been retained by my Department, or any of its agencies, to advise on the market testing programme as a whole. However, Messrs Donaldson are advising on the preparation of contractual documentation for market testing property management services. Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte are advising on, among other things the value for money of alternative arrangements for providing the services offered by the Government car service and the interdepartmental dispatch service. Watts and Partners are advising on documentation for royal parks works contracts. All these contracts were let by competitive tender.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest information about the *(a)* percentage of people who have made a payment of the community charge, *(b)* percentage of community charge collected by 31 December, *(c)* percentage of community charge collected for the financial year ending 5 April and *(d)* level of community charge for 1991-92 and 1992-93 for the boroughs of Gedling, Rushcliffe, Broxtowe and the City of Nottingham.

Mr. Key: The latest information concerning the percentage of people making community charge payments in 1991-92, and the collection rates to December 1991-92 for all authorities who have provided information, is listed in the departmental press release No. 164 which was placed in the Library on 27 February 1992.

Charging authorities have until 18 March to make their "Demands and Precepts Return" to the Department and until 1 April to set a 1992-93 community charge. The available community charge information is as follows.

	1991-92 Average Community Charge £	*1992-93 Average Community Charge £*
Gedling	266·58	No return
Rushcliffe	265·11	No return
Broxtowe	265	278·54
Nottingham	295	316

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when rates or the community charge have been capped in Basildon since 1983;

(2) what is the proposed level of community charge in Basildon; and at what levels it or rates have been set in each of the last five years.

Mr. Key: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the revenue support grant per capita for 1992-93 in the Wandsworth, Westminster and Rotherham local authorities; and if he will state the community charge which has been determined by each of these authorities for 1992-93.

Mr. Key: Many authorities have yet to make a return to the Department giving information about community charges. Charging authorities have until 18 March to make their "Demands and Precepts Return" to the Department and they have until 1 April to set a charge.

The available information is as follows:

	1992-93 revenue support grant £ per adult	*1992-93 community charge £ per adult*
Westminster	1,263	36
Wandsworth	975	No return
Rotherham	406	No return

Orimulsion

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will hold a public inquiry regarding the application by National Power to burn orimulsion at Padiham power station before allowing a decision to be made on the said application; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I am satisfied that the public have been made aware of this application. HMIP has received a number of representations which it will take into account in determining the application.

It remains open to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to direct that the application should be referred for his determination. In that event, he would consider whether a local public inquiry would be appropriate.

A299

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the proposed route for the A299 Thanet way between Whitstable and Herne Bay will be the subject of a public inquiry.

Mr. Yeo: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Community Charges

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the proposed level of community charges in London in 1992-93.

Mr. Key: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Wild Birds

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to establish a new inspection and enforcement service to ensure adequate safeguards for the trade in wild birds.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 9 March 1992, *Official Report*, at column *372*.

New Homes

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will initiate discussions on the future use of public sector sites which are no longer needed, as areas for new homes construction.

Mr. Yeo: I will write to my hon. Friend.

EC Habitats Directive

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice is available to local authorities concerning the need to assess the effect that plans or projects may have on special areas of conservation designated under the new EC habitats directive.

Mr. Trippier: Our obligation under the forthcoming directive to assess the effect of plans and projects on designated special areas of conservation is covered in the draft planning policy guidance on nature conservation. This was circulated for consultation by the Department of the Environment on 27 February.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is being taken to identify those areas in the United Kingdom which should be considered for designation as special areas for conservation under the forthcoming EC habitats directive.

Mr. Trippier: The Government and their scientific advisers are currently examining the criteria set out in annex III of the forthcoming EC habitats directive with a view to evaluating the eligibility of sites for inclusion on the United Kingdom's proposed national list of SITES of Community importance. While I expect it to be some time before I am in a position to determine the full list, the Government intend to comply with the timetable set by the directive.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he intends to introduce in order to comply with article 6.2—avoidance of the deterioration of the habitats—of the EC directive on the conservation of natural and semi-natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora—the habitats directive.

Mr. Trippier: Officials are currently consulting the statutory nature conservation agencies and other Government Departments about the legislative, regulatory and administrative provisions through which the forthcoming directive is to be implemented in the United Kingdom. The measures already in place under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, give considerable protection to the important wildlife habitat in this country. A recent further welcome step has been the launch of English Nature's wildlife enhancement scheme to secure more positive management of sites of special scientific interest.

Aqueous Cleaners

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to tackle the increase in effluent from disposal of increased amounts of aqueous cleaners used to replace CFC-G113; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Such discharges would be subject to existing statutory authorisation procedures as appropriate under section 88 of the Water Resources Act 1991, sections 118 and 120 of the Water Industry Act 1991, and section 6 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Agricultural Land

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the reference to little weight being attached to the loss of moderate and poor quality agricultural land in paragraph 2.5 of planning policy guidance note 7 "The Countryside and Rural Economy" refers only to that aspect of paragraph 2·4 which deals with the agricultural value of land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Yes. When paragraph 2.5 of PPG7 says that "little weight" should normally be attached to the loss of lower grade agricultural land it means little weight in terms of agricultural value; other factors such as landscape and nature conservation need to be taken fully into account. The PPG explains the Government's policy of encouraging rural enterprise, while ensuring that the environment is protected. It reminds planning authorities of the need for a balanced approach to rural development and conservation. The planning system helps to integrate development necessary to sustain the rural economy with protection of the countryside for the sake of its beauty, its diversity of landscape, its wealth of natural resources and its ecological, agricultural and recreational value.

Local Government Superannuation Scheme

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to complete the consultation exercise prior to amending the local government superannuation regulations concerning the treatment of war service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Local Government Superannuation (Amendment) Regulations which came into force on 28 February 1992 include a provision enabling certain probation officers to count their war service for superannuation purposes. No formal request has been received to make further amendments to the provisions on war service already included in the regulations and no consultation exercise is planned.

Relocation

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those parts of his Department which are currently under review for relocation; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to the east midlands; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to Mansfield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: I will write to the hon. Member.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his letter of 4 March, what consideration he has given to banning immediately the production of ozone-depleting substances and filling essential applications, including asthma inhalers, from existing stocks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Government are firmly committed to phasing out CFCs by the end of 1995 at the latest. An immediate phase-out of these substances would not be possible, because substitutes for some relatively high volume uses of CFCs still require further development before the overall demand will be low enough to be met by existing stocks.

Unleaded Petrol

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effect on emissions of *(a)* carbon dioxide and *(b)* carcinogens of the increased use of unleaded petrol.

Mr. Trippier: Increased use of unleaded petrol will result in a modest increase in carbon dioxide emissions from refineries. Any effect on carcinogenic emissions is likely to be very small, but a detailed assessment of hydrocarbon emissions from cars using leaded and unleaded fuel is in progress and results are expected in the autumn. Catalytic converters will be mandatory on all new petrol-engine cars from the end of this year and will secure dramatic reductions in all harmful emissions, including carcinogens. Cars equipped with catalysts can run only on unleaded petrol.

Waste Carriers

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the level of registration for waste carriers; what information he has on how many waste carriers have received information on duty of care regulations; whether he has had any discussions with the Institution of Environmental Health Officers about the practicability of meeting the 1 April deadline for registration of waste carriers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member.

Buildings (Disabled Persons' Access)

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the latest developments in Government policy to ensure maximum mobility and access to buildings by registered disabled persons on visits to buildings and installations in both the public and private sectors.

Mr. Yeo: The Government have introduced revised Building Regulations relating to access and facilities for disabled people which come into force on 1 June this year and apply in both the public and private sectors. The requirements have been extended to cover all floors of new non-domestic buildings and most extensions to such buildings. They now, for the first time, address some of the needs of people with impaired hearing and sight.

Pollution Control

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the 1992-93 schemes for recovery of pollution control costs in England and Wales.

Mr. Trippier: Cost-recovery charging to cover the costs of regulating processes under integrated pollution control, under local authority air pollution control, and premises subject to regulation under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 were introduced in April 1991, under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Radioactive Substances Act 1960.

With the agreement of the Treasury, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has now made revised charging schemes to introduce the 1992-93 scales of fees and charges, which will take effect from 1 April 1992. I have placed copies of the revised schemes in the Library.

The schemes have been prepared following consultation with industry and other bodies.

The form of the schemes remains the same. For integrated pollution control—IPC—the scheme comprises an application fee to cover the cost of assessment of the operator's proposals and preparation of the authorisation; an annual subsistence charge for holding an authorisation, to cover the costs of inspection and oversight of the plant; and a variation fee to cover the costs of assessment of any proposals for substantial variation to a process.

The application fee for 1992-93 is £2,450 per component for processes which have previously been subject to air pollution control; £3,650 per component for processes coming under regulation by HMIP for the first time. These fees reflect the amount of time and cost involved in the assessment of IPC applications in 1991-92, which has proved to be higher than the estimates on which the 1991-92 fees were based. However, HMIP has set itself the objective for 1992-93 of reducing its average application handling time by 12½ per cent., and the fee levels allow for this efficiency target.

HMIP is publishing extensive technical IPC guidance notes, and is also organising a programme of local seminars for industries currently involved in preparing IPC applications. These steps will ensure that industry has all the necessary information, and will help to achieve speedier authorisation, and reduce application handling further.

The variation fee is £1,200 per component—one third of the application fee.

On 8 November 1991 I announced a further substantial strengthening of HMIP's complement for 1992-93, to ensure that the inspectorate is able to maintain rigorous levels of inspection and oversight, and provide the high degree of public confidence which industry requires to be able to conduct its business. The annual subsistence charge of £1,500 per component reflects the costs of the higher level of oversight which HMIP will be able to provide in 1992-93.

As noted, the IPC fees for 1991-92 underestimated the time involved in assessing IPC applications, the cost of which was therefore not fully recovered. The legislation governing the charging scheme requires that costs and income are balanced, taking one financial year with another. It is therefore necessary to recoup the under-recovery of costs in 1991-92. However this recoupment will be spread over the remaining four years of the IPC implementation period. It will be carried out by way of an additional charge applied only to authorisations related to applications submitted during 1991-92. The additional charge in 1991-92 will be £410 per component for processes previously under air pollution control, £610 per component for others.

The charges payable on a plant are related to its complexity and scale by being linked to the number of defined components which the plant contains. The schedule of components has been reviewed in consultation with industry, in the light of experience in operating the charging scheme, and revised for 1992-93.

For the longer term, we wish to consider the option of moving to a system of direct charging for IPC applications according to the time and costs incurred in dealing with each application.

For local authority air pollution control, the application fee is increased to £900, and the annual subsistence fee to £550, taking account of the local authority associations' submissions to the Department reporting that local authorities' staff are spending more time than expected in implementing part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The substantial change fee and the fee for processes already registered under the Alkali Act are increased to £580. Fees and charges for small waste oil burners, which reflect a simplified authorisation procedure, remain unchanged at £100.

The form of the radioactive substances regulations—RSA 60—charging scheme also remains the same. Nuclear licensed premises will be billed individually on the basis of regulatory time spent and costs incurred at each site. Non-nuclear premises are charged on the basis of flat-rate fees similar to the IPC scheme, relating to applications, substantial variations, and the subsistence of consents to cover inspection and oversight costs.

For premises authorised to accumulate and dispose of radioactive waste—"band 3 premises", for example, research establishments, major universities—the application and variation fee will be £1,350 and the annual subsistence charge £800. For premises registered to keep and use radioactive material—"band 4 premises", for example industrial users of radioactive sources—the application and variation fee will be £500. The annual subsistence charge will be £80, but this will apply only to holders of larger sources. The majority of registration holders, using smaller closed sources, will not pay any annual subsistence charge, since these sources do not require routine inspection.

As with the IPC scheme, the RSA60 application fees set for 1991-92 underestimated the time involved in assessing applications, and costs were under-recovered. This scheme is also subject to a statutory requirement to balance income and costs. As for the IPC scheme, it has been agreed with the Treasury that the recovery will be spread over four years, through an additional charge applying to consents related to applications made in 1991-92, which will be £210 for band 3 authorisations, and £80 for band 4 registrations.

Charging schemes for Scotland will be made in due course.

Genetically Modified Organisms

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many replies were received in response to the consultation paper "Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs): Proposed New Regulations"; and if he will make the responses publicly available.

Mr. Baldry: Copies of the 181 responses received have been placed in the Department's library, where they are available for public inspection. A list of responses received has also been placed in the Library of the House, through which copies of individual responses may be obtained.

Urban Areas

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent by his Department in revitalising the urban and inner-city areas of the northern region since June 1987.

Mr. Key: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Historic Churches, Basildon

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grants are available to restore historic churches in Basildon.

Mr. Yeo: English Heritage provide grants for the repair of outstanding historic churches from grant in aid provided by my Department. The church grants budget proposed for 1992-93 is some £9 million. Local authorities also have discretionary powers to provide assistance.

Pitsea

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what moneys are available to clean up Pitsea creek;

(2) what response he has made to the Environment Committee's report on dumping on Pitsea tip, seventh report of 1990-91, HC 263;

(3) what recent representations he has received; and what response he has made about dumping on Pitsea tip.

Mr. Baldry: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Council House Sales

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council and Commission for the New Towns houses have been sold in Basildon since *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1983.

Mr. Yeo: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Rochester upon Medway City Council (Housing Stock)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the report of the district auditor into the sale by Rochester upon Medway city council of its housing stock to the Medway housing society; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 5 March 1992]:* I will write to my hon. Friend.

Homeless Families

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the comparative public sector revenue costs of housing homeless families in *(a)* Greater London, *(b)* other metropolitan authorities and *(c)* English non-metropolitan areas by (i) providing them with newly built council dwellings, (ii) providing them with council dwellings newly acquired from the private sector and improved for letting and (iii) providing them with bed-and-breakfast accommodation; and if he will publish these figures on a comparable basis with those in his answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 23 February 1989, *Official Report*, column *741*.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 11 March 1992]:* I have looked carefully at the basis on which such an answer can be given and have concluded that the information is not available in a form which enables a valid comparison to be made.

Expenditu[illegible] London

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the budget and forecast actual expenditure of his Department's London region office in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 12 March 1992]:* The London regional office's budget for pay and day-to-day running costs, excluding accommodation which is centrally funded, was £3·184 million for 1991-92. Forecast actual expenditure for the year is £3·092 million. The budget for 1992-93 has not been finalised.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the expenditure of the London residuary body on administration in each year from 1986-87 to 1991-92, at current prices.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 12 March 1992]:* Expressed in current prices, net expenditure by the London residuary body on general management or administrative services, including preparation and transfer of records to successor bodies by the LRB's administration department, was as follows in the years 1986-87 to 1991-92:

	£'000
1986-87	6,874
1987-88	4,164
1988-89	3,597
1989-90	2,962
[1]1990-91	7,365
[2]1991-92	3,466

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[1] On April 1 1990 the LRB took on responsibility for winding up the affairs of the Inner London Education Authority.

[2] The figures for 1991-92 are from the LRB's 1991-92 original budget while information for other years comes from the LRB's Annual Report and Accounts for the relevant year.

Further details may be found in the London residuary body's annual report and accounts.

Birds

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recommendations he has received from the chairman of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee relating to United Kingdom nature conservation and land use policies arising from the publication of the recent reports sponsored by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee on birds and pastoral agriculture in Europe; the conservation of lowland dry grassland birds in Europe; and breeding waders on wet grassland.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* None. However, the studies and recommendations contained in the reports will make a valuable contribution to our consideration of countryside policies in the United Kingdom and Europe.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the sum allocated by the London Docklands development corporation for its sponsorship of the Sports Scholarship Foundation for sports scholarships in the United States of America; the sum it is likely to expend in its trial event to be held in Florida in July next; the residential and other qualifications it expects of those it intends to sponsor at the trial event and the particulars of the persons there present who will make the selection for scholarship awards, together with details of any charges met in cash or kind for the trial event or the scholarships from individuals or bodies other than the corporation.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* The corporation has made provision for expenditure of £3,000 for the sponsorship of local young people attending the scholarship trials in Florida this year. From those urban development association residents selected by LDDC as suitable to attend the trial, a number who would otherwise be unable to take part will receive financial assistance.

The Sports Scholarship Foundation—an independent body—is entirely responsible for the running and organisation of the sports trial event. Assessment of an individual's sporting ability and the related costs are matters for the foundation.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the expenditure of the London Docklands development corporation on administration, research and planning for each year since its creation, at current prices.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 12 March 1992]:* Expenditure by the London Docklands development corporation on administration, research and planning, at current prices, is as follows:

£ million (rounded)

Year	*Amount*
1981-82	4
1982-83	10
1983-84	10
1984-85	12
1985-86	12
1986-87	12
1987-88	12
1988-89	14
1989-90	17

Year	Amount
1990-91	18
[1] 1991-92	16

[1] Estimated.

It is not possible to separate the amount specific to each item.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effect on businesses in Greater Manchester of the introduction of the uniform business rate.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* The table shows the average change, between 1989-90 and 1990-91, in non-domestic rates bills in Greater Manchester flowing from the introduction of the uniform business rate and the 1990 revaluation, but taking no account of the transitional arrangements.

District	*Average effect on rates bills per cent.*
Bolton	−8
Bury	−19
Manchester	−38
Oldham	−34
Rochdale	−35
Salford	−36
Stockport	−18
Tameside	−34
Trafford	−14
Wigan	−39

Boundary Commission

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in respect of the Local Government Boundary Commission's recommendations that Thamesmead East ward be transferred from the London borough of Bexley to the London borough of Greenwich.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* Seventy-six representations from hon. Members, local groups, members of the public and other interested persons have been received. Most of these oppose the proposed transfer.

DEFENCE

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of contracts awarded by his Department in each of the four calendar years to 31 December 1990 to *(a)* GPT Ltd. Strategic Communications Systems, *(b)* Rolls-Royce Industrial and Marine Gas Turbines Ltd., *(c)* Lucas Aerospace Ltd., *(d)* Dunlop Aviation Division, *(e)* Alvis Ltd., *(f)* Abbey Panels Ltd., *(g)* Commercial Hydraulics Keelavite Ltd., *(h)* Cornercroft Ltd., *(i)* Neol Penny Turbines Ltd., *(j)* J. S. Chinn Ltd., *(k)* Rotherhams Ltd., and *(l)* Self-Changing Gears Ltd.; and if he will list the total amount paid to each company in each of those years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information the hon. Gentleman requests is commercially sensitive and cannot be released.

1 Submarine Squadron

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the home addresses of the 350 naval personnel committed to the 1 Submarine Squadron; and whether they are home owners or tenants.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information on home addresses is held locally on all service personnel who work for the 1 Submarine Squadron. About one third are home owners, the remainder are either private tenants or occupy RN accommodation. It is not possible at this stage to say which personnel will move to Devonport.

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of relocating the 1 Submarine Squadron from Gosport to Devonport.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The estimated cost is some £3·5 million. With annual savings in running costs of some £2 million per year, we expect to recoup these costs within two years.

HMS Dolphin

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of the type 2400 Upholder class submarine maintenance facilities at HMS Dolphin, Gosport.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since the mid-1980s some £4·4 million has been spent on the provision of facilities at HMS Dolphin specifically for the maintenance of Upholder class submarines.

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number and nature of the workers who will be transferred from Gunwharf, Portsmouth to HMS Dolphin, Gosport as envisaged in the Minister of State for the Armed Forces' letter of 10 March to the hon. Member for Gosport.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A total of around 100 service and civilian posts are expected to relocate from Gunwharf to HMS Dolphin in the mid-1990s, although further work still needs to be done on our detailed plans. The following units are expected to transfer:

the Royal Engineers Diving Establishment;
the Minewarfare and Maritime Trade School;
the DNIS Management Systems Group and Small Systems Group;
the Fleet Diving Group;
the Portsmouth Area Clearance Diving Unit.

Green Rover

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the sale of the former Royal Navy ship Green Rover to Indonesia; and what restrictions have been placed on its use.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Indonesian Government are purchasing the surplus Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship Green Rover. She is a replenishment ship for fresh water, fuel and refrigerated goods. She has no offensive capability. Restrictions on her use would be irrelevant.

Telecommunications Station, Outhmuir

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the proposed telecommunications station being built at Outhmuir, Fife, giving details of the costs and the purpose of the system in terms of overall operation.

Mr. Alan Clark: The installations under construction at Outhmuir, Fife, are components of the Uniter communications system and the associated bearer network, Boxer. The estimated total costs of Uniter and Boxer at 1991-92 prices are about £410 million and £230 million respectively.

Relocation

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those parts of his Department which are currently under review for relocation; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to the east midlands; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to Mansfield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Much work is going on within the Ministry of Defence to determine future locations for both service and headquarters personnel. The aim is wherever possible to rationalise and concentrate personnel on existing defence sites away from London and the south-east. Certain RAF recruitment activities will transfer to RAF Cranwell, with the addition of 89 service and 70 civilian jobs for the region. At present, no posts are being considered for relocation to Mansfield.

Submarine Notification Scheme

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has come to a conclusion on the extension of the submarine notification scheme to cover the whole of the Minches.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Extension of the SUBFACTS notification scheme is one of the subjects covered in a consultation document on submarine operations and fishing vessels which has recently been circulated to fishing industry representatives, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. A decision on the areas to be covered by the extended arrangements will be made once this consultation has been completed.

Cwrt-y-Gollen Camp

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provision will be made in the near future by the Ministry of Defence to ensure the education of the children of service personnel shortly to move into Cwrt-y-Gollen camp, Crickhowell.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The responsibility for making provision for the education of the children of service personnel in the United Kingdom rests with local education authorities.

Defence Contracts

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what defence contracts have benefited Basildon in each of the last three years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The number and value of defence contracts placed in the Basildon/Southend-on-Sea area are as follows:

1990-91—311 contracts valued at £34·733 million.

1991-92—280 contracts valued at £18·175 million to end January.

Figures for earlier years could not be provided without disproportionate cost and effort.

Pacific Atomic Tests

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made of whether former service man Andrew Dickson, now of Wakefield, was contaminated from radioactive fallout from atomic bombs tested in the atmosphere over the Pacific in 1959; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 9 March 1992]*: In general it is not the policy of this Department to detail individual dose records which are medically confidential. Almost all participants in the United Kingdom nuclear test programme, however, were not exposed to ionising radiation from the tests. An independent study by the National Radiological Protection Board showed neither a loss of life expectancy nor an overall increase in the incidence of malignant disease.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Basildon Crown Court

Mr. Amess: To ask the Attorney-General when he proposes to start the building of a Crown court in Basildon.

The Attorney-General: It is expected that construction of a Crown court in Basildon will commence in the summer of 1993.

HEALTH

Intensive Care Beds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many beds *(a)* in each individual health authority in England and *(b)* in each health trust in England and were designated (i) for intensive care and (ii) for children's intensive care; how many of such beds were closed or otherwise not available for use on 31 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is not available in the form requested.

Organ Transplants

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further steps he intends to take to encourage more organ transplant donors.

Mr. Dorrell: We are continually looking at ways of improving the supply of donor organs.

Hospital Beds, Leeds

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* acute and *(b)* long-stay hospital beds there were in the Leeds metropolitan district in each year since 1979 shown (i) in total and (ii) by hospital.

Mr. Dorrell: Details requested about acute beds for each year from 1979 are given in the tables. Information about the total number of long-stay beds and the number of long-stay beds by hospital is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mrs. P. Smith, the chairman of Leeds health authority, for details.

Number of daily available beds of Acute specialties for each hospital in Leeds Western and Leeds Eastern Health Districts for the years 1979 to 1990-91

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
B6201 Leeds General Infirmary	649	654	653	669	650	615	620	618	625	631	621	606
B6203 Cookridge Hospital	152	149	150	149	151	153	138	117	104	118	117	119
B6204 Ida and Robert Arthington Hospital	91	82	78	79	74	31	25	25	25	25	25	25
B6205 Leeds Maternity Hospital	28	28	28	28	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B6207 Wharfedale Hospital, Otley	140	142	142	141	144	142	145	142	134	136	136	140
B6210 Roundhay Hall Hospital	78	81	80	81	68	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B6211 Middleton Hospital	82	70	58	58	52	47	36	29	10	0	0	0
B6212 Ilkley Convalescent Home	53	56	56	56	56	55	58	58	56	58	0	0
B6219 Chapel Allerton Hospital	284	285	280	232	189	188	184	213	207	187	173	120
B6230 Clarendon Wing, General Infirmary	0	0	0	0	17	178	173	178	176	172	166	170
B6313 St. James' Hospital	784	788	786	789	790	792	797	813	819	802	804	756
B6314 Seacroft Hospital	178	176	173	271	287	273	269	253	242	234	248	219
B6315 Killingbeck Hospital	201	202	198	195	177	172	164	166	173	167	168	171
B6321 Marguerite Hepton Hospital	46	47	47	47	47	36	32	0	0	0	0	0
B6322 Gateforth Hospital	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2,786	2,760	2,729	2,795	2,727	2,682	2,651	2,612	2,583	2,530	2,458	2,326

Please note that Chapel Allerton Hospital was in Leeds Eastern for 1979-81 and Leeds Western 1982-91.
Source: DH Form SH3 and KHO3
SM1 Fylde 4 March 1992.

Leeds Acute In-Patient and Day Case Activity 1979 to 1990-91

	In-Patients	*Day Cases*	*Total*
1979	76,887	14,213	91,100
1980	81,476	14,601	96,077
1981	82,636	14,934	97,570
1982	82,492	14,988	97,480
1983	88,638	16,872	105,510
1984	90,705	16,397	107,102
1985	93,181	17,075	110,256
1986	94,670	18,055	112,725
1987-88	95,892	0	95,892
1988-89	104,925	18,427	123,352
1989-90	104,637	23,733	128,370
1990-91	[1]104,846	[2]27,024	131,870

[1] Increase 28·7 per cent.
[2] Increase 90[illegible] per cent.

Family Planning Clinics

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the figures from 1979 to 1992 inclusive for the number of family planning clinics in *(a)* London, *(b)* Birmingham, *(c)* Manchester, *(d)* Leeds, *(e)* Newcastle, *(f)* Southampton, *(g)* Bristol and *(h)* England and Wales.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Pay Beds

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of pay beds in each district health authority in each year since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: The information available centrally is given in the tables.

Number of authorised pay beds in NHS hospitals

Regions	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Northern	56	56	78	103	103	105	95	101	96	99	97	97
Yorkshire	140	140	154	182	199	199	193	193	187	192	188	188
Trent	130	130	150	143	143	143	138	136	128	136	136	136
East Anglian	90	90	94	106	106	108	108	108	96	108	108	108
North West Thames	339	339	352	292	292	292	287	285	271	285	283	283
North East Thames	278	278	286	398	404	410	413	411	347	393	411	411
South East Thames	263	263	302	332	337	337	339	341	322	333	333	333
South West Thames	156	156	168	180	182	194	182	180	141	180	180	180
Wessex	99	99	106	117	120	120	116	116	105	115	116	116
Oxford	164	164	180	180	180	180	183	193	188	193	194	194
South Western	78	78	82	102	104	104	104	102	96	100	100	100
West Midlands	181	181	217	258	267	276	273	270	209	281	276	276
Mersey	67	67	92	112	123	123	123	129	123	129	129	129
North Western	170	170	214	231	244	245	243	237	207	233	233	227

Regions	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Special health authorities and boards of governors	194	194	202	183	183	183	178	178	177	160	178	178
England	2,405	2,405	2,677	2,919	2,987	3,019	2,975	2,980	2,693	2,937	2,962	2,956

Private Beds—Number of beds authorised in District under section 65 of the National Health Service Act 1977[1]

District Health Authority		*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
A01	Hartlepool	6	6	6	6
A02	North Tees	7	7	7	7
A03	South Tees	13	15	15	15
A04	East Cumbria	10	10	10	10
A05	South Cumbria	9	9	9	9
A06	West Cumbria	4	4	4	4
A07	Darlington	6	5	5	5
A08	Durham	2	2	2	2
A09	North West Durham	3	5	3	3
A10	South West Durham	3	3	3	3
A11	Northumberland	4	4	4	4
A12	Gateshead	3	3	3	3
A13	Newcastle upon Tyne	15	15	15	15
A14	North Tyneside	2	2	2	2
A15	South Tyneside	2	2	2	2
A16	Sunderland	7	7	7	7
B12	Hull	12	12	12	12
B13	East Yorkshire	10	10	8	8
B14	Grimsby	7	7	7	7
B15	Scunthorpe	9	7	7	7
B22	Northallerton	5	7	7	7
B23	York	3	5	5	5
B24	Scarborough	6	6	6	6
B25	Harrogate	6	6	6	6
B32	Bradford	34	31	31	31
B33	Airedale	15	12	12	12
B42	Calderdale	24	24	24	24
B52	Huddersfield	0	10	10	10
B53	Dewsbury	6	6	6	6
B62	Leeds Western	31	29	29	29
B63	Leeds Eastern	7	6	6	6
B72	Wakefield	10	10	10	10
B73	Pontefract	2	4	2	2
C01	North Derbyshire	8	6	6	6
C02	Southern Derbyshire	15	15	15	15
C03	Leicestershire	23	30	30	30
C04	North Lincolnshire	18	18	18	18
C05	South Lincolnshire	10	10	10	10
C06	Bassetlaw	6	6	6	6
C07	Central Nottinghamshire	15	15	15	15
C08	Nottingham	20	20	20	20
C09	Barnsley	3	5	5	5
C10	Doncaster	2	3	3	3
C11	Rotherham	0	0	0	0
C12	Sheffield	8	8	8	8

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[1] *Source:* DH form KH02

Private beds Number of beds authorised in district under section 65 of NHS Act 1977[1]

District health authority		*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
D01	Cambridge	11	11	11	11
D02	Peterborough	6	18	18	18
D03	West Suffolk	10	10	10	10
D04	East Suffolk	24	24	24	24
D06	Norwich	28	28	28	28
D07	Great Yarmouth and Waveney	5	5	5	5
D08	West Norfolk and Wisbech	8	8	8	8
D09	Huntingdon	4	4	4	4
E01	North Bedfordshire	10	12	12	12
E02	South Bedfordshire	7	9	9	9
E03	North Hertfordshire	10	10	8	8
E04	East Hertfordshire	10	10	10	10
E05	North West Hertfordshire	18	13	13	13

District health authority		1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
E06	South West Hertfordshire	6	6	6	6
E07	Barnet	12	12	12	12
E08	Harrow	13	13	13	13
E09	Hillingdon	30	30	30	30
E10	Hounslow and Spelthorne	7	7	7	7
E11	Ealing	0	3	3	3
E12	Brent[2]	10			
E13	Paddington and North Kensington[2]	53			
E14	Riverside	85	85	85	85
E17	Parkside[2]		75	75	75
F01	Basildon and Thurrock	9	11	11	11
F02	Mid Essex	18	18	18	18
F03	North East Essex	9	9	9	9
F04	West Essex	18	20	21	21
F05	Southend	17	19	19	19
F06	Barking, Havering and Brentwood	10	13	13	13
F07	Hampstead	27	29	29	29
F08	Bloomsbury	132	161	178	178
F09	Islington	31	31	31	31
F10	City and Hackney	9	15	15	15
F11	Newham	2	2	2	2
F12	Tower Hamlets	34	34	34	34
F13	Enfield	6	6	6	6
F14	Haringey	10	10	10	10
F15	Redbridge	8	8	8	8
F16	Waltham Forest	7	7	7	7

[1] *Source:* DH form KH02.

[2] E12 and E13 combined to form E17 from 1988-89.

Private Beds—Number of beds authorised in District under section 65 of National Health Service Act 1977[1]

District health authority		1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
G01	Brighton	24	24	24	24
G02	Eastbourne	10	10	10	10
G03	Hastings	6	6	6	6
G04	South East Kent	10	10	10	10
G05	Canterbury and Thanet	27	29	29	29
G06	Dartford and Gravesham	6	8	8	88
G07	Maidstone	5	7	7	7
G08	Medway	6	8	8	8
G09	Tunbridge Wells	37	37	37	37
G10	Bexley	10	10	10	10
G11	Greenwich	12	14	14	14
G12	Bromley	22	22	22	22
G13	West Lambeth	37	38	38	38
G14	Camberwell	41	41	41	41
G15	Lewisham and North Southwark	69	69	69	69
H01	North West Surrey	15	11	11	11
H02	West Surrey/North East Hants	12	9	9	9
H03	South West Surrey	0	15	15	15
H04	Mid Surrey	20	20	20	20
H05	East Surrey	21	23	23	23
H06	Chichester	0	6	6	6
H07	Mid Downs	19	21	21	21
H08	Worthing	5	4	4	4
H09	Croydon	10	12	12	12
H10	Kingston and Esher	8	6	6	6
H11	Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	12	12	12	12
H12	Wandsworth	0	20	20	20
H13	Merton and Sutton	19	21	21	21
J11	East Dorset	14	14	14	14
J12	West Dorset	11	13	13	13
J21	Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	14	14	14	14
J22	Southampton and South West Hampshire	16	14	14	14
J23	Winchester	0	11	11	11
J24	Basingstoke and North Hampshire	11	11	11	11
J31	Salisbury	10	10	10	10
J32	Swindon	12	12	12	12
J33	Bath	11	10	11	11
J41	Isle of Wight	6	6	6	6
K11	East Berkshire	17	17	17	17
K12	West Berkshire	36	36	36	36
K21	Aylesbury Vale	29	31	32	32
K22	Wycombe	24	24	24	24

District health authority		*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
K23	Milton Keynes	5	5	5	5
K31	Kettering	10	10	10	10
K32	Northampton	10	13	13	13
K41	Oxfordshire	57	57	57	57

[1] *Source:* DH form KH02.

Private beds—Number of beds authorised in district under section 65 of NHS Act 1977[1]

District Health Authority		*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
L11	Bristol and Weston	6	6	6	6
L12	Frenchay	4	4	4	4
L13	Southmead	2	2	2	2
L21	Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	13	13	13	13
L31	Exeter	10	10	10	10
L32	North Devon	5	5	5	5
L33	Plymouth	6	6	6	6
L34	Torbay	9	9	9	9
L41	Cheltenham	14	14	14	14
L42	Gloucester	14	18	18	18
L51	Somerset	13	13	13	13
M01	Bromsgrove and Redditch	6	6	6	6
M02	Herefordshire	2	4	4	4
M03	Kidderminster and District	6	6	6	6
M04	Worcester and District	8	20	20	20
M05	Shropshire	14	14	14	14
M06	Mid Staffordshire	8	10	8	8
M07	North Staffordshire	16	16	16	16
M08	South East Staffordshire	8	8	8	8
M09	Rugby	5	13	13	13
M10	North Warwickshire	3	6	3	3
M11	South Warwickshire	0	13	13	13
M12	Central Birmingham	30	67	67	67
M13	East Birmingham	10	10	10	10
M14	North Birmingham	9	9	9	9
M15	South Birmingham	21	21	21	21
M16	West Birmingham	10	10	10	10
M17	Coventry	15	10	10	10
M18	Dudley	10	10	10	10
M19	Sandwell	6	6	6	6
M20	Solihull	4	4	4	4
M21	Walsall	11	11	11	11
M22	Wolverhampton	7	7	7	7
N11	Chester	6	8	8	8
N12	Crewe	15	16	16	16
N13	Halton	6	6	6	6
M14	Macclesfield	15	15	15	15
N15	Warrington	14	15	15	15
N21	Liverpool	20	20	20	20
N31	St. Helens and Knowsley	15	15	15	15
N41	Southport and Formby	7	7	7	7
N42	South Sefton	10	10	10	10
N51	Wirral	15	17	17	17

[1] *Source:* DHform KH02.

Private beds—Number of beds authorised in district under section 65 of NHS Act 1977[1]

District Health Authority		*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
P01	Lancaster	13	13	13	13
P02	Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	15	15	15	15
P03	Preston	18	12	12	12
P04	Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	7	7	7	7
P05	Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	6	8	8	2
P06	West Lancashire	9	9	9	9
P07	Chorley and South Ribble	0	4	4	4
P08	Bolton	6	20	20	20
P09	Bury	13	13	13	13
P10	North Manchester	7	9	9	9
P11	Central Manchester	43	43	43	43
P12	South Manchester	33	33	33	33
P13	Oldham	5	5	5	5
P14	Rochdale	2	2	2	2
P15	Salford	9	11	11	11
P16	Stockport	5	6	6	6

District Health Authority		*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
P17	Tameside and Glossop	0	2	2	2
P18	Trafford	0	5	5	5
P19	Wigan	16	16	16	16
T01	Hospital for Sick Children	31	31	31	31
T02	National Hospital for Nervous Diseases	17	16	16	16
T03	Moorfields Eye Hospital	20	22	22	22
T04	Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	6	6	6	6
T05	National Heart and Chest Hospitals	38	38	38	38
T06	The Royal Marsden Hospitals	27	27	27	27
T07	Hammersmith and Queen Charlottes	38	20	38	38
T09	Eastman Dental Hospital	0	0	0	0
England		2,693	2,937	2,962	2,956

[1] *Source:* DH form KH02

NHS Estate

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate for every district health authority and trust in England the amount required to bring the national health service estate to a condition B, exhibiting only minor deterioration.

Mr. Dorrell: I will write to the hon. Member.

Hospital Services, London

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to receive the report on hospital services in London.

Mr. Dorrell: In October 1991, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science appointed Sir Bernard Tomlinson, assisted by a small team of experts, to advise us on London's health services, and on medical education and research issues in the capital. This appointment is for about 12 months. During that time Sir Bernard will provide us with advice on the many aspects of his remit. We have not requested the production of a single report.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on recent changes in waiting lists and waiting times in Greenwich.

Mr. Dorrell: Provisional figures for January 1992 show that since last March, the number of patients waiting over two years in Greenwich health authority has fallen by 91 per cent. and the number over one year by 41 per cent. The authority—along with all other authorities—expects to have no patient waiting more than two years by 31 March.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the spending, in real terms, each year since 1974 on the family health services authority and on the hospital services in the Greenwich area.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested for the years since 1 April 1982, which is derived from annual accounts submitted to the Department, is shown in the table. This shows overall, real-terms increases, measured at 1991-92 prices, in revenue expenditure between 1982-83 and 1990-91 of 29·9 per cent. for family health services and 3·6 per cent. for hospital and community health services, Greenwich 1·2 per cent. and Bexley 7·7 per cent.

Expenditure figures for individual health authorities are not readily available centrally for 1974-75. However, for Greenwich and Bexley taken together the relevant annual accounts record total revenue expenditure on hospital and community health services—HCHS—and family health services—formerly family practitioner services—of £44·4 million cash in 1975-76, £62 million cash in 1978-79 and £181·3 million cash in 1990-91, the latest year available.

The figures represent increased expenditure in 1990-91 in real terms of 12·5 per cent. on 1975-76 and 15·2 per cent. on 1978-79, measured at 1991-92 prices.

Total revenue expenditure in Greenwich and Bexley
Family Health Services (FHS)
Greenwich and Bexley Family Health Services Authority

	£'000 (Cash)	*£'000 (At 1991-92 prices)*
1982-83	21,748	36,376
1983-84	23,098	36,924
1984-85	25,439	38,731
1985-86	26,365	38,040
1986-87	29,330	40,971
1987-88	32,681	43,295
1988-89	36,993	45,727
1989-90	39,507	45,855
1990-91	44,158	47,249

Hospital and community health services (HCHS)

	Greenwich health authority		*Bexley health authority*		*Total*	
	£000 (cash)	*£000 (at 1991-92 prices)*	*£000 (cash)*	*£000 (at 1991-92 prices)*	*£000 (cash)*	*£000 (at 1991-92 prices)*
1982-83	54,159	90,586	30,536	51,075	84,695	141,661
1983-84	55,996	89,515	32,164	51,418	88,160	140,933
1984-85	57,825	88,039	34,447	52,445	92,272	140,484
1985-86	61,135	88,206	35,608	51,375	96,743	139,581
1986-87	61,441	85,827	38,012	53,099	99,453	138,926
1987-88	64,894	85,972	41,924	55,541	106,818	141,513
1988-89	73,312	90,621	46,685	57,707	119,997	148,328
1989-90	79,534	92,315	48,473	56,263	128,007	148,578
1990-91	85,685	91,683	51,431	55,031	137,116	146,714

Sources:

Annual accounts of the Greenwich and Bexley Health Authorities and the Greenwich and Bexley Family Health Services Authority. (Predecessor Greenwich and Bexley Area Health Authority: Greenwich and Bexley Family Practitioner Committee).

Notes:

1. The figures have been expressed at 1991-92 prices by the use of Gross Domestic Product deflators.
2. HCHS covers total expenditure managed or accounted for by the health authorities during the years concerned and includes hospital, community health and other services.
3. All expenditure on family health services—FHS (formerly family practitioner services) is essentially regarded as current (ie revenue) expenditure. It is not strictly attributable to particular districts and is recorded in annual accounts after the deduction of charges to patients.

4. The FHS figures for the years since 1 April 1985 also include the administrative expenses of the Greenwich and Bexley Family Health Services Authority which are shown below. Prior to 1 April 1985 the Greenwich and Bexley Family Practitioner Committee was associated with the Bexley Health Authority/Greenwich and Bexley Area Health Authority and its administrative costs formed a comparatively small part of those health authorities' total expenditure and are not separately identifiable.

	£ 000 (cash)
1985-86	612
1986-87	643
1987-88	676
1988-89	765
1989-90	805
1990-91	1,290

NHS Trusts

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the work of the Royal Free trust.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We receive information on all the first wave NHS trusts and we are glad to say that the Royal Free is doing well. We are especially pleased to note that since becoming a trust the Royal Free has opened a new AIDS day care, out-patient, and counselling centre. It is also pleasing to note that the Royal Free has sucessfully devised and launched its own "Learning from Patients" initiative. This scheme sits particularly well with the spirit and aims of the patients charter.

We are delighted to note the increase in admissions which the Royal Free has achieved since becoming a trust. This is illustrated by the fact that in the trust's first year ordinary admissions increased by 4·2 per cent. We are very pleased to note the trust's success in reducing its waiting lists. For example in June 1991 there were 560 people waiting over a year for general surgery, currently no one has to wait over a year, a reduction of 100 per cent. in seven months.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provisions prevent a hospital trust or other trust from seeking to leave the national health service.

Mr. Dorrell: By virtue of section 5(a) of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is empowered to establish NHS trusts to assume responsibility for the ownership and management of hospitals or other establishments or facilities previously provided by health authorities. The order establishing the trust sets out its functions and it may only undertake to treat private patients and generate income to the extent that this does not interfere with the performance of its obligations under any NHS contract or the obligations imposed on the trust by its establishment order.

Brook Hospital

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received since July 1991 on the future of the Brook hospital from the Brook Hospital Defence Campaign.

Mr. Dorrell: We have not received any representations from this organisation.

St. Thomas's Hospital

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the timetable for St. Thomas's hospital to become an NHS trust.

Mr. Dorrell: St. Thomas's was established as a NHS trust on 1 November 1991 and will, subject to the recommendations to be made to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State by the inquiry headed by Sir Bernard Tomlinson, become fully operational on 1 April 1993.

Childhood Diseases

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on recent changes in the levels of child protection against avoidable illnesses or diseases.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest estimates for national childhood immunisation uptake are:

Diphtheria, Tetanus and Polio vacines—93 per cent. at 18 months.

Whooping cough—88 per cent. at 18 months.

Measles, Mumps and Rubella—90 per cent. at 24 months.

Notifications of these diseases are now running at exceptionally low levels, and provisional returns show that in 1991 no child died from acute measles or whooping cough. The introduction of measles, mumps and rubella immunisation in October 1988, the GP targets scheme in April 1990 and the accelerated infant schedule in May 1990, have all contributed to this success. We plan to add another vaccine, "Hib", to the programme from October 1992. This will protect young children against invasive haemophilus disease, a major cause of bacterial meningitis.

Human Organs

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had with his counterparts in other EC countries about establishing an EC directive banning the sale of human organs.

Mr. Dorrell: None. The sale of human organs for transplantation is prohibited in the United Kingdom by the Human Organ Transplant Act 1989.

Nurses

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nurses are currently employed by the national health service; how many there were five years previously; and how many in 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The whole-time equivalent number of nursing and midwifery staff, including agency staff, employed by the NHS in England was 402,100 at September 1990, 401,200 at September 1985 and 358,400 at September 1979. These figures are derived from the Department's annual census of non-medical manpower. They have not been adjusted for the reduction in nurses' working hours during 1980-81 from 40 to 37·5 hours per week.

Adoption

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action his Department is taking in relation to children coming to this country from Romania for adoption.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that the Romanian Adoption Committee is not at present authorising arrangements for overseas adoption pending agreement with foreign Governments on the arrangements to be made. A delegation of officials from the Department is at present in Romania and I hope that a voluntary working arrangement can shortly be agreed on behalf of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will establish a helpline for local authorities and prospective adopters seeking information on adoption from overseas.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress is being made with setting up a helpline for inter-country adoption; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have now reached an agreement with the Bridge Child Care Consultancy who will host the project to start as soon as possible. The Bridge is a well-established registered charity with a reputation for work with children in substitute families and I am confident that they will provide an excellent base for this project. The objective of the project is to provide a service of sound information on intercountry adoptions and for prospective adopters themselves. The project will not arrange adoptions for particular children.

The grant of the order of £43,000 will be for six months in the first instance during which time requirements for the service will be assessed.

The project will be steered by a board on to which I am inviting members from statutory and voluntary sector.

GPs (Referrals)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to the number of written referral requests by general practitioners to consultant ophthalmologist out-patient clinics for each of the last five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley The information available centrally is given in the table.

Consultant Ophthalmology Out-patient clinics, NHS hospitals, England

Year	*General practitioner written referral requests*
1987-88	451,006
1988-89	467,371
1989-90	462,710
1990-91	478,141

Eye Tests

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether his Department has been monitoring the costs charged by optometrists for a private eye test; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will conduct any further surveys into the numbers of people having their eyes tested.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department collects information on NHS sight tests only. Other sight tests are private transactions and, as such are inappropriate for Government information gathering. Surveys conducted by the optical profession indicate that the total number of sight tests has returned to 1987 levels, the last typical year before changes in the sight testing arrangements were announced.

Hypertension and Diabetic Clinics

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what initiatives have been taken by the Government in developing specialist hypertension and diabetic clinics.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Clinics are held by hospital consultants and by some general practioners for the treatment of diabetes. Some hospitals have specialist hypertension clinics and some GPs run clinics which include screening for hypertension.

Kevin Rooney

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the case of Kevin Rooney.

Mr. Dorrell: An independent inquiry has been established by the North East Thames regional health authority. The chairman is Mr. Andrew Collins QC. The other members are Dr. Oscar Hill, consultant psychiatrist, St. Luke's Woodside hospital, and Mr. Michael Taylor, director of social services, London borough of Hillingdon. The committee will seek other professional advice as the need arises.

The terms of reference are:

> "To inquire into the arrangements for the assessment, care, discharge and follow-up of Mr. Kevin Rooney by the mental health and related services in City and Hackney Health Authority and North East Thames Region;
>
> To consider the adequacy of these arrangements;
>
> To report their findings and to recommend any action which, in the light of these, might assist the assessment and care of mentally disordered patients and the protection of those patients and the public from the risk of harm."

The committee has been asked to report by July 1992.

Infant Deaths

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the numbers of infant deaths each year between 1974 and the most recent year for which figures are available *(a)* in numbers and *(b)* as a rate per thousand live births.

Mr. Dorrell: The information for the period 1974-1990, is given in the table.

Infant deaths, England and Wales 1974-1990: (a) Numbers; (b) rates (per 1,000 live births)

Year	*Numbers*	*Rates*
1974	10,459	16·3
1975	9,488	15·7
1976	8,334	14·3
1977	7,841	13·8
1978	7,881	13·2
1979	8,178	12·8
1980	7,899	12·0
1981	7,021	11·1
1982	6,775	10·8
1983	6,381	10·1
1984	6,037	9·5
1985	6,141	9·4
1986	6,313	9·6
1987	6,272	9·2
1988	6,270	9·0
1989	5,808	8·4
1990	5,564	7·9

Source: Key population and vital statistics, Series VS.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the infant mortality rate in 1979 and the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is given in the table.

Infant mortality rate (England and Wales)

Year	*Rate per thousand live births*
1979	12·8
1990	7·9

Waiting Lists

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the change in waiting lists in all specialties of health care in each of the last three years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give, by specialty and by region, the decrease in the numbers of people waiting over two years during his recent initiative to reduce long waits.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 21 February 1992]:* The latest information available centrally by region and specialty is given in the table. Provisional figures for January show that since last March the number of patients waiting over two years in all specialties has fallen by a further 30,730—60 per cent. in January alone, over-two-year waiters fell by 30 per cent.—the largest monthly fall ever.

Waiting lists: changes in the number of patients waiting over two years—March 1990-March 1991

Regional health authority	*General surgery*	*Urology*	*Trauma and orthopaedics*	*ENT*	*Opthalmology*	*Oral surgery*	*Plastic surgery*	*Obs and gyn (gynaecology)*	*Other*	*All specialties*
Northern	−433	−129	−262	−32	−79	−123	−507	−19	−14	−1,598
Yorkshire	223	−257	−123	−18	125	−110	−480	−117	60	−697
Trent	−391	−228	−685	−167	−112	−208	−912	−180	−73	−2,956
East Anglia	−2	98	−180	−49	7	−206	−455	−222	−62	−1,071
North West Thames	−98	159	−8	0	57	264	−1,772	6	−24	−1,416
North East Thames	−795	−33	−1,259	−1,068	−44	−1,805	−1,191	−152	−209	−6,556
South East Thames	−1,184	342	−1,219	−569	−58	−158	−12	−134	−130	−3,122
South West Thames	−718	−218	−811	−436	−485	−132	−266	−364	−47	−3,477
Wessex	−344	−136	−454	−10	−1	−120	96	181	30	−758
Oxford	−183	−64	−250	−137	9	6	−324	−98	1	−1,040
South Western	−423	44	−304	−106	−11	−200	−62	26	−7	−1,043
West Midlands	−679	−420	−109	−594	−113	−286	−327	−212	−226	−2,966
Mersey	n/l	n/l	n/l	n/l	n/l	n/l	17	n/l	n/l	−17
North Western	−657	−278	−325	−504	−285	−249	−627	−83	−214	−3,222

Notes:

Based on KH07 returns at 31 March 1990 and 31 March 1991.

Includes ordinary admissions and day case waiting lists.

n/l denotes no one waiting over two years at March 1990 and March 1991.

Positive values indicate an increase from March 1990 to March 1991.

Negative values indicate a decrease from March 1990 to March 1991.

Drugs Abuse, Basildon

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what initiatives and programmes have been launched over the past five years to prevent drug abuse in Basildon.

Mr. Dorrell: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Disabled Organisations, Basildon

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what grants and help has been made available to disabled organisations in Basildon in each of the last five years.

Mr. Dorrell: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Patient Statistics

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will give the number of in-patients, out-patients and day patients treated in the northern region in 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Dorrell: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Lead

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to amend the law relating to lead levels in the light of recent research; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department keeps under review the results of research into the effects of lead on health and advises as necessary those Departments that are responsible for legislation to control exposure to lead.

I understand that there are no proposals currently to amend any regulations or guidelines relating to lead levels.

Measures already taken have reduced lead exposure through petrol, water, air, food, industrial emissions, paint, cosmetics, ceramic glazes and toys, and monitoring programmes have shown a continuing fall in blood lead levels in children and adults.

The Government's policy remains to contain and reduce exposure to lead wherever practicable.

Community Pharmacists

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state the factors taken into account in attributing the profit of £20·6 million under the community pharmacists balance sheet in its final year of operation 1988-89.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Pure profit was calculated at 1 per cent. of the total cost of labour, overheads, interest charges, ingredients and containers.

Children

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to give assistance to the international initiative, Children Youth Families; what help he is giving to the Boys and Girls Welfare Society in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Relocation

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those parts of his Department which are currently under review for relocation; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to the east midlands; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to Mansfield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: During 1992-93, the Department will relocate to Leeds around 1,100 posts in the National Health Service Management Executive and the National Health Service Estates Agency. There are no plans at present to relocate further posts, to Leeds or elsewhere.

Immunisation

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many reports of serious adverse reactions to immunisation there have been in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 2 March 1992]:* The reports were as follows:

Year	*Number of reports*
1982	125
1983	104
1984	165
1985	160
1986	162
1987	121
1988	242
1989	272
1990	210
1991	159

A report of a suspected adverse reaction does not necessarily denote a causal association between the reaction, the outcome and the vaccine.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many reports of serious adverse reactions to the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine there have been in each year since it has been widely used.

Mrs. Viginia Bottomley *[holding answer 2 March 1992:]* Measles, mumps and rubella vaccine was introduced in this country in October 1988. Reports of suspected serious adverse reactions since then have been as follows:

	Number
[1]1988	13
1989	110
1990	58
1991	37

[1] Part.

Intensive Care Beds

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the ratio of intensive care beds per 1,000 of the population or other convenient measures, in Coventry, the west midlands, and the United Kingdom; and what is the ratio of intensive care beds to the total number of national health service beds in Coventry, the west midlands and the United Kingdom at *(a)* the latest convenient date, *(b)* three years ago, *(c)* seven years ago and *(d)* 12 years ago.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 9 March 1992]:* I will write to the hon. Member.

Health Service, York

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many registered private hospital and nursing home beds there were in the York health authority area, and previously in York health district, in 1979 and each year since then.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 11 March 1992]:* The information available centrally is given in the table. Information prior to 1985 is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the York health authority for details. Private hospitals, homes and clinics registered under section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984, in York health authority area are as follows:

Number of beds in private institutions

Year	*Nursing Homes*	[1]*Hospitals*
1985	414	24
1986	478	24
1987-88	616	24
1988-89	936	34
1989-90	1,201	34
1990-91	1,218	34

[1] Private institutions with operating theatres.

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many full-time equivalent hospital doctors worked in York health authority hospitals, and previously in York health district hospitals, in 1974 and each year since then;

(2) how many national health service staff, expressed *(a)* in terms of a full-time equivalent and *(b)* in terms of total hours worked, were employed by York health authority, and previously in York health district, in 1974 and each year since then.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 11 March 1992]:* The available data are shown in the following table:

NHS hospitals, York Health Authority

Year	*Hospital doctors in York Health Authority—30 September each year analysis by WTE*[1]	*Directly Employed Staff in post at 30 September each year —York DHA (WTE)*[2]	*Total Number of In-patients*	*Day Cases*
1979	—	—	27,296	4,444
1980	—	—	28,085	4,658
1981	—	—	28,330	4,548
1982	89·9	4,340	27,071	3,796
1983	88·2	4,290	29,641	4,444
1984	89·7	4,590	30,020	4,469
1985	79·8	4,420	31,646	4,801
1986	84·0	4,370	32,596	5,686
1987-88	88·4	4,310	34,062	4,549
1988-89	87·4	4,230	[3]34,176	5,523
1988-89	—	—	[4]38,184	5,523
1989-90	98·7	3,970	39,434	5,626
1990-91	79·6	3,950	39,530	5,425

Notes:

[1] Please note that the figures include permanent paid and honorary staff but exclude consultants and senior registrars whose contracts are held by the region. Details therefore refer to junior doctors, clerical assistants and hospital practitioners. Information prior to 1982 is not available.

Mental health services transferred from Clifton Hospital, York to Harrogate, Northallerton and Scarborough in 1982. Doctors transferred with the service.

[2] (1) All figures are rounded to the nearest ten whole-time equivalent.

(2) Medical staff-figures include permanent paid and honorary staff but exclude consultants and senior registrars whose contracts are held by the region.

(3) Figures include agency nursing and midwifery staff.

Information prior to 1982 is not available. Information in terms of total hours worked is not collected centrally.

[3] discharges and deaths

[4] finished consultant episodes

in-patients 1979—1988-89 discharges and deaths

in-patients 1988-89—1990-91 finished consultant episodes

1990-91 figures provisional

Between 1979 and 1990-91 in York health authority the numbers of in-patient cases treated in the acute sector increased from 19,460 hospital discharges to 26,726 finished consultant episodes, an increase of 31 per cent. on a comparable basis, and for all sectors increased by 30 per cent. from 27,296 hospital discharges to 39,530 finished consultant episodes.

Health Service Finance

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide detailed information on the amount and origins of the income from charges column of table 4 in Cm. 1913.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 3 March 1992]:* The information requested is as follows:

Breakdown of origins of income from charges which supports the data shown in table 4 of Cm. 1913

Year	*Total income from charges £ million*	*Breakdown of income from charges*				
		Hospitals[2] *£ million*	*Pharmaceutical £ million*	*General dental £ million*	*General ophthalmic £ million*	*Welfare foods £ million*
1978-79	141·0	35·0	24·0	55·3	26·5	0·2
1979-80	171·0	38·2	39·1	66·3	27·2	0·2
1980-81	245·0	52·5	71·2	92·0	29·0	0·3
1981-82	298·0	64·3	86·2	115·1	32·1	0·3
1982-83	348·0	66·7	102·1	141·1	37·8	0·3
1983-84	383·2	74·2	110·0	155·3	43·4	0·3
1984-85	414·8	78·0	122·1	170·7	43·8	0·2
1985-86	422·6	85·7	129·2	195·9	11·5	0·3
1986-87	465·5	91·1	150·1	223·5	0·5	0·3
1987-88	493·5	95·6	157·5	240·1	—	0·3
1988-89	601·3	106·8	203·6	290·6	—	0·3
1989-90	956·7	398·7	191·3	366·2	—	0·5
1990-91[1]	1,014·8	404·8	220·6	389·2	—	0·2
1991-92[1]	1,059·2	395·1	237·6	426·0	—	0·5

[1] Estimated.

[2] Mainly income from pay and amenity beds.

[3] Figures for 1978-79 to 1989-90 are from the appropriation accounts and for 1990-91 and 1991-92 are from the Vote Estimates.

TRANSPORT

Marine Accidents (Reports)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish the marine accidents investigation branch report into the Wilhemina J and the Zulficar.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents expects to submit his report to the Secretary of State around mid April; following which it will be published.

Quality Assurance

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will restrict the awarding of his Department's contracts to companies with accredited quality assurance;

(2) if he will make a further statement on his policy regarding quality assurance and companies tendering for his Department's contracts;

(3) what favourable consideration he gives when awarding his Department's contracts to companies which have accredited quality assurance.

Mr. Chope: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Seafreight Freeway

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North with a copy of all reports relating to the Seafreight Freeway incident of 1988.

Mr. McLoughlin: The investigation into the engine room fire on board the Seafreight Freeway on 23 May 1988 was carried out by the Department on behalf of Bermuda, the flag state. A report was produced for the Bermudian authorities, but was not generally released.

Road Improvement Schemes

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the value of road improvement schemes for Yorkshire/Humberside between *(a)* 1979 and 1987 and *(b)* 1987 and 1991; and how much is due to be spent over the next five years.

Mr. Chope: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Red Routes (London)

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will extend the consultation period on the red route proposals for London.

Mr. Chope: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Taxis

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he plans to make any adjustments to the existing policy of supply of taxi services to registered disabled persons by licensed taxi cab operators in the Greater London area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. This is a matter for the London boroughs, which operate the London taxicard scheme.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on Government policy on subsidies for the transport by taxis and similar vehicles of registered disabled persons making essential journeys.

Mr. McLoughlin: Throughout the country the provision and funding of concessionary fares schemes for elderly and disabled people and special service transport —for example, dial-a-ride services—are responsibilities of local authorities. Some special services in London are also provided by London Transport.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library copies of the working papers produced by his Department and British Rail for the high-level forum on the channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Rifkind: No papers were produced for the inaugural meeting of the high-level consultative forum on the rail link held on 17 February. Some of the material for subsequent meetings will need to be confidential to forum members so as to avoid generating unnecessary blight.

Relocation

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those parts of his Department which are currently under review for relocation; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to the east midlands; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to Mansfield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: One formal relocation review—of part of the Department's highways, safety and traffic command—is currently in progress.

The review has only recently begun and a short list of locations has yet to be drawn up.

M3

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was his original estimate of the cost of the M3 extension from Bar End to Compton; what is his current estimate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I will write to the hon. Member.

Basildon

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to place "Welcome to Basildon" signs on trunk roads and motorways in the Basildon area.

Mr. Chope: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the impact of the citizens charter on the standards of rail services delivered to Pitsea, Basildon and Laindon stations.

Mr. McLoughlin: The objective of BR's passengers charter is to raise standards on all lines, including the London, Tilbury and Southend line. To this end it outlines a range of measures to encourage efficient management and to make BR more responsive to customers' needs. On the London, Tilbury and Southend line a further key factor in achieving a significant improvement in quality of service will be the £50 million resignalling programme for which BR intends to let a contract shortly.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Village Halls

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to date of zero-rating the construction of new village halls and those buildings which are similarly treated for VAT purposes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that this information is not available because builders do not have to identify the value of this work separately in their VAT returns.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many refunds of VAT under section 20 of the Value Added Tax Act 1983 have been made to parish councils in connection with building work for voluntary village halls, carried out as part of the council's non-business activity; and what is the value of these refunds.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: This information is not available. Local authorities are not required to distinguish, in their VAT returns, the tax refunded under section 20 from the tax deducted on their business inputs; nor are they required to itemise the section 20 tax to reveal the sort of information requested by my hon. Friend.

VAT

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which organisations have so far been recognised by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise as falling within schedule 3 S.I. note 4(1) Finance Act 1989 relating to charging of VAT at zero rate on the construction of a new building for a charity use.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Customs and Excise do not have any formal system of "recognition". Any charity constructing a new building for the use specified in note (4) to group 8 of schedule 5 to the VAT Act 1983, as amended by the Finance Act 1989, is eligible to claim zero-rating by giving a certificate to the building contractor or developer.

Civil Servants (Travel Expenses)

Mr. Bevan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each Government Department, including executive agencies, their estimated expenditure on travel and associated expenses incurred by civil servants in the current year.

Mr. Maples: This information is not held centrally and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Civil Servants

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of civil servants in each of the last five years.

Mr. Maples: This information can be found in the publication "Civil Service Statistics" 1991 edition, which is held in the House of Commons Library.

Relocation

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those parts of his Department including the Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, which are currently under review for relocation; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation; to the east midlands; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to Mansfield; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Among the Chancellor's departments, a relocation review is currently in progress in the Registry of Friendly Societies, though none of the posts are expected to go to the east midlands. Under the current policy, departments review the location of their work regularly and systematically with a view to making best use of resources. As a result, the Chancellor's departments have announced relocation decisions involving more than 9,300 posts, of which more than 2,300 Inland Revenue posts are relocating to the east midlands, including 2,100 to Nottingham and 160 to Leicester.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 4 December, *Official Report*, columns *163-64*, if he will list by Department the distribution of the 24,000 Government Department posts still under review for relocation; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The departmental distribution of the 24,000 posts which were in the relocation review process in June 1991 is as follows:

Department	*Review started*	*Review planned*
Trade and Industry	3,110	—
Property Holdings	—	1,640
Defence	2,280	12,000
Paymaster General's Office	850	—
MAFF	700	—
Home Office	370	—
Office of Fair Trading	—	320
Treasury	250	—
Transport	180	240
Registry of Friendly Societies	130	—
Lord Chancellor's Department	110	630
Land Registry	100	—
Energy	90	800
Crown Prosecution Service	70	—
Environment	30	50
Education and Science	30	20
	8,300	15,700

National Income

Mr. Speller: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the latest Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development figures for per capita national income for the 20 most prosperous countries.

Mr. Maples: Following are the latest OECD estimates of gross domestic product per capita in 1991, using purchasing power parities for the 20 most prosperous OECD countries.

GDP per capita, 1991. Converted at purchasing power parities, United Kingdom = 100

	GDP per capita
United States	137
Switzerland	134
Luxembourg	127
Canada	121
Germany	121

	GDP per capita
Japan	119
France	114
Denmark	111
Austria	110
Belgium	108
Norway	107
Sweden	107
Italy	104
Netherlands	104
Iceland	103
Australia	101
Finland	101
United Kingdom	100
New Zealand	85
Spain	78

Source: OECD Main Economic Indicators, February 1992.

Low Incomes

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what definition of low incomes he used to determine that 4 million people on low incomes will pay income tax at only the 20p rate; and how many of those 4 million people will lose benefit as a result of the new 20 per cent. lower tax rate.

Mr. Maude: The new 20 per cent. tax rate applies to the first £2,000 of taxable income in 1992-93. Nearly 4 million taxpayers will pay tax only at this new rate as their taxable income is £2,000 or less.

Of these, about half a million will be entitled to a smaller amount of income-related benefit as a result of the introduction of the lower rate band, when their benefit is next assessed.

TESSA

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 28 November 1991, *Official Report,* column *588,* if, in his regular review of the tax-exempt special savings account scheme, he will consider what measures may need to be taken to attract new money to the scheme rather than funds switched from other savings products.

Mr. Maude: The objective of TESSA was to encourage the culture of thrift and, by giving tax relief only to accounts held for five years, to make savings less liquid. The proportion of new savings attracted into the scheme is likely to increase. The TESSA rules are designed to be as simple as possible and I have no current plans to change them.

Budget

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from pensioners in Basildon about the Budget.

Mr. Maples: A large number of Budget representations have been received from pensioners, but we cannot separately calculate the number from Basildon except at excessive cost.

Pensions

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the most recent estimates of the number of people who are *(a)* under state retirement age and *(b)* over state retirement age, and receiving (i) an occupational pension and (ii) a personal pension, giving in each case the number who are (1) non-taxpayers, (2) basic rate taxpayers and (3) higher rate taxpayers in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 13 March 1992]:* Available estimates for 1992-93 for taxpayers with occupational pensions are as follows. I regret that information on personal pension recipients is not available.

Thousands

	Lower rate taxpayers	*Basic rate taxpayers*	*Higher rate taxpayers*
Aged under 65	220	700	50
Aged 65 and over	570	990	70

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Research Funding

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what criteria he uses in determining whether or not research applications for his Department's funding are near market.

Mr. Leigh: The DTI does not normally support near-market R and D under its innovation programmes. Research and development work is prima facie near-market if its primary objective is the development of a specific product or process for commercial sale or use. Typically, near-market R and D will display low technological risks, and the returns from the project will mostly accrue to the firm itself, with externalities or wider benefits being relatively minor. Such risks as there are will largely be commercial. Commercial risks are generally inappropriate for Government to underpin.

However, exceptions may be made where, for instance, enterprises may lack some of the necessary information to enable them to make a sensible judgment on their competitive position or on the way the market will develop, for example in the case of small firms, or where commercial outcomes may be significantly affected by future United Kingdom, foreign or international legislation. Moreover, Government support may be considered if a project exhibits a significant degree of both technical risk and wider benefits, or if it exhibits one of these characteristics to a very marked degree, or for other policy reasons such as the promotion of international collaboration or the facilitation of exports. The case for support would be strengthened if other forms of market failure were shown to exist. The project would also need to satisfy established criteria such as additionality, viability, degree of innovation and value for money.

China

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the export from the United Kingdom of surveillance equipment and instruments of torture to the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Sainsbury: The export of a range of equipment that may be used for surveillance is controlled by the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1991. As to "instruments of torture" I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 23 January, *Official Report,* columns *293-94.*

Relocation

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list those parts of his Department which are currently under review for relocation; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to the east midlands; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to Mansfield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: The locations of some 300 posts in the Radiocommunications Agency and 120 in parts of the Insolvency Service are currently under review. None of these is planned for relocation to the east midlands.

Scottish Bankruptcy System

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the cost to date of the evaluation process of the Scottish bankruptcy system initiated in March 1990; and whether the inquiry has considered *(a)* the provision of insolvency advice to the public by means of helplines or otherwise and *(b)* procedures in (i) other European countries, (ii) the United States of America and (iii) Canada.

Mr. Redwood: No specific figures are available for the cost of the evaluation process. The details of the review are confidential, but all points raised by those who submitted comments have been taken into consideration.

Newspaper Recycling

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to offer financial support for investment in newspaper recycling at Aylesford, Kent.

Mr. Lilley: Having consulted my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, I decided to consider an application from the Swedish paper-making company, SCA, for a grant under the assistance to exceptional projects facility. I took that decision primarily because of the significant environmental benefits which the proposed new mill, at Aylesford in Kent, would provide.

After thorough appraisal, we propose to offer a £20 million grant to the company to encourage it to invest £260 million in a newspaper recycling plant at Aylesford. Our proposal will require the approval of the House and the agreement of the European Commission which has been told about the project.

This investment will quadruple the amount of newsprint currently produced at Aylesford from 100 per cent. recycled fibre. The plant will consume 430,000 tonnes of waste paper a year, much of it from household waste paper. This will make a vital contribution to the achievement of the Government's recycling targets.

The Aylesford project would be the first to produce this volume of newsprint from 100 per cent. recycled waste and it will have the immediate environmental benefit of reducing the need for landfill.

Section 8(8) of the Industrial Development Act 1982, requires that the assistance proposed be authorised by a resolution of this House. The resolution will offer an opportunity to give more details about the project and to debate its merits.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Local Offices

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many offices providing public access for the purpose of claiming benefit, including unemployment benefit, were in operation on 1 April 1979, and at the latest available date, in Great Britain.

Mr. Jack: The payment of social security benefits, excluding unemployment benefit, is the responsibility of the Department of Social Security. We are unable to supply precise figures for social security offices for 1979, as records are not readily available, but it is estimated that there were about 800 offices open to the public at that time. These included both national insurance offices and area offices which dealt solely with supplementary benefit.

At 30 September 1991, the latest available date for which figures are held, there were 694 offices providing public access. This reduction was in part due to the creation of integrated local offices, combining some former national insurance offices and area offices. Overall there has been an increase in the accessibility to the service available including the provision of improved telecommunications, better publications and services such as Freeline.

I understand from my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment that precise figures for 1979 are not held centrally, but there were about 1,000 unemployment benefit offices open to the public at that time. At 31 January 1992, the latest date for which figures are held, there were 1,028 such offices.

Pensions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if will update the figures provided for the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) on 7 February 1985, *Official Report*, columns *685-86*, on the level of state old age pensions as a percentage of current gross average earnings.

Mr. Jack: There are no meaningful, updated comparable statistics available on average earnings in the member states of the European Community, and I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 14 January at column *552*.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update his answers to the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) of 27 March 1990, *Official Report*, column *161-62*, using the 1989 family expenditure survey on pensioner incomes.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested for 1989 is not yet available. In 1988, 16 per cent. of pensioner units received all their income from state benefits compared with 23 per cent. in 1979. The original tables have been updated *(a)* to include details of the information held using the 1988 family expenditure survey and *(b)* with medians rather than means used to calculate the average incomes in each quintile and decile. The updated tables are as follows:

Table 1: Real percentage changes in pensioners' net income by quintile.

Quintile	*Lowest*	*Q2*	*Q3*	*Q4*	*Highest*	*All*
1979-80	4	2	2	2	0	2
1980-81	5	6	6	4	3	5
1981-82	3	3	2	1	−3	−1

Quintile	*Lowest*	*Q2*	*Q3*	*Q4*	*Highest*	*All*
1982-83	5	6	[illegible]	9	12	11
1983-84	2	1	−2	−2	−1	−1
1984-85	−1	0	1	0	4	2
1985-86	2	2	3	6	8	5
1986-87	−2	1	2	4	4	7
1987-88	−3	0	1	3	6	2
Overall	14	24	24	30	37	34

Table 2: Cash changes in real equivalised income at each decile group of pensioner tax units. Change since previous year in £ per week in 1988 prices. Median values used for deciles, means for total values.

	1979 to 1980	*1980 to 1981*	*1981 to 1982*	*1982 to 1983*	*1983 to 1984*	*1984 to 1985*
Lowest Q1	1·10	4·10	−0·40	4·40	0·90	−0·60
Q2	0·50	4·80	0·90	4·50	1·10	−1·10
Q3	1·00	5·30	1·00	5·10	1·50	−1·10
Q4	0·80	5·00	1·70	5·80	0·80	−0·50
Q5	0·90	4·90	2·00	6·30	0·40	0·60
Q6	0·90	5·00	2·20	6·80	0·50	−0·20
Q7	0·80	5·30	1·80	7·80	0·70	−0·40
Q8	−1·00	7·30	0·80	10·80	−1·00	2·50
Q9	−0·90	10·20	−3·00	16·10	−4·50	7·00
Q10	12·00	4·40	−10·40	29·60	−3·60	11·90
Total	1·40	6·60	−1·40	11·60	0·10	0·30
Change since 1979	1·40	8·00	6·60	18·20	18·30	18·60

	1985 to 1986	*1986 to 1987*	*1987 to 1988*
Lowest Q1	1·90	−1·90	−0·50
Q2	2·20	0·00	−1·50
Q3	2·50	0·60	−1·60
Q4	3·40	0·80	−1·00
Q5	2·80	2·10	−1·00
Q6	3·40	3·10	−0·30
Q7	3·70	4·70	1·40
Q8	6·50	4·70	5·70
Q9	7·00	6·10	13·00
Q10	15·30	22·90	20·10
Total	6·40	6·80	1·40
Change since 1979	25·00	31·80	33·10

Table 2: Percentage changes in real equivalised income of each decile group of pensioner tax units. Percentage change since previous year. Median values used for deciles, means for total values.

	1979 to 1980	*1980 to 1981*	*1981 to 1982*	*1982 to 1983*	*1983 to 1984*	*1984 to 1985*
Lowest Q1	2	6	−1	6	1	−1
Q2	1	7	1	6	1	−1
Q3	1	7	1	6	2	—1
Q4	1	6	2	6	1	−1
Q5	1	6	2	7	0	1
Q6	1	5	2	7	0	0
Q7	1	5	2	7	1	−1
Q8	−1	6	1	9	−1	2
Q9	−1	7	−2	11	−3	4
Q10	6	2	−5	14	−2	5
Total	1	6	−1	10	0	0
Change since 1979	1	7	6	17	117	17

	1985 to 1986	*1986 to 1987*	*1987 to 1988*
Lowest Q1	3	−3	−1
Q2	3	0	−2
Q3	3	1	−2
Q4	4	1	−1
Q5	3	2	−1
Q6	3	3	0
Q7	3	4	1
Q8	5	3	4
Q9	4	4	7
Q10	6	9	7
Total	5	5	1
Change since 1979	23	30	31

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many additional pensioners will be brought into means testing by becoming eligible for income support as a result of the proposed addition to the income support pensioner premium.

Miss Widdecombe: It is estimated that up to half a million pensioners on low incomes will become newly entitled to claim income-related benefits from October. Around three quarters of these will qualify for income support, and the remainder for housing benefit and or community charge benefit.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of the real-terms increase in benefit expenditure on the elderly is attributable to the commencement and growth of spending on additional pensions with contributory benefit between 1978-79 and the latest available date.

Miss Widdecombe: Benefit expenditure on the elderly rose by 32·6 per cent. in real terms between 1978-79 and 1991-92. Additional pensions account for 4·4 per cent. real terms growth between those years, and all other benefits account for 28·2 per cent. real terms growth.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update his answer to the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) of 3 July 1990, *Official Report*, columns *513-16* concerning the income of retired households, using the 1989 family expenditure survey.

Miss Widdecombe: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update his answer to the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) of 2 December 1991, *Official Report*, column *51*, on pensioner incomes, using the information in the 1989 family expenditure survey.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not yet available.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion and number of pensioners will benefit from the addition to the income support pensioner premium.

Miss Widdecombe: It is estimated that some 5 million people aged over 60 will stand to gain from the increases announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the

Exchequer on 10 March. About half these will gain from income support and about half from housing benefit and community charge benefit. Nearly half of all those over pension age will be entitled to extra benefit as a result of the increase.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update his answer to the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) of 18 October 1991, *Official Report,* columns *273-74,* regarding pensioners' living standards, to take account of the 1989 family expenditure survey results.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not yet available.

Income and Benefits Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give, for each uprating date since November 1979, *(a)* the cash level, *(b)* the percentage increase on the previous year, *(c)* the percentage increase in the retail prices index since the previous year, *(d)* the percentage increase in adult male gross average full-time earnings since the previous year, *(e)* the percentage increase in adult male average full-time earnings net of national insurance and income tax since the previous year, for (i) unemployment benefit, (ii) sickness benefit, (iii) statutory sick pay since its introduction, (iv) child benefit, (v) retirement pension, (vi) invalidity benefit, (vii) one-parent benefit and (viii) maternity benefit at the single and couple rate, where appropriate.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is in the tables. As the information requested in *(c), (d)* and *(e)* is identical for all the benefits—with the exception of statutory sick pay, which was uprated on a different month from the other benefits mentioned here from 1983 until 1987. This is given once in table 1.

Table 1
Unemployment benefit

Uprating date	*Single*		*Couple*		*Percentage increase in RPI since previous uprating date*	*Percentage increase in adult male gross full-time earnings since previous uprating date*	*Percentage increase in adult male net full-time earnings since previous uprating date*	
	Rate (£)	*Percentage increase on previous rate*	*Rate (£)*	*Percentage increase on previous rate*			*Single*	*Couple*
November 1979	18·50	—	29·95	—	—	—	—	—
November 1980	20·65	11·6	33·40	11·5	15·3	18·4	16·9	17·0
November 1981	22·50	9·0	36·40	9·0	12·0	10·7	8·1	7·8
November 1982	25·00	11·1	40·45	11·1	6·3	7·4	6·3	6·7
November 1983	27·05	8·2	43·75	8·2	4·8	7·3	7·5	7·2
November 1984	28·45	5·2	46·00	5·1	4·9	8·7	9·0	9·0
November 1985	30·45	7·0	49·25	7·1	5·5	6·5	6·8	6·9
July 1986	30·80	1·1	49·80	1·1	1·7	5·7	7·0	6·1
April 1987	31·45	2·1	50·85	2·1	4·4	6·2	8·4	7·6
April 1988	32·75	4·1	52·95	4·1	3·9	9·7	12·1	11·2
April 1989	34·70	6·0	56·10	5·9	8·0	9·6	9·4	9·3
April 1990	37·35	7·6	60·40	7·7	9·4	9·7	11·2	11·2
April 1991	41·40	10·8	66·95	10·8	6·4	7·9	8·1	7·8

Table 2: Sickness Benefit

Uprating date	*Single*		*Couple*	
	Rate	*Percentage increase on previous rate*	*Rate*	*Percentage increase on previous rate*
	£	*Per cent.*	*£*	*Per cent.*
November 1979	16·50	—	29·95	—
November 1980	20·65	11·6	33·40	11·5
November 1981	22·50	9·0	36·40	9·0
November 1982	25·00	11·1	40·45	11·1
November 1983	25·95	3·8	41·95	3·7
November 1984	27·25	5·0	44·05	5·0
November 1985	29·15	7·0	47·15	7·0
July 1986	29·45	1·0	47·65	1·1
April 1987	30·05	2·0	48·65	2·1
April 1988	31·30	4·2	50·70	4·2
April 1989	33·20	6·1	53·75	6·0
April 1990	35·70	7·5	57·80	7·5
April 1991	39·60	10·9	64·10	10·9

Table 3
Statutory sick pay

Uprating date (April)	*Rate (£)*			*Percentage increase on previous rate*			*Percentage increase in RPI since previous uprating date*	*Percentage increase in adult male gross full-time earnings since previous uprating date*	*Percentage increase in adult male net full-time earnings since previous uprating date*	
	Standard	*Middle*	*Lower*	*Standard*	*Middle*	*Lower*			*Single*	*Couple*
1983	40·25	33·75	27·20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1984	42·25	35·45	28·55	5·0	5·0	5·0	5·2	8·6	8·8	9·2
1985	44·35	37·20	30·00	5·0	4·9	5·1	6·9	7·6	7·9	7·9
1986	46·75	39·20	31·60	5·4	5·4	5·3	3·0	7·8	8·9	8·5
1987	47·20	—	32·85	1·0	—	4·0	4·2	8·0	10·0	9·4
1988	49·20	—	34·25	4·2	—	4·3	3·9	9·7	12·1	11·7
1989	52·10	—	36·25	5·9	—	5·8	8·0	9·6	9·4	9·3
1990	52·50	—	39·25	0·8	—	8·3	9·4	9·7	11·2	11·2
1991	52·50	—	43·50	0·0	—	10·8	6·4	7·9	8·1	7·8

Table 4: Child Benefit (Standard Rate for first or eldest child)

Uprating Date	*Rate* £	*Percentage increase on previous rate*
April 1979	4·00	33·3
November 1980	4·75	18·8
November 1981	5·25	10·5
November 1982	5·85	11·4
November 1983	6·50	11·1
November 1984	6·85	5·4
November 1985	7·00	2·2
July 1986	7·10	1·4
April 1987	7·25	2·1
April 1988	7·25	0·0
April 1989	7·25	0·0
April 1990	7·25	0·0
April 1991	8·25	13·8
October 1991	9·25	12·1

Table 5: Retirement Pension

Uprating Date	*Single*		*Couple*	
	Rate	*Percentage Increase on Previous Rate*	*Rate*	*Percentage Increase on Previous Rate*
November 1979				
Under 80	£23·30	—	£37·30	—
Over 80	£23·55	—	£37·80	—
November 1980				
Under 80	£27·15	16·5	£43·45	16·5
Over 80	£27·40	16·3	£43·95	16·3
November 1981				
Under 80	£29·60	9·0	£47·35	9·0
Over 80	£29·85	8·9	£47·85	8·9
November 1982				
Under 80	£32·85	11·0	£52·55	11·0
Over 80	£33·10	10·9	£53·05	10·9
November 1983				
Under 80	£34·05	3·7	£54·50	3·7
Over 80	£34·30	3·6	£55·00	3·7
November 1984				
Under 80	£35·80	5·1	£57·30	5·1
Over 80	£36·05	5·1	£57·80	5·1
November 1985				
Under 80	£38·30	7·0	£61·30	7·0
Over 80	£38·55	6·9	£61·80	6·9
July 1986				
Under 80	£38·70	1·0	£61·95	1·1
Over 80	£38·95	1·0	£62·45	1·1
April 1987				
Under 80	£39·50	2·1	£63·25	2·1
Over 80	£39·75	2·1	£63·75	2·1
April 1988				
Under 80	£41·15	4·2	£65·90	4·2
Over 80	£41·40	4·2	£66·40	4·2
April 1989				
Under 80	£43·60	6·0	£69·80	5·9
Over 80	£43·85	5·9	£70·30	5·9
April 1990				
Under 80	£46·90	7·6	£75·10	7·6
Over 80	£47·15	7·5	£75·60	7·5
April 1991				
Under 80	£52·00	10·9	£83·25	10·9
Over 80	£52·25	10·8	£83·75	10·8

Table 6: Invalidity Benefit

Uprating date	*Single*		*Couple*	
	Rate £	*Percentage increase on previous rate* *Per cent.*	*Rate* £	*Percentage increase on previous rate* *Per cent.*
November 1979	23·30	—	37·30	—
November 1980	26·00	11·6	41·60	11·5
November 1981	28·35	9·0	45·35	9·0
November 1982	31·45	10·9	50·30	10·9
November 1983	32·60	3·7	52·15	3·7
November 1984	34·25	5·1	54·80	5·1
November 1985	38·30	11·8	61·30	11·9
July 1986	38·70	1·0	61·95	1·1
April 1987	39·50	2·1	63·25	2·1
April 1988	41·15	4·2	65·90	4·2
April 1989	43·60	6·0	69·80	5·9
April 1990	46·90	7·6	75·10	7·6
April 1991	52·00	10·9	83·25	10·9

Table 7: One Parent Benefit

Uprating date	*Rate* £	*Percentage increase on previous rate*
November 1979	2·50	—
November 1980	3·00	20·0
November 1981	3·30	10·0
November 1982	3·65	10·6
November 1983	4·05	11·0
November 1984	4·25	4·9
November 1985	4·55	7·1
July 1986	4·60	1·1
April 1987	4·70	2·2
April 1988	4·90	4·3
April 1989	5·20	6·1
April 1990	5·60	7·7

Table 8: maternity benefit

Uprating date	*Single* *Rate* £	*Percentage increase on previous rate*	*Couple* *Rate* £	*Percentage increase on previous rate*
November 1979	18·50	—	29·95	—
November 1980	20·65	11·6	33·40	11·5
November 1981	22·50	9·0	36·40	9·0
November 1982	25·00	11·1	40·45	11·1
November 1983	25·95	3·8	41·95	3·7
November 1984	27·25	5·0	44·05	5·0
November 1985	29·15	7·0	47·15	7·0
July 1986	29·45	1·0	47·65	1·1
April 1987	30·05	2·0	48·65	2·1
April 1988	31·30	4·2	50·70	4·2
April 1989	33·20	6·1	53·75	6·0
April 1990	35·70	7·5	57·80	7·5
April 1991	40·60	13·7	65·10	12·6

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 10 March, *Official Report,* column *510,* on the number of households claiming a social security benefit, if he will indicate in what form information is available.

Mr. Jack: Broad estimates of households' receipt of benefits including retirement pension could be made from the family expenditure survey, subject to some difficulties such as underreporting of certain benefits. These estimates could be obtained for the sequence of years 1979, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989 only at disproportionate cost. For the other years, data are not readily available in the form requested and would involve significantly more work, again at disproportionate cost.

Reliable information on households' receipt of benefits excluding retirement pension is not available for any year because survey data do not distinguish accurately between receipt of supplementary benefit/income support by pensioners and contributory retirement pensions.

Income Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of income support who are entitled to a disability premium are aged *(a)* 18 to 19, *(b)* 20, *(c)* 21, *(d)* 22, *(e)* 23 and *(f)* 24 years.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is shown in the table.

Age group	*Number of recipients (thousands)* *Disability premium*	*Severe disability premium*	*Total*
18-19	10	—	10
20	6	*	6
21	6	*	6
22	6	*	6
23	5	*	5
24	6	*	6

Notes:

1. All figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.
2. Number of claimants * denotes fewer than 499.
3. Included in the above table are 2,000 lone parents who receive income support at the rate appropriate to a person aged 25 or over.

Source: Annual statistical inquiry May 1990.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give his estimate of the number of separate households comprising 16 and 17-year-olds not eligible for income support.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households are currently receiving income support premiums under the Social Security Act 1986; and how many households he estimates would be eligible for this help but for their lack of accommodation.

Miss Widdecombe: In May 1990, 2,898,000 income support claimants were in receipt of one or more premiums. The number of income support claimants without accommodation was 8,000, but it is not possible to estimate how many of these would have been entitled to a premium if they had entered accommodation.

Residents of boarding establishments and hostels, including homeless families placed in temporary accommodation by local authorities, are entitled to the full range of income support premiums.

Source: Income support annual statistics inquiry May 1990.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) of 5 November, *Official Report*, column *84*, on premia paid with income support, if he will give the total number of claimants for each of the premia.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is given in the table:

Premium	*Total number of recipients*
Higher pensioner	688,000
Enhanced pensioner	314,000
Pensioner	496,000
Severe disability (higher)	13,000
Severe disability (lower)	50,000
Disability	331,000
Lone parent	793,000
Disabled child	18,000
Family premium	1,144,000

Note: Figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.
Source: Annual statistical inquiry May 1990.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many income support claimants there were with deductions *(a)* for arrears of community charge and *(b)* for recovery of social fund loans, at the end of the most recent months for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 2 March 1992]*: The latest information of the number of income support claimants with deductions for arrears of community charge deductions is contained in the Department's management information statistics for the quarter ending November 1991, a copy of which is available in the Library. The number of social fund loan recoveries made in the most recent month for which figures are available, January 1992, is 693,353. The figures are based on the number of people making repayments during the whole of January and not at the end of that month. It is not possible to exclude from these figures repayments made by people not in receipt of income support.

Home Visits

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 9 March 1992, *Official Report*, column *423*, what information he has concerning the number of home visits, including specialist visits, excluding those for the purpose of investigating fraud, that were made per 1,000 claimants in 1991-92.

Mr. Jack: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Staffing

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 6 March 1992, *Official Report*, column *318*, regarding staffing, if he will give the total number of full-time equivalent staff in each year.

Miss Widdecombe: The total number of full-time equivalent staff administering the social security programme for the years 1979-80 to 1990-91 is in the table.

	Number
1979-80	88,429
1980-81	87,902
1981-82	87,578
1982-83	85,698
1983-84	82,975
1984-85	82,527
1985-86	83,869
1986-87	85,276
1987-88	89,023
1988-89	87,137
1989-90	81,633
1990-91	79,715

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the maximum daily amount an employed person was allowed to earn per day without loss of entitlement to unemployment benefit in 1979-80 and 1991-92.

Mr. Jack: Unemployment benefit is primarily for those who are entirely without work. However, a day on which an unemployed person does a small amount of work in a subsidiary occupation can still count as a day of unemployment provided he satisfies the usual conditions and earnings for that day do not exceed the daily limit. In 1979-80 the limit was 75p a day and in 1991-92 it is £2 a day.

This represents an increase above the rate of growth in the retail prices index.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to change the 21-hour rule which enables unemployed claimants to study part time; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 11 March at column *527*.

Transitional Payments

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his best estimate of the numbers who will still be in receipt of transitional additions in 1992-93; and if he will break it down by pensioners, families with children, lone parents and others.

Miss Widdecombe: It is estimated that immediately following the April 1992 uprating there will only be 10,000 people in receipt of income support transitional additions. The total can be broken down as follows:

	Number
Pensioners	2,000
Lone parents	1,000
Couples with children	[1]
Others	5,000

[1] Denotes a caseload of fewer than 500.
Note: Numbers have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

Loss of Benefit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what number and proportion of people affected by the proposed 20 per cent. income tax lower rate will lose benefit as a result.

Mr. Jack: On the introduction of the 20 per cent. income tax rate, all those receiving income-related benefits and who pay tax will be better off. In time the increased net earnings of those eligible for income-related benefits will result in the normal reductions in benefit levels which occur when net earnings are increased. The complex interaction of benefit upratings, tax changes and changes in personal circumstances at April 1992 make it difficult to determine with precision the number of people who will be affected, but we estimate that individual benefit levels will be reduced for around 1 million people out of the 25 million people who will benefit from the lower tax band.

Bickleigh Down Clinic

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which hon. Members were invited to inspect the site last month of the future Bickleigh Down clinic in the constituency of South Hams; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We are not aware of any hon. Members from this Department invited to inspect a clinic at Bickleigh Down, but at the invitation of Plymouth city council I attended and performed its turf cutting ceremony at the site of the Plymouth Child Support Agency centre. All invitations for this event were issued by Plymouth city council, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark) attended.

Students

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many full-time students are currently receiving housing benefits and income support, by entitlement category; and if he will express the total as a proportion of all full-time students who would be entitled to these benefits if they were not students.

Miss Widdecombe: The latest available data for term-time indicate that in May 1991, 5,200 students were receiving housing benefit. Of these, 1,200 were also in receipt of income support. Data for August 1991 show 3,100 students were receiving housing benefit of whom 1,600 were also in receipt of income support.

A breakdown of the different categories of student claiming and information about the number of students on income support but not on housing benefit are not available. Similarly, information on the number of students who would be eligible for benefits but for their student status is not available. However, previous survey data have shown that only a minority of students claimed benefits.

Source: The housing benefit and community charge benefit management information system quarterly stock count for May and August 1991.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give his estimate of the number of households, by tenure, whose housing benefit is reduced because of non-dependants deductions; and if he will sub-divide this number by 16 to 17-year-old, 18 to 24-year-old, and 25 years old and over age groups.

Miss Widdecombe: Such information as is available is in the table.

Recipients whose Housing Benefit is reduced through non-dependent deductions: May 1990

Age of claimant	*HB with non dependent deductions LA tenant*	*HB with non dependent deductions Private tenant*	*All cases*
Non-IS cases			
16-17	0	0	0
18-24	400	200	600
Over 25	126,000	13,100	139,100
All ages	126,400	13,300	139,700
IS cases			
All ages	186,400	23,700	210,100

Source: The housing benefit and community charge benefit management information system annual 1 per cent. sample.

Disability

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households are currently receiving disabled living allowance and whether he will make a statement as to the effect of housing costs being excluded from calculations for this allowance.

Mr. Scott: Disability living allowance will not begin to be paid until 6 April 1992.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many inquiries were made through the benefit inquiry line by the end of February; and how many were concerned with *(a)* disability living allowance, *(b)* disability working allowance, *(c)* other disability benefits and *(d)* a combination of the above.

Mr. Scott: The provision of the benefit inquiry line is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and Public Information Office.

Relocation

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those parts of his Department which are currently under review for relocation; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to the east midlands; how many of these posts are being considered for relocation to Mansfield; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: During 1992-93 the Department of Social Security will relocate around 700 Benefits Agency staff to Leeds. Around 3,000 Child Support Agency staff will be located in centres at Falkirk, Belfast, Birkenhead, Dudley, Hastings and Plymouth during 1993.

The Contributions Agency has recently reviewed the effectiveness of its activities in local offices and there may be localised relocation of a small number of staff. In those locations where the Contributions Agency has plans to redeploy its resources, a departmental reception service will continue to be provided. There are no significant numbers moving to the east midlands, although there are proposals to increase staff in Mansfield by around six posts.

Benefits Claims, Scotland

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the target time scale for benefit claims to be dealt with in each region in Scotland.

Miss Widdecombe: The setting of targets in the Benefits Agency area directorates is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Social Fund

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many successful and unsuccessful applications were made to the social fund, in the last period for which figures are available, for help with *(a)* the cost of furniture and other essential household items, *(b)* rent in advance and *(c)* other items, by category, and where the application was successful, whether the assistance was provided by way of grant or loan, and the average amount of such assistance.

Mr. Scott: The available information for the period 1 April 1991 to 29 February 1992 is in the tables. Information regarding unsuccessful applications for specific items or services could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Social Fund Loans

	Number of awards	*Size of average award (£)*
Furniture and household	662,911	226
Rent in advance	14,795	137
Washing machines	33,656	209
Home improvements, repairs and maintenance	12,722	174
Removal expenses	6,180	154
Travelling expenses	5,923	42
Living expenses	441,922	38
Clothing and footwear	49,471	119
Bedding	25,754	127
Other	15,298	142

Social fund grants

	Number of awards	*Size of average award (£)*
Furniture and household	142,139	387
Rent in advance	427	202
Washing machines	14,494	288
Home improvements, repairs and maintenance	7,021	238
Removal expenses	8,624	182
Travelling expenses	45,808	60
Living expenses	924	77
Clothing and footwear	26,503	152
Bedding	6,152	156
Other	4,052	179

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of *(a)* crisis loans, *(b)* budget loans and *(c)* all loans from the social fund have gone to people aged 60 years and over.

Mr. Scott: The table shows the percentage of social fund loans awarded to people aged 60 and over from 1 April 1991 to 31 January 1992.

	Per cent.
Crisis loans	1·05
Budgeting loans	3·96
All loans	2·66

Carers

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how long is the average delay in application for carers' benefits in Scotland, by region, since 1989.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Child Benefit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would have been the gross additional cost, in cash terms and at 1991-92 prices, of uprating child benefit fully in line with inflation assuming each child in the family receives the same rate, in April of each year from 1988 to 1992.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 27 February 1992]:* In 1992-93 we estimate that gross expenditure on child benefit will be £5·7 billion. If child benefit had been uprated each April from 1988 in line with the retail prices index, the rate payable for each child from April 1992 would be £9·95. It is estimated that to pay child benefit at this rate in 1992-93 would cost an additional £720 million gross or £470 million net, after allowing for the normal adjustments to other benefits. The extra help that has been made available to less well-off families since 1988 through the income-related benefits will be worth around £620 million in 1992-93.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

China

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the current number of political and religious prisoners of conscience held in the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Chinese authorities have said that there are 1·1 million inmates in prisons and reform camps in China, of whom 0·5 per cent.—5,500 people—

have been indicted for so-called counter-revolutionary offences. Such offences often relate to those regarded in the west as prisoners of conscience. Some foreign researchers estimate that the real figures are much higher, but this cannot be verified.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the present BBC World Service broadcasts to the People's Republic of China; and if he has any plans to increase the service.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Broadcasting to China is a high priority. Broadcasts in Mandarin and Cantonese total 24 ½ hours and 5 ¼ hours a week respectively. The former will be increased by 3 ½ hours a week in early 1993, when the World Service has recruited the necessary specialist staff. World Service broadcasts in English are also audible in China.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has of the number of executions in the People's Republic of China last year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: According to Amnesty International, there have been published accounts of more than 1,000 executions while unofficial sources suggest that up to 20,000 executions may have taken place in 1991. We have no means of verifying such figures.

Insolvency, France

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British citizens currently imprisoned in France are presently seeking to prove insolvency under articles 752 and 756 of the French code of penal procedure.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We do not have the requested statistics. British nationals are not obliged to inform consular officers that they or their lawyers are negotiating a reduction or waiver of customs fines imposed by French courts.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the reasons for the variation in the English translation of article 198a of the treaty agreed at Maastrict on 11 December 1991.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The first English version of article 198a referred to

> "representatives of regional and local authorities"

but in the version signed at Maastricht the word "bodies" was substitited for "authorities". Jurists/linguists decided that the term "bodies" translated better the word "collectivités" in the French text.

Geneva Convention

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is now in a position to state when he will sign the additional protocols of the Geneva convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Not yet. Our consultations are still not complete.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about growth in overseas aid since 1986-87.

Mrs. Chalker: Between 1986-87 and 1990-91, the aid programme grew by 33·7 per cent. in cash terms, and 2·5 per cent. in real terms.

Additional Aid

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commnwealth Affairs what proposals have been made by the European Community for additional subsidies, grants and loans to north African countries and Jordan; and if he will state the amounts involved.

Mrs. Chalker: As part of the Community's new Mediterranean policy, European Community Foreign Ministers agreed in 1991 to the following new series of financial protocols for 1992-96;

	Grants and risk capital		*Loans*	
	ecus million	*£ million*	*ecus million*	*£ million*
Algeria	70	[1]49	280	196
Morocco	218	153	220	154
Tunisia	116	81	168	118
Egypt	258	180	310	217
Jordan	46	32	80	56

[1] Approximate.

The above countries and others are also eligible for 300 million ecu—£210 million—in grants in support of structural adjustment; and for 230 million ecu—£161 million—in grants and 1,800 million ecu—£1,260 million—in loans for horizontal co-operation—projects benefiting more than one country in the region.

Bolivia (Soya Beans)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs further to his answer of 4 March, *Official Report*, column *167*, what were the previous uses of the area now under cultivation for soya bean production.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on 27 January 1992, *Official Report*, column *421*.

WALES

Village Halls

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the village halls in Wales which have been assisted financially by the urban aid programme since June 1979, with an indication of the grant given to each, respectively.

Mr. David Hunt: The village halls assisted by the urban programme in Wales since June 1979 are listed in the table:

Name	*Grant £*	*Financial year*
Penybryn village hall, Rhymney Valley	72,000	1982-83
Gilwern village hall, Blaenau Gwent	3,789	1985-86
St. Brides village hall, Newport	79,500	1991-92
Pontneath Vaughan village hall, Brecknock	25,000	1991-92

Singleton Hospital

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will announce his decisions about the night casualty service at Singleton hospital.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My right hon. Friend's policy is to allow at least two to three months after the end of the one-month appeal period for careful consideration of any representations made to him about a service change. The appeal period in respect of the Singleton hospital night-time casualty service ended on 28 February.

Conservation Areas

Mr. Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance he proposes to issue to local authorities regarding the impact of large-scale retail development in conservation areas and on unlisted buildings in conservation areas.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Guidance on development proposals within conservation areas is provided in Welsh Office circular 61/81: "Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas". The Department has also issued guidance on large-scale retail development in planning policy guidance note 6: "Major Retail Development".

Copies of both documents are available in the Library of the House.

Roads

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total spending by central Government on roads in Wales since 1979; and how many miles of motorway and trunk roads have been laid since that year.

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the spending per capita on roads in Wales.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total value of road starts in Wales planned in the next two financial years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Since 1979, total net spending by central Government on the roads programme in Wales is almost £2 billion; including £360 million transport grant. Twenty-two miles of motorway and 145 miles of trunk road have been completed. Seven schemes totalling almost 18 miles are presently under construction. Twenty-three local authority schemes are being sponsored by transport grant.

Total expenditure on roads in Wales per head of population in 1990-91 was £145·49.

Six major trunk road scheme starts are planned for 1992-93. The total cost of these schemes is estimated to be £204 million. Starts in 1993-94 have not yet been announced, but 20 schemes, costing £391 million, are indicated over the next three years in the 1992 supplement to roads in Wales published in February.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of male and female unemployed in Ogmore, Mid-Glamorgan and Wales at the latest available date, together with the figures for the same areas in May 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: Figures that are consistent between 1979 and 1992 are available for Wales only. The seasonally adjusted figures in January 1992 were 97,100 males and 26,500 females. Corresponding figures for May 1979 were 49,800 and 19,000 respectively.

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were in work in Wales in May 1979; and what the figure is at the latest available date.

Mr. David Hunt: The number was 1,157,000 in June 1979, which has now increased to 1,175,000 on the latest available figure.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what figures he has for rural unemployment for *(a)* Clwyd South West and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: There is no classification by which unemployment can readily be categorised as rural.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state the number of male unemployed in Newport, Gwent and Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. David Hunt: In January 1992, there were 5,712, 16,063 and 101,149 unemployed male claimants in the Newport district, Gwent and Wales respectively.

Clwyd Health Authority

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of administrative staff employed by the Clwyd health authority; what percentage this is of the total number of staff employed; and what were the equivalent figures for 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Between 1979 and 1990 the numbers of administrative and clerical staff and senior managers increased by 2 per cent. as a proportion of the total work force employed by the district health authority and the family health service authority in Clwyd.

This compares with the 3 per cent. increase in numbers of nurses and midwives over the same period.

Health Service Pay

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the difference between the amounts paid by the Welsh Office to Welsh area health authorities to pay for agreed pay rises in 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 and the actual costs of the pay rises.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Health authorities must meet the cost of pay awards from within the totality of the resources available to them. They receive a cash increase each year and may receive further funding in-year as a contribution toward the excess costs of review bodies' recommendations. These resources, together with the cash released from cost improvement programmes and income-generation schemes, have not only been sufficient to meet the cost of pay and price rises over the period since 1987 but permitted a sustained expansion in the volume of services.

The figures relating to the funding available to health authorities and the actual cost of pay awards is as follows:

	Purchasing power of health authorities[1] *£ million*	*Actual cost of pay awards*[2] *£ million*
1987-88	67·9	44·5
1988-89	83·8	[3]71·2
1989-90	65·6	49·0
1990-91	80·4	56·1

[1] Welsh Office and value for money unit, Welsh Health Common Services Authority.

[2] Health authorities in Wales.

[3] Includes the cost of the clinical regrading of nursing staff.

Hospital Trusts

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hospitals in Wales have expressed an interest in applying for trust status.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My right hon. Friend has invited applications from 14 health units for NHS trust status in April 1993. These cover 82 hospitals, 11,000 beds and contractual income of some £600 million. Including Pembrokeshire, some 65 per cent. of acute services and 60 per cent. of community services in Wales could be NHS trust based in 1993.

Small Businesses

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact of the recession on small businesses in Wales; and what new initiatives he has taken to help local authorities help Welsh companies.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of VAT registered businesses in Wales increased by over 10 per cent. in the years 1988 to 1990—the latest year for which figures are available—to 8,250. Government policy to assist this sector is clearly working and the Welsh economy is strongly placed to respond to the economic upturn.

Environment Report

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish an annual report on the state of the environment in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Welsh Office already publishes the "Environmental Digest for Wales." In addition my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales last September published the "Environment in Wales" report which described progress on environmental matters in Wales since the publication of the Government's White Paper "This Common Inheritance."

Local Government Finance

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met leaders of local authorities in Wales to discuss local government finance.

Mr. David Hunt: I chaired a meeting of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance on 24 February to discuss implementation of the council tax.

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the percentage change in the amount paid per household under community charge in Wales compared to the last year of domestic rates in real terms.

Mr. David Hunt: Average domestic rates per household in Wales for 1989-90, after domestic rate relief, were £327 or around £380 at 1991-92 prices, using the GDP deflator. The average community charge set for 1991-92 after community charge reduction grant was £92, or £184 per two charge payer household—52 per cent. less than the average domestic rates figure for 1989-90.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give an estimate of how much money could be saved by moving to unitary local government in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: My proposal for a structure of 23 unitary authorities is estimated to be cost neutral; I am placing in the Library of the House and in the Vote Office copies of the report submitted to me by financial consultants.

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements he has made to consult with hon. Members on options for local government reorganisation.

Mr. David Hunt: I have invited hon. Members to submit their views to me, and have held meetings with every Member who has requested one.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the South Glamorgan health authority concerning hospital closures.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: None.

Coal and Steel Industries

Sir Anthony Meyer: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales were employed in the coal and steel industries in 1979; and what is the total at the latest available date.

Mr. David Hunt: In December 1979, 55,200 were employed in the steel industry in Wales. The current figure is some 18,000. In March 1979, 31,000 people were employed in the coal industry in Wales. The latest available figures show that some 2,800 people now work in the industry.

Buses

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from bus operators in Wales on the question of the dual sourcing of buses.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have received no such representations.

Secure Accommodation

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce his proposals for the provision of secure accommodation.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I announced in August 1991 proposals for the provision of a new secure unit in Wales. I made a further announcement on 25 February following consideration of the responses received to those proposals.

Rail Investment

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he plans to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss investment in rail services in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend is to meet Sir Bob Reid in the near future.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the total expenditure by the Welsh Office on housing during the current financial year; and how this compares with similar expenditure in real terms in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1987.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The latest estimate of expenditure on housing in Wales in 1991-92 is £591 million, an increase of more than 7 per cent. in real terms on the comparable figures for 1987-88. No comparison is possible with expenditure in 1979-80, as figures for that year are not available on a consistent basis.

Eryri Hospital

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects work to take place on upgrading the Eryri hospital at Caernarfon into a full community hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennet: It is a matter for Gwynedd health authority to decide when work on the upgrading of Eryri hospital should start.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to strengthen the guidelines governing conflicts of interests involving board members and staff of the Welsh Development Agency and the agency's clients.

Mr. David Hunt: Requirements concerning board appointments and procedures are set out in the Welsh Development Agency Act 1975. Guidance is also contained in "Non Departmental Public Bodies: A Guide for Departments". The guide is kept under review.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency concerning the number of craft workshops available at the Old Cornmill, Porthmadog.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the Welsh Development Agency's Bangor regional office routine monitoring report dated 11 April 1989 in relation to the Old Cornmill, Porthmadog development and of the communication from the Bangor regional office to the agency's head office in December 1989, and of the chairman's first letter to the then agency chief executive referred to in his second letter to the present chief executive dated 25 November 1991 concerning the same development.

Mr. David Hunt: No.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he or his ministerial colleagues were informed of *(a)* the application for, and payment of, a rural conversion grant to Mr. Gwyn Jones, chairman of the Welsh Development Agency, *(b)* the request to Mr. Jones for a partial refund of the grant and *(c)* the basis on which the refund was assessed and its amount.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is:

(a)—on 13 January 1992

(b)—I was informed on 13 January 1992 that Dr. Jones had requested advice on the level of partial refund that might be involved.

(c)—on 18 February 1992.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development agency on improving procedures in making senior agency appointments.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Power Stations

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on licensing policy for gas-fired power stations by *(a)* PowerGen and National Power and *(b)* independent generators.

Mr. David Hunt: All proposals for new power plant are considered on their merits. All such projects are subject to the relevant provisions of the electricity and town and country planning Acts and also to the pollution controls operated by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the National Rivers Authority. These procedures ensure that power station projects take full account of general planning and environmental protection considerations.

Welsh National Opera

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the proposals for a new home for the Welsh National Opera Company.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The report of the feasibility study for a Cardiff Bay opera house is still under consideration and no firm decisions have yet been reached.

NHS Estate

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate for every health authority and trust in Wales the amount required to bring the national health service estate to a condition B, exhibiting only minor deterioration.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: District health authorities in Wales are required to review the cost of backlog maintenance annually and for 1990-91, they estimated that it would cost £186·3 million to bring the whole of the NHS estate in Wales to a standard where it is exhibiting only minor deterioration. There were no trusts in Wales at that time. This sum may be broken down by district health authority as shown in the table:

DHA	*£ million*
Clwyd	20·3
East Dyfed	17·9
Gwent	18·7
Gwynedd	11·4
Mid Glamorgan	22·1
Pembrokeshire	0·9
Powys	3·5
South Glamorgan	82·0
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OFFICIAL REPORT

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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